

The Bible as a Story, His Story

Romans 8: 18-25,

Well friends, we're now past the half-way mark on our Road trip thru the bible. And each week as I've been quizzing you on what we've learned you are showing excellent progress. So as usual we'll start out with some review –

There are three claims the bible makes about itself
Its Inspired, Infallible, Its about Salvation through Christ

Then we looked at the different kinds of literature in the OT. And the NT and discovered that there is Narrative, Poetry, Law, Prophecy and Wisdom in the OT and Gospel, Epistle and Apocalyptic in the NT.

Then we looked at some pictures in the OT of how God promised to save the world, and saw the ways in the NT which showed how Jesus fit those pictures.

The Serpent Stomper from Genesis 3 – God says to Eve that one of her descendent will crush the head of the serpent – He will destroy the devil and we saw how Jesus did this in the NT

by resisting the temptation in the desert, by casting out demons, and through his death and resurrection.

Then we saw the picture of the Lamb of God – starting with the Passover, when Israel was delivered from Egypt and was spared from the judgment by the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

We saw in the NT how Jesus became the Lamb of God in offering himself as a sacrifice, and how the Lord's supper now takes the place of the Passover.

And we looked at the picture of the Prince of Peace from the prophet Zechariah, a prince who would ride on a donkey – and we saw how NT shows Jesus doing this when he rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

So we learned how the OT and the NT fit together, how they are related to each other, but... the big questions for us is how does the bible fit into our lives? How does it relate to us?

Well it gives us rules to live by, tells us what is right and wrong, we always say Scripture is the only rule for faith and life – and that is true.

But if you really want to understand how the bible relates to us and our lives and the reality we live in then we need to understand that the Bible is a story – God’s story about reality, the reality in which we live, and work and play.

But seeing the bible as a story that describes reality can create some problems for us because it challenges our perception of reality in terms of what we experience.

And some of those pictures we looked seem to make promises and statements about our world that perhaps aren’t true.

- If Jesus was the serpent stomper who defeated the Devil how come there are still Satanists, voodoo, spiritualists and so much evidence of the occult and evil around today?

- If Jesus was the Lamb of God why don’t I feel confident that what I’ve done wrong is really forgiven? Why do I still struggle with feelings of guilt when I repeatedly commit the same sin over and over
- If Jesus was the Prince of Peace why is there still war in this world, why do I have conflict with my family members? Why are their church splits?

Friends we need to acknowledge that there is a discrepancy between some of what we read in the bible in terms of promises and what Jesus is supposed to do, and what we see and experience going on around us every day.

Do you ever experience this in your own life? Many other people do as well. In fact that is why many Jews do not accept Jesus as the promised Messiah – they say look around you, does this look like the world the messiah would bring in as foretold by the prophets? Jesus can’t be the messiah.

And it’s important that we address this discrepancy because we live in an extremely pragmatic age. We look for results to

verify something, in fact that's part of what we've been encouraged to do in this series, right? – to put the claims of the bible to the test.

So as we do that and we notice this discrepancy between the world we observe and the promises which the bible gives us about who Jesus is and what he will accomplish we need to know “what's up with that?”

So friends here's the answer – “we live in the time between times” That is to say we live in the time period between Christ's first coming and his second coming. We live in the time between Redemption and the New Creation.

And we know we live in between these times because in addition to giving us promises about how God plans to save the world, and how Jesus fulfills that, the bible also gives us a timeline of how that is going to work out.

The bible offers us God's view of history – and in reality what has happened since the beginning of time is really His Story,

and friends, we need to understand that we are living in God's story.

Now, how is this going to help us resolve the tension that we experience with the discrepancy between what is promised in scripture and what we see around us or experience in our own lives?

Well let's go through the story and I'll show you.

Here are its four main chapters – Creation, Fall, Redemption and New Creation. And a brief summary of the story would go something like this...

In the beginning God created everything, it was good, harmonious, and humanity was given the task of developing the creation by the creator and they had a free and uninhibited relationship with each other and God. But then...Eve was deceived by the Devil and she and Adam disobeyed and rebelled against God – they fell out of their harmonious relationship with God, each other and the creation – and sin became a reality – affecting their relationship with God

alienating them from Him, warping the creation and each other so that hurt and sickness and death would be the result.

But, God promised redemption – to overturn the results of the fall in his creation that was once good. He promised to make it good again.

So finally after many many years, Redemption was accomplished by sending His Word to become flesh – Jesus Christ became a man, offered his life as a perfect sacrifice for sin and through his life and death and resurrection restored the relationship between God, humans and the creation.

And when Christ ascended to heaven to claim his position as ruler of the Creation, he promised that He would return one day and at that time all things would be made new – there will be a New Heavens and Earth, free of sickness, death and suffering and all who have confessed Christ as Lord and Ruler and have been forgiven by him will live forever in the New Creation.

Isn't that an amazing story! And friends its true and we live in it – we live in the time between times – between Redemption and New Creation.

That's how a Christian views history – by the important events which have happened in God's plan to save the world.

So what about the discrepancies? Well let me ask you a question – can something be a circle and a rectangle at the same time?

A cylinder is – depending on the angle you view it from. When we read the bible, many years after the people who were inspired by God to write the various books in it, and many years after the Holy Spirit guided the church to compile these different books together as the scriptures we are getting the rectangle view of the cylinder.

That is to say we see the linear view of the timeline – starting at the beginning and moving left to right towards the end – with all the dates in between.

But when the people who were inspired to write the scriptures received these revelations from God, often times – and especially when it concerned promises about Jesus Christ – like the pictures we looked at – Serpent Stomper, Lamb of God, Prince of Peace they saw the circle part of the cylinder-

So when we read about these pictures in the bible we need to understand that they are layered pictures seen from a “head-on” perspective.

Like when we look out towards the mountains – we see a layered perspective – our front parking lot, some hills in the distance, the higher foothills and then the mountains. And we have no clue really how much distance is in between each layer until we turn it and look at it sideways, in a crosscut fashion and then we see there are spaces in between in each layer.

It works the same way with the promises about Jesus and what we can expect to experience in our lives because of that.

The picture of the serpent stomper show us a head-on view of Jesus destroying the devil – but if we turn this picture sideways we see what we will experience over time.

In Redemption Jesus dealt a death blow to Satan – his blood covers over our sin so that Satan can no longer accuse us before God, but the New Creation hasn’t arrived yet, so Satan is still around – he’s not yet been destroyed and until that day comes he will accuse us to our faces, not to God, but to us trying to get us to not believe that we have been forgiven, opposing what we do for God’s kingdom, trying to get us to forget what Jesus accomplished in Redemption.

And friends, that why it’s so important that we frequently are reminded of the bible’s story and the significance of what has happened in it. Because in remembering what Christ accomplished in Redemption we have the weapons to fight back against Satan, we can resist his accusations of not being forgiven and he will flee from us.

Now this is just one example of how we live in the time between times and we need to understand what this means for how we are to live.

Are you with me – is this making sense to you?

What we are looking to understand is that the pictures in the bible which make promises about Jesus, and what he will do and the kind of world he will bring about are layered pictures – and looking at these layered pictures can sometimes lead us to expect “immediate” results in our own lives as Christians and in the world around us.

We can become discouraged or disillusioned because we believed the bible’s promises about Jesus defeating the devil, forgiving us and bringing peace. And we should... Jesus did that is true.

But understanding the bible is also the story of how our reality is developing and progressing from God’s perspective helps us understand that there is distance to travel between the different layers of the pictures and what is promised.

It is time that God gives us so that what Jesus accomplished can begin to express itself in our lives so that as the apostle

Paul says “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me”

So I hope you can see how understanding the story of the bible helps us to see how the bible relates to our lives, as it describes the reality we live in, and how this also helps us cope with the tension of living between Jesus’ first Coming and his second Coming, of living between Redemption and New Creation – of waiting for what Jesus accomplished to transform all of reality.

I hope you can see how these four chapters of the story Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation – are really the four most important events in the history of our world. That they are the cornerstone of the universe, they are the four points on the compass of truth and they are of ultimate significance –I hope you will allow them to shape your perspective on reality and guide you in it.

And I pray that we would be eager for Christ to return so that we can experience the New Creation as he has promised.

But friends, until Christ returns, I want to encourage you to read the story of reality - read your bible! so you're your anticipation and expectation grows. So you become more in touch with reality. Conversely the less familiar you are with the story of scripture, the less in touch with reality you are.

Reality as God has created it,
as it has been affected by the Fall into sin,
as it is being redeemed by the work of Christ
as we look forward to it being made New once again.

So that is your choice this morning, do you want to be in touch with reality? Amen.