

WHAT STORY ARE WE A PART OF?

THE BIBLE IN 5 THEMES



A FOLLOW-UP TO THE BIBLE IN 10 FRAMES



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WHAT THE STORY IS NOT...

Having followed the movement of the Bible through 10 Frames, it's beneficial to reflect further on what kind of story it tells. This is especially important given the way the Bible has often been understood in a modern American context. For example, it's become common to think the Bible mainly tells a story that goes like this:

God's good. You're bad. You deserve punishment. But God punished Jesus instead, so you can go to heaven one day.

There are shreds of truth there, but that kind of story is put together with ideas that are quite foreign to the Bible. The building blocks of that story tend to have the following characteristics:

Transactional | Upon discovering oneself on the road to the bad place, a person makes a transaction with God in order to get to the good place. This emphasis tends to overshadow the relational nature of life with God, and it struggles to energize holy living and the pursuit of godly purpose.

Escapist | The main goal is to escape earth and go to heaven. However, the phrase "go to heaven" is never found in the Bible, and the Bible's picture of the world's ultimate destiny is a renewed heaven and earth. In the final vision heaven comes down TO earth, and in advance of that day believers are taught to pray for God's kingdom to come on earth as in heaven.

Individualistic | The emphasis is on God doing something for YOU, the Bible being written to YOU. But, while each person must decide how they will respond to God, and while faith is personal, it's not private, and it's not something that happens on your terms. The renewal of individual humans is set within God's comprehensive plan to renew all things and God's agency through the church community.

Dualist | This idea says heaven is "way up there," earth is down here, and they never meet. And it often assumes the Bible only cares about "spiritual" things. But the Bible describes creation as a heaven + earth reality. The union of heaven and earth was the original design, and it's the final destiny as God renews ALL things. Plus even now heaven is breaking into this aching world wherever Jesus' Spirit is present through his people.

Platonic | Plato was an ancient Greek philosopher who popularized a division between the body and the soul. The soul is good, the body is bad, a prison from which we need to be freed. This idea is transported to the Bible, envisioning our souls floating off to “heaven.” But while the Bible warns against being driven by “fleshy” desires, our bodies and souls are integrated, and bodily resurrection is integral to God’s redeeming work.

Much more could be said about all of this, but these snapshots are hopefully enough to cause us to freshly consider: what story does the Bible tell? Yes, it’s one in which God is good and loving, humans are plagued by sin, and Jesus is God’s solution. But the Bible packages these truths within a story that is much bigger and much more compelling than the one often told today.

Let’s look more deeply into the story...

5 THEMES THAT TELL THE STORY

Set aside the 5 ideas above and consider how these 5 overlapping themes clarify what the story is all about. With a better understanding of the biblical story we can be better equipped to discover our place within it.



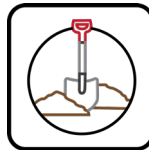
**CREATION/NEW
CREATION**



**IMAGE OF
GOD**



**KINGDOM
OF GOD**



VOCATION



COVENANT



CREATION + NEW CREATION

ARE YOU LONGING FOR A WHOLE NEW WORLD?

The Bible is a story that **BEGINS** with **CREATION**, **ENDS** with **NEW CREATION**, and in the **MIDDLE** Jesus is doing **NEW CREATION** stuff.

The resounding announcement of the Bible is that Creation was **GOOD** (see 1-Creation). And though humans were designed to multiply that goodness and help the world flourish, they have also vandalized God's world (see 2-Rebellion). As wondrous as creation is, the cultivation of evil has led to de-creation and degradation. But throughout the story of the Bible, God is still creating anew and still filling the world with goodness. The promise to Abraham that all nations will be blessed is a new creation project (see 3-Abraham). God de-creates the oppressive Egyptian empire through 10 plagues and then re-creates his people to be his representatives in the world (see 4-Exodus). Jesus comes to set people free from evil and oppression and then himself is freed from the power of death as the first sign of new creation breaking into this vandalized world (see 8-Jesus). All of this is in advance of God's promised new creation when evil is defeated for good (see 10-New Creation).

We find our place in the story when we allow God to remake us as new creatures, living now as signs of new creation and longing for the renewal of all things.



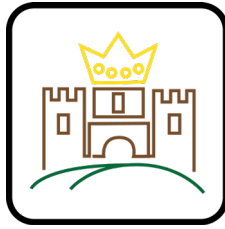
IMAGE OF GOD

ARE YOU LONGING TO KNOW YOUR IDENTITY AND VALUE?

The Bible is a story that **BEGINS** with humans made in the **IMAGE OF GOD**, **ENDS** with redeemed humans remade in the **IMAGE OF GOD**, and in the **MIDDLE** Jesus comes as the true **IMAGE OF GOD**.

“Image” in the Bible is the word for a “statue” that would stand in the middle of a temple as the representation of the god to whom the temple belonged. The Bible portrays all of creation as God’s temple with humans as the images who are set in place so that the influence of the Creator God can be felt in the world (see 1-Creation). This is what it means to be human. It’s striking to discover that **ALL** humans—not just the powerful or good-looking—are God’s image bearers. Humans have not always used this remarkable authority for good. The image has been distorted as a result of our rebellion, for we have all gone the way of Adam and Eve, and creation groans as a result (see 2-Rebellion). Yet the good news is that though “in Adam all die, so in Christ, all are made alive!” (1 Cor 15:22; see 8-Jesus). Our renewal in Christ’s image is part of God’s renewal of all creation (see 10-New Creation).

We find our place in the story when we allow Jesus to remake us into his image and so become fully alive and truly human, extending Jesus’ influence in the world.



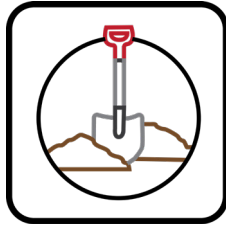
KINGDOM OF GOD

ARE YOU LONGING FOR JUSTICE AND
ORDER TO LIFE'S CHAOS?

The Bible is a story that **BEGINS** with humans **RULING** with God over creation, **ENDS** with remade humans **REIGNING** with Jesus in the New Creation, and in the **MIDDLE** Jesus comes to bring the **RULE (KINGDOM)** of God on earth.

The ideas of “ruling” and “subduing” often trigger negative ideas of oppression. And the humans God trusted to rule are guilty of such things (see 2-Rebellion & 6-Exile). But when someone with power acts in love and wisdom to bring order and justice, everyone flourishes. That’s why it’s “good news” that God’s kingdom came near through Jesus (see 8-Jesus). God’s kingdom doesn’t look anything like the way that the rest of the kingdoms and influencers in the world operate. Acquiring political power, seizing control, dominating others, building fame... Jesus doesn’t rule the world like that. And when we know Jesus, we are able to fulfill our God-given calling to rule with Jesus and like Jesus. As Jesus reigns over our lives, we reign in Jesus’ name through self-sacrificing love. As Jesus puts us in order, we, through the Spirit, bring order and justice and beauty to the world. In that way we become truly human, and the church fulfills its purpose (see 9-Church).

We find our place in the story when we become citizens of a new kingdom, joining with the rest of the church to pray and work for God’s kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.



VOCATION

ARE YOU LONGING TO KNOW YOUR PURPOSE?

The Bible is a story that **BEGINS** with humans given a **VOCATION** (multiply and rule), **ENDS** with remade humans given a **VOCATION** (reign with Jesus), and in the **MIDDLE** Jesus comes to fulfill the **VOCATION** we failed to do.

The purpose given to humans endures from the first page of the Bible to the last—to rule in partnership with God (see 1-Creation & 10-New Creation). And because humans fail dramatically and continually to live out this calling, God acts dramatically and continually to reinstate them. All throughout the Bible, God saves his people so they can fulfill their purpose. **SALVATION** leads to **VOCATION**. God provides salvation for his people in Exodus 12-15 in order to charge them with their vocation as God’s “royal priesthood” in Exodus 19 (see 4-Exodus). Peter says the church has this same vocation (1 Peter 2:9-10; see 9-Church). Revelation praises Jesus, “who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (salvation) and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father” (vocation). Likewise, in Ephesians 2, Paul summarizes the impact of Jesus in 4 moves: (1) we were dead in our sins, (2) but God saved us (salvation), (3) now we’re alive as God’s handiwork, (4) so we can do good (vocation).

We find our place in the story when we are set free by Jesus in order to embrace our purpose of doing good in Jesus’ name.



COVENANT

ARE YOU LONGING TO CONNECT WITH GOD?

The Bible is a story that **BEGINS** with humans in a special **PARTNERSHIP** with God, **ENDS** with redeemed humans in a renewed **PARTNERSHIP** with God, and in the **MIDDLE** Jesus comes to secure that **PARTNERSHIP**.

The God of the Bible continues to make promises to sustain and renew the world, partnering with humans to do it. Several specific partnerships, called covenants, are mentioned throughout the Bible—with Noah, Abraham (see 3-Abraham), Israel (see 4-Exodus), and David (see 5-David). In response to God’s promises, humans are asked to make commitments that will lead to their own flourishing and ultimately the flourishing of the whole world. God shows his willingness to work with even just one in order to bless many. While God remains faithful to his promises throughout the sad history of his covenant people (see 6-Exile), only Jesus perfectly keeps his commitments (see 8-Jesus). As a result of the “new covenant” in Jesus, the special partnership God desires can be experienced by all people. This is pictured in the final scenes of the Bible where all nations gather, and “God will be their God, and they will be his people” (Revelation 21:6; see 10-New Creation).

We find our place in the story when we form a special relationship with God through Jesus, so we can be part of God’s efforts to form a special relationship (covenant) with the whole world.

5 THEMES SUMMARY THROUGH THE 10 FRAMES

TEN FRAMES	CREATION/NEW CREATION	IMAGE OF GOD
1. CREATION	God creates order from non-order by naming and separating	Humans created “after the God kind,” unique of all of creation.
2. REBELLION	God re-creates: Disorder → Non-order → Re-Order	Human image tarnished by sin/death
3. ABRAHAM	God is creating a family for His purposes	The patriarchs become more like the One to whom they are devoted
4. EXODUS	God creates a new community, bringing them through the waters of chaos	Created to bear God’s image to the world but they worship images
5. DAVID	God is creating a nation for His purposes	The king as a shining picture of God’s image but the image is tarnished
6. EXILE	Creation seems to have turned into chaos	God’s people end up resembling the image of every other nation
7. PROMISE	One day God will make a new heavens and new earth	Are we still God’s people?
8. JESUS	New Creation begins with Jesus’ incarnation and resurrection	Jesus is the perfect image of God and models what it means to be truly human
9. CHURCH	The church forms hotspots of New Creation to take God’s purposes forward	Jesus followers are remade into the image of Christ by the power of the Spirit
10. NEW CREATION	New heavens & new earth fully arrive; no more “sea” of evil/chaos; all things new!	Humans are resurrected into new, incorruptible bodies for the new creation

KINGDOM OF GOD	VOCATION	COVENANT
"Have dominion," "be fruitful," "create"	Take care of the garden, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth	Living in Eden with God (relationship & responsibility)
Humans rebel against God's dominion and try to rule through their own wisdom	Humans multiply evil instead of being fruitful	God's relationship with humans is changed (shame, fear, deceit...)
One family vs. the kingdoms of the world	An Israelite man (Joseph) rescues a pagan nation (Egypt)	Covenant is promised, established, and expanded
God's people are supposed to serve the world as a Kingdom of priests	The community is rescued so they can represent God to the world	The Covenant instituted and sealed with blood (Exod. 24)
Promise of everlasting King and kingdom	The King as model representative of God on earth (e.g., Psalm 72)	God maintains the covenant through thick and thin
Where is God in this kingdom?	Get on with living life (Jer. 29:4-10), and that will be your "light" (Isa. 49:6)	God's covenant will require exile
Awaiting the return of the King	Where do we go from here?	The prophets bring hope of the covenant still in effect
The Kingdom of God is at hand!	Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation to draw all nations to God	The New Covenant implemented and sealed with the blood of Jesus
The Kingdom of God lived out as God is King and Jesus is Lord for believers	"Follow me!" "As the Father has sent me, so I send y'all!" "Y'all will be my witnesses!"	The promised New Covenant in action through Spirit- empowered believers
The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, & He shall reign forever!	We are the priestly kingdom to continue God's missional purposes	The New Covenant in its fullness; God comes to dwell with humans



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