

## *“The Story’s Subject Matter”*

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths © 2008 - [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org)  
November 30, 2008

The Bible is a story. It is a story from which all other stories find their substance. Words such as epic, larger-than-life, and classic find their source in this one story. Folklore and mythology all find their soil in the Bible. It would be erroneous to think of the Bible as folklore or mythological. The Bible is the true standard from which all deviations and distortions originally flowed. It is a story of a Creator who acts, an Author who writes, a King who rules, and a Hero who wins. It contains villains, war, defeat and victory.

Often we read the Bible as if it was not a story or as if it were a poorly written story. I have read many books over the years, and all the good ones have a single plot with many different sub-plots contributing to the one story. I just finished reading *SHOGUN*. James Clavell wrote the work in 1975. It has various characters such as Blackthorne, Toranaga, Ishido, Mariko, etc. Yet with all of the various sub-plots, the story is singular. Everything James Clavell places in the story contributes to the final end. This same idea rings true with J.R.R. Tolkien’s classic work, *The Lord of the Rings*.

Inside the story of God there are five parts or ideas unfolding the person and purpose of God. It is God’s person and purpose that provide the subject matter or theme of the story. **First**, God existed before the story. He wrote the story (Gen. 1:1, 31). **Second**, the stage in which the story will be told is creation. **Third**, in the story the primary character is God. **Fourth**, the secondary character is humanity. **Fifth**, the story has four distinct chapters. To present the various chapters they will be noted with bullet points.

- Preparation in Type/Shadow (Genesis – Malachi)
  - Creation is for His Glory – The Power of God
  - Transgression is for His Glory – The Mystery of God  
Evil (i.e., the villain) will be used to further the story.
  - Condemnation is for His Glory – The Justice of God  
The response of God to evil will further the story’s subject matter.
  - Redemption is for His Glory – The Grace of God  
These four ideas (i.e., creation, transgression, condemnation, redemption) will appear in various forms throughout the one story.
- Arrival in Antitype/Substance (The Gospels)  
The hero who was foretold through prophecy and picture will appear.
- Continuation by means of Gathering (Acts – Jude)  
The hero’s mission will continue in His absence.
- Continuation by means of Consummation (Revelation)  
The story will find its conclusion with all creation either in fellowship with God or banned from His presence.

The story uses the imagery of a ruler, reign, and realm context where the king enters into covenant with His subjects (Dan. 4:34, 35; Luke 1:31-33; Mark 1:14, 15; Acts 28:30, 31; Rev.

12:10). The Creator rules over that which He created and the created exists in obedience to the Creator.

All of creation and all of Scripture speak to two ideas: the person of God and the purpose of God. Because of who He is (i.e., the person of God) and what He does (i.e., the purpose of God), He is to receive glory. All that He is and all that He does is from Him, through Him, and for Him. There is nothing outside of Him that does not fulfill this end. **God's activities are part of this one purpose.** God as King reigns over all things created. This reign is expressed through various stages or periods of time. For example,

- Prior to the fall of mankind, His reign was immediate and direct without any necessary mediation.
- After the fall of mankind and through the flood, His reign over all of mankind will start being mediated through select agents beginning with Abraham.
- With the selection of Abraham, God's reign comes through a single family.
- The reign of God will go from a patriarchal system to a prophet/judge selection to a monarchy.
- Inside the family, an individual son will be progenitor to a blood line. The reign of God will shift from being tribal to that of being a distinct blood line. The reign of God will go from being mediated through a patriarchal structure to that of a monarchy.
- The monarchy will be Judaic and Davidic. Through David's line comes the Messiah through whom God's mediation will find its ultimate expression.
- In the church, God is gathering for Himself a bride and to Himself worshippers from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.
- From our present place in history, the events that are yet future (i.e., Tribulation, Millennium, and Eternal State) are parts of one whole. **They are neither disconnected nor in conflict.**

The entire Bible tells this one story. I do not believe it is only creation in general or biblical revelation in particular that tells this story. I believe each of our lives in all of its facets, whether religious or routine is a part of this story and is telling this story. There is no part that is not contributing to this story. It is always about who God is, what He has done, and who His people are in Him. Because I believe this to be true, I do not believe any of life is wasted, and that somehow all of life has meaning to the story no matter how delightful or damaging, no matter how pleasurable or painful, no matter how scheduled or surprising.

All of us who grew up in a Christian home are familiar with the stories of the Bible: The creation of all things by God, the fall of mankind into sin, the flood of Noah, the defeat of Goliath, the birth of Jesus, and His resurrection from the dead. Although we know the pieces, it is seldom the various pieces are placed together in their proper order or theological context.

We rarely see the connection between the stories. Often we fail to see the overarching purpose behind all of it. Our intent is to grasp the storyline of Scripture and to see God working out His will flawlessly for His glory.

The stories of the Bible are not randomly selected. Each one is intentionally placed. Each story contributes to two primary ideas. The first is the person of God and the second is the purpose of God. And although we speak of “two ideas” there is really only one and it is God. **The Scripture does not record everything knowable only what we need to know.** This statement is vital in our understanding of the Bible. What the Bible says is true, yet it does not speak exhaustively on any subject. We cannot fully comprehend all there is to know of God or our own wickedness. The height of one and the depth of the other elude us. Our finite existence cannot fully comprehend the magnitude of either. Because of this inability we can neither appreciate the delight of God or the horror of our rebellion against Him.

Inside the larger thoughts of creation, transgression, condemnation, and redemption there is a definable progression. The following six bullet points show us the unfolding of this progression.

- The Subject Matter of the Story - The Person and Purpose of God
- The Presence of Evil
- The Promise of a Deliverer
- The Seed of the Woman
- The Victory of God
- The Mission of God in the Mission of the Church

Perhaps **the most important point** to remember in studying the storyline of the Bible is that it is Christ-centered. Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, is the hero of the story. The storyline has meaning only as it is sourced in and flows from Christ. The storyline when studied apart from Christ is hollow and will ultimately become a distraction. **Today’s tragedy is that we have made the Bible into a series of independent and unconnected stories** that can stand alone. The problem inside the storyline of Scripture is not the fall or sin’s existence, but rather our failure to affirm His person and purpose. It matters not whether we are unbelievers or believers; the failure is in not affirming who He is and what He does. As we read the Bible, let us not forget that it is a story with a singular idea: God. This God speaks and acts. He writes the story and creates the context in which the story will be told. Nothing existing today is outside of this story. Your life is part of His story. Do not believe for one second that you are outside of His control or care. Our responsibility, our act, is to affirm Him as the author of our lives.