

God's Big Picture: The great story

Starting point:

2 Timothy 3:15

1. Children can learn the Scriptures. Children can be made wise for salvation. We want to be ministering the Word to children.
 2. The whole point of the Scriptures are to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus. They are all about him.
- Are there parts of the Bible though that we find hard to see how it should be making us wise for salvation in Jesus?

Either:

The Bible is top down or bottom up

God revealing himself or man trying to know God

One perfect revelation or a jumble of different ideas, full of contradiction and error

If it is the second, then there is no point trying to find an overall coherent story (other than the story of men trying to find out about God). If it is the first then it does make sense to look for the big message, the big picture, the big story.

2 Timothy 3:16 – The Bible is a top-down, God-breathed, perfect revelation of Jesus

Three runs through the Bible:

1. The Wedding Banquet
2. Two Men
2. Exoduses

1. The Wedding Banquet

Jesus thought that the Bible was one story and here is one way he told it:

Matthew 22:1-14 – the Bible from beginning to end in 14 verses

- a) The reason for Creation (v2) – cf. John 17:26
- b) The history of Israel (v3) – cf. Isaiah 25:6; 55:1-2; Proverbs 9:1-5
- c) The history of Israel continued through to John the Baptist and the Apostles (v4-6)
- d) The judgment of Jerusalem and the gospel goes to the Gentiles (v7-10)
- e) The final judgment (v11-13)

Take time to trace the beautiful theme of marriage all through the Bible:

Gen. 2; Ex. 34; Song of Songs; Isa. 49, 61-62; Jer. 2; Ezek. 16; Hosea; Mark 2; John 3; Eph. 5; 2 Cor. 11; Rev. 19, 21

2. Two Men

1 Cor. 15:47 – the Bible in one verse – first man, second man

How does the Bible start? – creation, garden, tree of life, perfection, beauty, God and man dwelling together

How does it end? – recreation, garden city, tree of life, perfection, even greater beauty and glory, God and man dwelling together

First man is deceived, believes the lie that God is not good, chooses death rather than life, expelled from garden, cut off from tree of life, cut off from fellowship with God, cursed, takes the whole creation down with him.

Adam starts perishing, starts dying – like a cut flower – decay, heading for death

But immediately there is the promise (Gen. 3:15) of another man, born of woman, who will crush Satan and in the process he himself will be crushed.

The OT is the search for the second Adam:

- Noah – as an Adam in charge of the animals in the ark – like a new Eden – then emerging into a new world with the Adamic blessing and commission to be fruitful and fill – but then he disappoints
- Abraham – Gen. 12 – the Adamic blessing of the world
- Isaac – Gen. 26 – blessed with the Adamic/Abrahamic blessing, bringing a 100-fold harvest in a time of famine (cf. Matt. 13) and water out of dry ground
- Moses – tabernacle/Eden – Exodus 25-40 – God dwelling with his people, the cherubim, the lamp/tree
- Joshua – 10:24-25 cf. Gen. 3:15
- Judges – saviours (2:16), serpent crusher representative battling with deception (14:1-9; 16:5,21,30)
- Kings:
 - David – 1 Samuel 17 (How have you heard this preached?)
 - Psalm 1 – the tree of life, first Adam and second Adam
 - Solomon's rise and fall (1 Kings 1-11)
 - [Uzziah](#) (2 Chron. 26)
- Prophets:
 - Isaiah 1 cf. 53 – the first Adam and the second Adam
 - Jonah (fleeing the presence of God) versus Ezekiel (the Spirit-filled son of man)

Finally the second Adam comes.

Born of woman but like the first Adam he has no earthly Father.

He is tempted by Satan but he resists.

He shows that he is the one who can reverse every effect of the fall – sickness, blindness, demons, even death itself.

Like Adam he has to make a decision in the garden – a much harder garden – and he chooses God's will.

As Adam was cut off from the tree of life so Christ goes willingly die on a tree that he might become the tree of life to us. At the very moment the serpent has the heels of the seed of woman nailed and it looks like he has triumphed, the serpents head is being crushed, Satan is being disarmed, mortally wounded, decisively defeated – Gen. 3:15//Col. 2:15.

And then Jesus rises again on the first day of the week – as the firstborn of a new creation.

He's met by Mary – do you remember what she mistakes him for? – the gardener – and he is – he is the second Adam remaking Eden for us.

"In God's sight there are two men – Adam and Jesus Christ." *Thomas Goodwin*

1 Cor. 15:47 – first man, second man

Everyone after Adam is born in him – connected to him like the branches of a tree to the root – and so they die – 1 Cor. 15:22a

Two men – we all start in Adam – but now we can be in Christ – you can be cut from the tree of Adam and grafted into Christ.

Only two men – you're in one or the other

That story is behind all the NT letters

1 Corinthians 15, Romans 5, Hebrews 2, Philippians 2:6

Also behind the idea of 'in Christ' comes again and again

We die in Christ, we rise in Christ

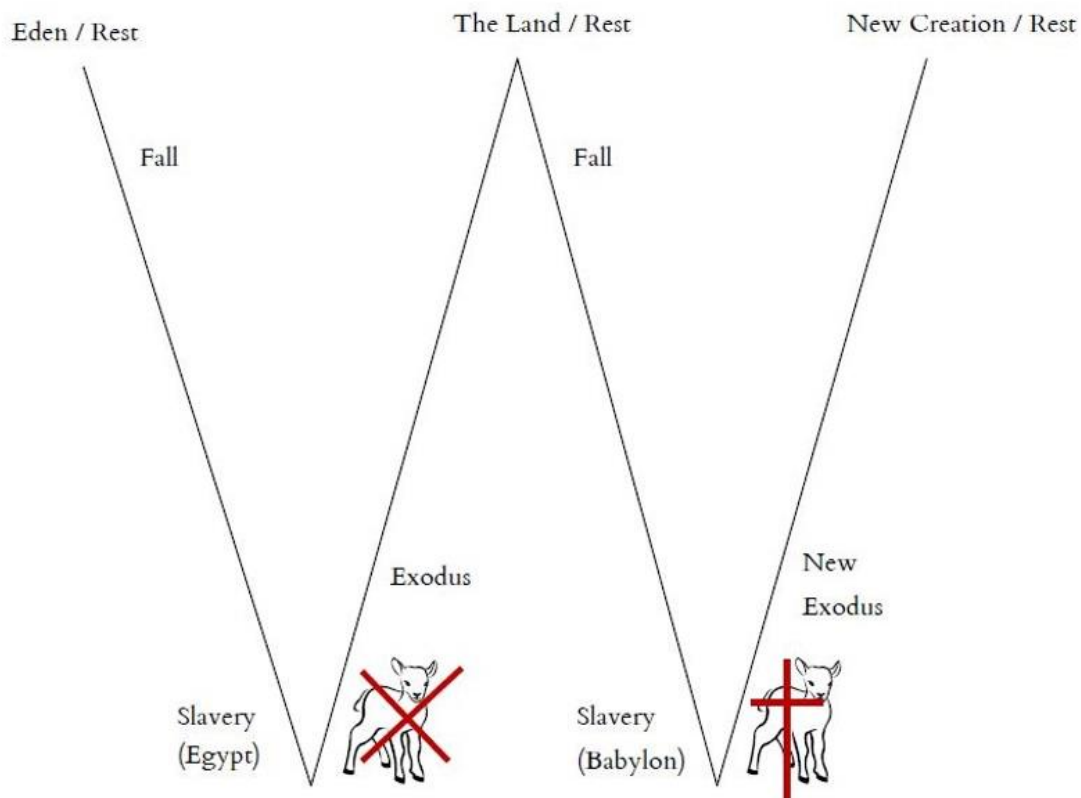
Phil. 3:9; 1 Peter 1:3

Caution: Don't try to see this everywhere – push everything to fit this – but don't be surprised when you see hints of Adam and the New Adam, of paradise lost and paradise restored – because that is the big storyline of the Bible.

E.g. 1 Chron. 1:1; 4:9-10 – Jabez – looks like he might be a new better Adam to reverse the Fall with the mention of the pain of childbirth, blessing, enlargement, removal of evil and pain (cf. Gen. 1:28; 3:8, 16) but he dies and the genealogy moves on.

- Questions?
- Do our students / congregations know this story?
- Does it matter - to how we read the Bible and how we preach?
 - Evangelism is not about offering two options – heaven or hell – with us as a neutral observer – No
 - Or worse – “have this lifestyle upgrade”
 - No – the Bible assumes we are born in Adam – perishing, cursed – we don’t just need motivating, we don’t need a bit of a boost, we need to die and be born again in Christ – we start as a branch in Adam’s rotten tree and we need to be cut off and grafted into Christ.

3. Two Exoduses



Eden – perfect Sabbath rest

Fall

Downhill all the way to slavery in Egypt

Physical but also spiritual – see that in places like Ezekiel 20 – Israelites are worshipping idols

The way out of this slavery is through a Lamb dying, blood over door, angel of death, corpse in every house

Point of Exodus is not just release but to bring them to a new Eden, new Sabbath rest – a land of milk and honey where God would dwell with them again.

That the end of the story?

No – good for about a generation – while Joshua’s with them but then they fall again and it’s really just a long downward spiral all the way through the books of Kings and Chronicles till you get to another slavery and exile from the land of rest – this time in Babylon.

But the prophets promise a new Exodus, a new Eden and a new Creation – Jer. 16:14-15; Isaiah 11; 40; 65

They come back 70 years later but it never as good as the prophets said – it’s ok but it’s nothing even close to the glory that was promised, the glory never returns to the Temple.

Then hundreds of years later John the Baptist cries out “Look – the Lamb of God”

Jesus stands on a mountain with Moses and Elijah and discusses his coming ‘exodus’ (Luke 9:31 – Greek word for departure).

Then a few months later you get to the time of Passover, and the Lamb of God is slain, and they even raise a hyssop branch up to him (exactly what was used to paint the blood over the doorposts) and none of his bones are broken (cf. Ex. 12:46) – he is slain instead of you and me so that we would be freed from bondage to sin and death and the devil and brought to the promised land, the new greater Sabbath rest.

That is a great story isn't it?

We like stories but what are the stories we tell in our pulpits? Are they this story?

This is the story that pulses underneath the NT letters too.

Esp. clear at places like:

1 Cor. 5 – Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed

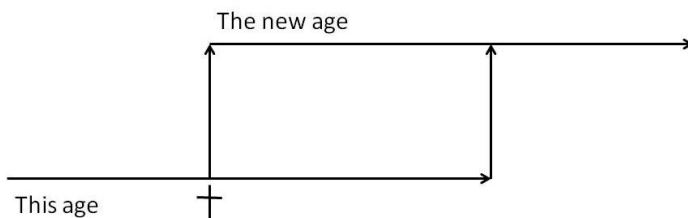
Hebrews 3-4 – new Sabbath rest

But also everywhere there is talk of redemption

How does this change the way we look at Jer. 29:11?

So which is it – has the New Exodus happened or are we still Exile?

Now and not yet



Such an important thing for us to get our heads around

Because it underlies all the New Testament letters – it's the basic dynamic that drives them

The Exodus has happened and the New Age has started

We have been freed from bondage to hell and the devil – we have been taken out of Adam and grafted into Christ – we are seated with Christ on high – we've been adopted by the Father – we have every spiritual blessing
But we're still here – we're still in our decaying bodies, we still get sick, we still sin, other people sin, there's persecution and disasters, and car accidents, and Jesus is not physically here with us, ruling over everything, this is not The New Creation is it?!?!?

Then one day there will be part two of the Exodus – the consummation – when Jesus returns and this age finishes and there is no more pain or crying or suffering and we see Jesus as he is and we are made like him.

For Now - The Kingdom of God, The New Age – is Now and Not Yet

the great sacrifice, the great victory has happened, the promises have all been fulfilled in Christ, we have all the spiritual blessing but much is still ahead

- Read Romans 8:12-25
- What are the marks of those who have the Spirit?