



The Big God Story

Bible Outline - Resource

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The Story of the Old Testament

Creation (Genesis 1-2)

- God as Creator/King – establishes God as having the authority to rule His creation, define its purpose, and define good and evil.
- God's Creation was good
- God created man in His image – we are to reflect His character into the world
- Cultural Mandate: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth – we are to rule God's creation as He would rule. How does God rule? Ps 89:14 – righteousness & justice are the foundations of His throne, steadfast love and faithfulness go before You. To represent the Lord and rule as He would rule means we're living out righteousness, justice, steadfast love & faithfulness.
- Where do we see The Kingdom of God? God's people (Adam & Eve) living in God's place (The Garden of Eden) under God's rule (Obedience to His Word) and blessing (they enjoy His blessing/presence as they remain under His rule)

Fall/Rebellion (Genesis 3) (rebellion is a better term because it signifies intent rather than passivity)

- Gen 2:15-17 – Man was put in the Garden to work it and care for it; God commanded them to eat of any tree except the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “for when you eat of it you will surely die.”
- Gen 3 – The serpent enters the Garden and instead of ruling and subduing it, Adam and Eve let it rule them. The serpent contradicts God's word opening up a second choice for Adam & Eve: they could obey God's rule and serve Him as King or they could decide good and evil for themselves and usurp the throne for themselves. Up to this point, God has been the provider and knower of good (Creation). They wanted to be like God – God had already made them “in His image” – they forgot their identity and thought they could remake it based on their own definition of what was good and evil.
- When sin enters the Garden, three relationships are damaged: relationship between God & man (man is now separated from God and must live apart from His presence/place), man & man (Adam & Eve blame each other and now feel shame toward the other), man & creation (creation is cursed as a result of sin)
- Gen 3:15 – The first mention of the Gospel – promised Seed will crush Satan's head but Satan will bruise His heel; God clothes man – covers their shame; judgement came on them because of their disobedience but mercy came too – death didn't come immediately like it should have, God still extended life to them...the rest of the story of the Bible traces this promised Seed. We should be watching and waiting and questioning, is this the One?
- The Kingdom: God's people (Adam & Eve) are outside God's place (the Garden) because they disobeyed His rule (God's words) and now face judgement rather than blessing...how will God restore His people to living in His place under His rule & blessing? (This is what the rest of the Bible is about)

Cycle of Rebellion (Genesis 4-11)

- Adam & Eve give birth to a son, Cain – they would have wondered, is he the seed? Cain follows in the footsteps of his parents and chooses to define good and evil for himself by not giving God the first fruits (or best portion) of his harvest – he obeyed God with his actions but not his heart. When God rejected his offering but accepted his brother's, Cain killed his brother in a jealous rage. Cain is exiled for his actions and sent in judgement to live as a wanderer. Adam & Eve give birth to another son, Seth with the hope that this one would now be the seed to come but generation after generation of people continue to serve themselves instead of faithfully serving God until Noah and his family of 8 are the only righteous people left on earth. Gen 6:5-6 “...every intention of the heart was only evil...the Lord regretted that he had made man...it grieved him to his heart.” So, God sent the flood

(a decreation narrative) to wipe the slate clean and start over – our thoughts: surely this time things will be better...

- Noah's story is another salvation story – God's faithful people are saved by His hand (through grace) from His judgement. God makes a covenant with Noah to never again curse the ground because of man - He knows that every intention of their heart is evil (God could have destroyed man for they had rebelled against His rule and followed their own hearts but again He shows His love and mercy by extending life even though they were deserving of death.) God gives Noah & his family the cultural mandate, just as He had done with Adam & Eve (promise of a new start).
- They're not long off the ark when sin pervades God's people once again. By Gen 11, the people are formulating a plan to build a city and a tower that will make their name great so they won't be dispersed over the face of the whole earth (vs 4) – in direct opposition to the cultural mandate to fill the earth. God comes down and scatters them and out of this scattering, He chooses one man, Abraham to carry God's name forth to the world – God says, I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. (man wanted to make their name great for selfish motives, God makes a name great to bless others) – the rest of the Bible is an outworking of this promise to Abraham

Abraham & the Nation of Israel (Genesis 12 – Joshua)

- Through Abraham God promises to restore His Kingdom – God's people (Abraham and his descendants) in God's place (Canaan) under God's rule & blessing...Abraham was accepted by God not because of his own merit or goodness but because of his faith in the promises of God – this is true of us as well, our only hope for salvation is to believe and hope in the gospel
- We have Abraham (God's people) in God's place (leaving his home to go to the land God would show him) but we have no heir at this point in the story. God had promised him descendants as numerous as the stars, yet no children have been born to him. Sarah, Abraham's wife is barren. In fact, we see this theme of barrenness play out in the following generations as well with Isaac & Rebekah, and Jacob & Rachel – yes, we're waiting for the promised Seed but He will always and only come as a miraculous provision of God.
- God had been clear to Abraham, Sarah would be the one to bear a child. Finally, at 90 years old, Sarah gives birth to Isaac, the son of the promise. Isaac grows and marries Rebekah. Isaac knows the promise God made to his father, that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars and yet Isaac hasn't produced an heir either. He prays to God. God hears and Rebekah conceives twins. God tells Rebekah that the older will serve the younger – God had chosen Jacob, not the firstborn Esau, through whom to build His nation. As a result, rivalry between the brothers ensues and when Jacob deceives his father Isaac for the blessing of the firstborn, Jacob is forced to flee the land. As a result, God's people are no longer in God's place.
- Jacob settles in the land of his grandfather Abraham and after being deceived himself by his uncle, Jacob ends up with 2 wives and 2 concubines through whom the nation of Israel will be built. Jealous rivalry ensues between his wives as they compete for his affections through childbearing. 12 sons are born to Jacob and this rivalry and division is passed on to them. Things aren't looking good for the people of God, but eventually Jacob, dealing with jealousy and deceit from both his father in law and his wives, decides enough is enough and moves his family back to the promised land. God's people are back in God's place, so, are one of the 12 the promised Seed?
- But things don't seem to be better in God's place. Jealous rivalry, conniving and deceit continue amongst Jacob's sons and they band together to sell the favored son Joseph into slavery. The brothers tell their father Jacob that Joseph was killed by wild animals but in actuality he's taken to Egypt. In Egypt, Joseph works as a slave where he's unjustly put in prison after being falsely accused of a crime he didn't commit. Joseph continues to serve God faithfully and God blesses him – is he the one? Again, through the hand of God we see Joseph rise from prisoner to second in command at the right hand of Pharaoh. God sends a famine over the land but God reveals this to Joseph ahead of time so he can prepare for it and save Egypt and the surrounding nations. Because Egypt is the only place where there is food, Joseph's brothers must come to him for food. They don't recognize Joseph but he recognizes them and after a series of tests to see if their character has changed, Joseph reveals himself to them

and moves his father Jacob and the rest of the family to Egypt. Once again, God's people (Jacob and his sons and their families) are living outside of God's place (they're in Egypt, not Canaan).

- Before his death, Jacob blesses each of his 12 sons and indicates through prophecy from God that the coming King will be through the line of Judah, the line of the kings (Gen 49:10).
- After 400 years of slavery in Egypt, God raises up another son to lead His people back to the promised land. Moses, through the workings of God, is an Israelite child raised in the palace of the Egyptian King (Pharaoh) yet when he grows up he leaves his life of royalty because he identifies and sympathizes with the Israelite slaves. God uses Moses to reveal the person and character of God to the people, both the Israelites and Egyptians but Pharaoh's heart is hard and he won't let God's people go. God warns that because Pharaoh won't let God's firstborn son (the nation of Israel) go, God will kill the firstborn of all those who aren't protected by the blood of the Lamb (Ex 12). Once again, God's judgement comes to those who are disobedient to His command yet He again provides a way of escape (deliverance from death) for His faithful followers.
- God leads the people through Moses, out of Egypt and into the desert, on the way to the promised land. He leads them to Mount Sinai where He gives them His law (the order is important – God reveals Himself and rescues His people first and then gives them the Law, His love comes first, He doesn't love because we obey, we obey because He loves us) – read in the context of the whole story, the laws become more than a list of dos and don'ts and more than how to be a good morale person. God is holy and perfect and pure. Unholy man (all of us are sinful) cannot dwell in the presence of a holy God and live (Ex 33:20) so God makes a provision through His law for unholy man to dwell in the presence of our holy God – His laws reveal His love for us and His desire for us to dwell with Him. But God's people can't keep His law (remain under His rule) and so another provision must be made.
- God gives detailed instructions to Moses for the building of His dwelling place (the Tabernacle – the place where God would dwell with man, symbolizes God's presence (blessing) with His people) and He also outlines the blood sacrifices needed to cover their sin (since the Garden, the shedding of blood has been the only covering for sin) – these sacrifices point forward to a better sacrifice to come (Heb 10:4,19-22). Again, things look good for a while – though not in His place, Exodus 40:34-35 shows us that God's presence and blessing was with His people in the wilderness. "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."
- But the people soon disobeyed God again, failing to trust that He would go before them into the Promised Land and as a result they forgo God's blessing/presence. In His judgement God sentences them to 40 years in the wilderness. Once again, God's people are not in His place, nor under His rule & blessing.
- Deuteronomy ends with Moses' death – As the people prepare to enter the Promised Land God speaks to them again (Deut 10:12-13, 28:9-10, 15, 64) and lays before them two ways – obedience & blessing vs disobedience & judgement. God raises Joshua up to succeed him. Joshua is the one who will finally lead the people into the Promised Land to subdue and settle it. Even though they don't follow God's instructions here perfectly, God's people, once again, find themselves in God's place (the promised land) under His rule & blessing.

Judges (Judges, Ruth)

- The period of the Judges follows Joshua's death. The people are settled in the Promised Land but they failed to dispossess the nations living in the land and those nations have influenced the Israelites in such a way that they no longer resemble or image God but resemble the Canaanite nations instead. They've disobeyed God's commands and serve and worship foreign gods instead of the one true God. Just as God had warned the people, judgement falls on them because of their actions and the people cry out to God in their affliction. God hears and raises up a judge to defeat the attacking enemy and restore the people to God but this lasts only until the death of the judge in which case the cycle starts all over again. Throughout the book of Judges we hear the recurring phrase..."In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Judges 21:25 God's people are once again defining good and evil for themselves instead of trusting God to decide good and evil for them and we see God's people in God's place but living outside His rule & blessing.

- The book of Judges sets the reader up to long for a better leader, a king who would rule justly and righteously (the Judges are all short-term, flawed saviors.) God had always planned for His people to be lead by a King – we see it hinted at in Gen 3:15 (the seed who would crush the serpent...a symbol of a great warrior/king), Gen 49:10 (Jacob’s blessing to Judah), Deut 17:14-20 (God gives detailed instructions on how a king should rule over His people) but “the king was not to be an authority separate from God, but would rule under God, submitting to him and his law...God rules in his kingdom by means of a king.” Vaughan Roberts, God’s Big Picture
- Samuel is the last Judge to rule over Israel. He served God faithfully throughout his life but when he appoints his sons, who do not serve God, as judges in his place the people cry out for a king to rule them. The request in and of itself isn’t bad but the motive behind the request is. The people want a king like the other nations – they want a king in place of God. They reject God as their authority and King and once again decide for themselves what is best. God grants their request.

Kings (Samuel, Kings, Chronicles) & Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah)

- Saul was the king after the people’s heart – he was what they wanted in a king. The people looked at external appearances and saw Saul was more handsome than any other and a head taller than all the people – they thought these characteristics would make a great king, they thought nothing of his character. The nation is not blessed during Saul’s reign because Saul persistently disobeys God and God finally rejects him as King and chooses David to sit on the throne instead.
- David was a king after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14) – the kind of king God wanted His people to have, but even though David was anointed by God, his succession to the throne was not easy. He lived for years on the run from King Saul who sought to kill David in jealousy. After the death of Saul and his sons David becomes King in Saul’s place. Those of you who know the story of David may question how he was a man after God’s own heart when he did so many sinful things: He took another man’s wife and had her husband killed when he found out she was pregnant, his home life was a mess, and yet we continue to see him repent of his sin and desire to be faithful to God – David didn’t seek to rule Israel independently from God as Saul did, but genuinely sought to rule under God’s authority and direction and God blessed the people through him as a result. The Israelites might have wondered here if David was the one they had been waiting for – the one who would crush the serpent? But God tells David and the people that there is still one greater to come. 2 Sam 7:8-16 – God promises a son of David who will build a house for God’s name, and God will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
- In David’s son Solomon we see God raise up a king in the wisdom of Christ (1 Kings 3:12) who rules wisely and brings security and prosperity to the land. Solomon builds the temple – a permanent symbol of God’s dwelling with man. It seems that all the promises of God have been fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come: God’s people are as numerous as the sand on the seashore/stars in the sky; they are in God’s place (Solomon ruled over the whole of the promised land; they are enjoying God’s rule & blessing (1 Kings 8:56). But it’s not long before we see things fall apart. Solomon marries many foreign wives and he begins to worship their gods. For David’s sake, God delays his judgment until Solomon dies but when his son Rehoboam comes to the throne, the nation of Israel divides into the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah).
- Israel very quickly descends into idolatry and disobedience turning their back on God and His ways. God send prophets to warn the people to repent of their ways and turn back to God or destruction and judgement would come but the people refuse to listen. The prophets remind the people that they are to be God’s people, living in God’s place under God’s rule and enjoying His blessing – they explained the people were being punished for their sin. But the people didn’t repent, so in 722 BC the Assyrians conquer Israel and take the people into captivity.
- Judah has some faithful kings but eventually they turn their backs on God too and though God sends prophets (Isaiah & Jeremiah) to warn them that if they don’t repent and turn back to God, He will send the Babylonians to conquer them and take them into exile, they don’t listen either and so in 586 BC God executes His judgement on the people through the nation of Babylon and as a final blow to the nation, the temple is destroyed.

- The storyline of the Bible primarily follows the history of Judah, the southern kingdom from this point forward because, if you remember, the promised One is to come through the line of Judah.

Exile & Prophets (Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah)

- God in His love and mercy, offers hope to His people showing them that He is with them in exile and giving them an end date – they would be in exile for 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10-14, 16:14-15). He gives them instructions on how to live as exiles in a foreign land (Jeremiah 29:4-7). And to a people who wondered how they would ever get right with God again, who wondered if God would ever be faithful to them again, He promised a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). God also promised a new temple, greater than the first (Ezekiel 40-48)

Return to Jerusalem & Rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Esther)

- God's people are once again scattered and living outside His place. God raises up the Persian nation to conquer Babylon and where Babylon's policy towards captives was to remove them from their place, Persia allowed the captives to remain in their own land. As a result, Persia allowed the exiled Jews who wanted to, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the nation.
- Only a small number of exiles return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Those returning have the foretold prophetic hopes in mind: a future Messianic King, God's presence in a rebuilt temple, God's kingdom to reign over all the nations and bring forth His blessing.
- Ezra returns approx. 60 years after Zerubbabel to teach the Torah and rebuild the community. And Nehemiah returns after that and leads the people in the rebuilding of the walls of the city but all who return face great opposition. Eventually the temple is rebuilt but to wailing and despair – it has none of the glory and splendor of the former temple. God's Shekinah glory does not descend on this temple as it had on the former one leaving the people with an emptiness and waiting: there had to be more... this points us forward to Christ, Immanuel, God with us.
- The people however do confess their sin, and vow obedience to God's law yet very quickly the people fall into disobedience once again, neglecting the temple and dishonoring the Sabbath – even though Israel is back in the land, their spiritual state seems unchanged from before their exile – the people need a new heart (like Ezekiel (36) and Jeremiah (31) prophesied), those who returned showed they were just as corrupt as their ancestors had been (injustice prevailed), and their hearts were just as hard.

Waiting (Malachi & The Intertestamental Period)

- Malachi 4:4-6 summarizes the Law (Torah) and the Prophets as a unified story that points to the future, and he wants the people to know and remember it.
- God once again promises to send a new Moses & Elijah to restore God's people and heal their hard hearts...one day God would send a messenger and then show up personally to confront evil, restore His people, and bring His healing justice.
- Then the people wait, during 400 years of silent, as a faithful few watch and hope for the Promised Seed that they know is coming.