

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org).

**Date:** November 30, 2008

**Title:** The Storyline of the Bible - The Person and Purpose of God

**Text:** Genesis 1:1, 31; Daniel 4:34, 35; Luke 1:31-33; Mark 1:14, 15; Acts 28:30, 31; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 12:10

**Theme:** The Bible is the unfolding of God’s purpose and person for creation in general and for His people in particular.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

## The Storyline of the Bible

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 Theme: The Bible is the unfolding of God’s purpose and person for creation in general and for His people in particular.

Over the next eight weeks, I would like us to consider the story of Scripture. Our attempt will be to view the Bible from a panoramic perspective. It will be to gather the largest wide-angle representation possible of who God is and what He is doing and where this leads us as subjects under His rule. Our subject matter is provoked by the onset of Advent.

Advent (from the Latin word **adventus**, meaning "coming") is a season of the Christian church, the period of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus, in other words, the period immediately before Christmas. It is the beginning of the Western Christian year and commences on Advent Sunday. Latin **adventus** is the translation of the Greek word **parousia**, commonly used in reference to the Second Coming. Christians believe that the season of Advent serves a dual reminder of the original waiting that was done by the Hebrews for the birth of their Messiah as well as the waiting that Christians today endure as they await the second coming of Christ. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advent>

We have been in the Gospel of Mark. Mark is an intentional part of the Bible’s story. Sometimes we read the Bible as if it was not a story, or as if it is a story poorly written. 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 class work, The Lord of the Rings.

There are five parts or ideas to this story.

First, God existed before the story. He wrote the story.

Second, the stage in which the story will be told is creation.

Third, the primary character is God.

Fourth, the secondary character is humanity.

Fifth, there are four chapters to the story.

- Preparation in Type/Shadow (Genesis – Malachi)
  - Creation
  - Fall
  - Redemption
  - Re-creation
- Arrival in Antitype/Substance (The Gospels)
- Continuation by means of Gathering (Acts – Jude)

- Continuation by means of Consummation (Revelation)
  - Eternal fellowship
  - Eternal separation

What I will argue is that the entire Bible tells this one story. There isn't any part that does not contribute to this story. I do not believe anything in any part of life falls outside of this one 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. 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.

I am fighting against a brush-pile approach to the study. There are multiple aspects to the study and it is like fighting a multi-appendage octopus. But I will attempt to keep things orderly and logical. Let us begin with the short statement in the Westminster Catechism.

**Introduction:**

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q1. What is the chief end of man?

A1. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

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, seldom are the various pieces placed together in their proper order or theological context.

We seldom see the connection between the stories. Often we fail to see the overarching purpose behind all of it. Our intent during this advent season is to help us 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. **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.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Nov. 30	<b>The Person and Purpose of God</b>
Dec. 7	“Now What?” - The Problem of Evil
Dec. 14	“Your Days Are Numbered” - The Promise of a Savior
Dec. 21	“What Child Is This?” - The Seed of the Woman - Part 1
Dec. 24	“What Child Is This?” - The Seed of the Woman - Part 2
Dec. 28	“Hallelujah, What a Savior” - The Victory of God
Jan. 4	“Where Do We Go From Here?” - The Mission of God in the Mission of the Church - Part 1
Jan. 11	“Where Do We Go From Here?” - The Mission of God in the Mission of the Church - Part 2

<sup>1</sup> “In the beginning **God created the heavens and the earth.** <sup>31</sup> God saw all that He had made, and behold, **it was very good.** And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (Gen. 1:1, 31).

<sup>34</sup> “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; **For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.** <sup>35</sup> All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But **He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?’**” (Dan. 4:34, 35).

<sup>31</sup> “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; <sup>33</sup> and **He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end**” (Luke 1:31-33).

<sup>14</sup> “Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, **‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’**” (Mark 1:14, 15).

<sup>30</sup> “And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, <sup>31</sup> **preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ** with all openness, unhindered” (Acts 28:30, 31).

<sup>19</sup> “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, **that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**” (Gal. 5:19-21).

<sup>10</sup> “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, **‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come,** for the

accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10).

**Its Eternal Value:**

Our passages this morning note how God created everything, and everything He created was very good, and how the idea of God as creator is unfolded in the Scripture in the imagery of a Kingdom.

**The Storyline:**

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 and what He does, 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.

When considering the storyline of the Bible it must be noted that the language of Scripture is couched in the structure of a kingdom setting. George Ladd correctly notes how, “The Hebrew-Christian faith expresses its hope in terms of the Kingdom of God.” (Ladd, *Gospel of Kingdom*, 14). **God does not have various programs. He has only one program. Everything that happens is directly or indirectly connected to this one program. In light of this, Kingdom truth operates on a continuum.**

George Ladd defines this kingdom idea with the following thought,

“**The Kingdom of God is God’s sovereign reign;** but God’s reign expresses itself in different stages through redemptive history. Therefore, men may enter into the realm of God’s reign in its several stages of manifestation and experience the blessings of His reign in differing degrees.” (Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 22).

Listen also to Francis Breisch,

“In choosing a theme for our study it is important that we look ahead to Christ and to the New Testament. We need a theme as a highway to direct our travel through the Old Testament. We want to follow one road, and we want to be sure that our road is the main highway that will lead us directly to Christ and the New Testament. **We find this highway in the theme, ‘The Kingdom of God.’ We will see in our study how this constitutes the main line of thought in the Old Testament.**” (Francis Breisch, Jr., *The Kingdom of God: A Guide for Old Testament Study*, c1958, 16).

Also consider Isaac Rottenberg,

“What term shall we use to express the manifold aspects of God’s gracious dealings with the world as well as the unity of the biblical vision concerning God’s future? **The Bible itself provides us with a comprehensive term for this purpose: gospel of the kingdom.** There are other ways in which the Bible

describes the message of redemption that has come to us: the gospel of God, the gospel of Christ, the gospel of reconciliation, and the gospel of grace. The term 'gospel of the kingdom,' however, helps to remind us of the broad cosmic and world-historical dimensions of the message of redemption." (Isaac C. Rottenberg, *The Promise and the Presence : Toward a Theology of the Kingdom of God*, 7).

**"From our survey in this section we conclude that the kingdom motif constitutes a unifying theme in the Scriptures."** "Yet, not only in the Psalms, but throughout the Old Testament, God's sovereign rule over the destiny of nations is confessed and proclaimed. The prophets broaden the vision of God's righteous reign to include not only the covenant people of Israel, but other nations as well." (Isaac C. Rottenberg, *The Promise and the Presence : Toward a Theology of the Kingdom of God*, 11).

**"The Kingdom of God is, in a certain and important sense, the grand central theme of all Holy Scripture."** (Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, c1968, 4, 5).

"It seems clear that, although there are several great theological themes in Scripture, **the central focus of biblical theology is the rule of God, the kingdom of God**, or the interlocking concepts of kingdom and covenant (but not covenant alone). This theocratic kingdom is realized and consummated primarily through the mediatorial work of God's (and David's messianic Son. Significantly, Ephesians 1:9-10 appears to indicate that God's ultimate purpose in creation was to establish His Son - the 'Christ' - as the supreme Ruler of the universe." (Kenneth L. Barker, "Forward," in *A Biblical Theology fo the Old Testament*, Dallas Theological Seminary Faculty, Roy B. Zuck, Editor [Moody, 1991]).

**God's activities are part of one purpose.** God as King reigns over all things created. That 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.**

“If, in the beginning, it seems strange to have a kingdom without a king, we must not forget that in this kingdom it is *God*, not man, who rules. And this theocratic rule could be, and was historically, mediated through divinely chosen leaders of various types, whether prophets or judges or kings. The important idea is not to be found in the titles these various leaders bore, but rather in their common function of *mediatorial* rule.” (Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, c1968, 52, 53).

Perhaps **the most important point** to remember in studying the storyline of the Bible is that it is to be Christ-centered. The storyline has meaning only as it is sourced in and flows from Christ. The storyline when studied apart from Christ is hollow and a distraction.

“The Bible is one book. Had we to give that book a title, we might with justice call it ‘The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God.’ That is, indeed, it’s central theme everywhere. In approving this affirmation we are not forgetting the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. For *He* is the King eternal, and there could be no final Kingdom apart from Him and His work as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, c1968, 4, 5).

Perhaps **today’s tragedy is that we have made the Bible into a series of independent and unconnected stories** that can stand alone and in so doing have unknowingly divided the body of Christ.

When speaking of Kingdom there are three fundamental parts.

**First**, we are to understand who the King is. God is King. Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, is the mediator who rules and reigns for the Godhead over all things created. Everything revealed is for the establishment of the Trinitarian reign over all things created through the mediation of the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ.

**Second**, we are to understand how the King reigns. The King reigns with an absolute authority. This authority is exhaustive and inclusive. All power and all people fall under His reign.

“The gospel of the kingdom opens up wide vistas, but it also keeps us focused on the heart of the matter: God-with-us – the sovereign Lord who through the initiative of his love is establishing his future in the world.” (Isaac C. Rottenberg, *The Promise and the Presence : Toward a Theology of the Kingdom of God*, 8).

“The primary meaning of both the Hebrew word **malkuth** in the Old Testament and of the Greek word **basileia** in the New Testament is the rank, authority and sovereignty exercised by a king.” (Ladd, *Gospel of Kingdom*, 19).

Ladd goes on to note three qualifiers.

- First of all, a kingdom is the authority to rule, the sovereignty of the king (19). The Kingdom of God is His kingship, His rule, His authority (21).
- However, a reign without a realm in which it is exercised is meaningless. Thus we find that the Kingdom of God is also the realm in which God’s reign may be experienced. (22) (Ladd, *Gospel of Kingdom*)

Often we find ourselves struggling with the idea of God’s rule in and through all things created. Our difficulty lies in trying to reconcile our sense of justice with all that is happening in the outworking of God’s purpose. Yet, no justification is necessary when God chooses to act. God rules and man either rebels or obeys. Either way, God wins.

Ladd continues,

“The Kingdom of God is basically the rule of God. It is God’s reign, the divine sovereignty in action. **God’s reign, however, is manifested in several realms**, and the Gospels speak of entering into the Kingdom of God both today and tomorrow. God’s reign manifests itself both in the future and in the present and thereby creates both a future realm and a present realm in which men may experience the blessings of His reign.” (George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, c1959, 24).

**Third**, we are to understand the sphere in which His rule is exercised. All things bow before Him.

Again, it cannot be stressed enough. The mission of His people is to shout the supremacy of God (i.e. His reign) in all things (i.e. His realm) by finding, celebrating, and declaring that He is enough (i.e. His ruler) in this life and in the life to come through the systematic study of the Scripture and to share Him with every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

### **The Problem:**

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 not affirming who He is and what He does.

### **Questions:**

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know God as creator and us as His creation.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to see Him as creator and us as His creation.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in our creator God

## Outline:

### I. God is the Creator of all things outside Himself

The curtain opens on the Biblical drama—its first act is God’s creation of the universe. As a supreme ruler, God calls all things into being by His sovereign decree. **Each creature plays a part in this grand symphony of creation, and every part is declared “good.”** These first human beings, Adam and Eve, **enjoy warm and close fellowship with God in the garden** . . . By the end of act one, the curtain closes on a ‘very good’ world. (“The Story-Line of the Bible,” Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen), [http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue\\_files/The%20Story-Line%20of%20the%20Bible.pdf](http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue_files/The%20Story-Line%20of%20the%20Bible.pdf)

- A. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1)
- B. By Him all things were created . . . all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col. 1:16, 17)

God created everything. He is the creator. That is His position, role, and function. This is His status. He is the Creator and everything outside of Him is created. Thus, He may do what He wants with what is His and what He does is always right.

### II. Everything inside of creation is for Him

- A. “From Him and through Him and to Him are all things” (Rom. 11:36)

Psalm 19:1 emphatically notes how all of creation gives Him glory.

- B. “He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth” (Eph. 1:9, 10)

### III. Everything inside of creation will ultimately glorify Him (this includes the fall of all, the salvation of some, and the condemnation of others).

“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created” (Rev. 4:11)

- A. The fall of all is for His glory

**God gives Adam and Eve everything they need;** their lives are rich and full as they delight in God and the gifts He has given. God places one restriction on them: they are not to eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden or everything will be ruined. By submitting to God’s word, Adam and Eve learn the joy of living as trustful and dependant creatures. But Satan offers another word, a lie, by which Adam and Eve can live. **In a tragic twist,** they listen

to the lie of Satan and contravene God's command. **This treasonous act of rebellion sends shock-waves throughout the whole creation.** Adam's and Eve's **rebellion corrupts the warm friendship they had enjoyed with God** as they walked together in the garden, delighting in God's presence and gifts. **They find themselves estranged from God and hide from His presence.** **Their revolt** also damages relations between human beings. The whole world is now befouled by their rebellion. ("The Story-Line of the Bible," Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen), [http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue\\_files/The%20Story-Line%20of%20the%20Bible.pdf](http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue_files/The%20Story-Line%20of%20the%20Bible.pdf)

If the fall is not a part of God's intentional purpose to redeem His people, then everything after Genesis 2 is a response to something He did not intend, desire, plan, or purpose. If our only fundamental argument is that such thinking is a violation of man's free will, then when has man ever been completely free or autonomous?

It is not my intent to address the area of man's will, however, I would be negligent if I did not make some initial comments. **First**, inherent to the image of God in man is the ability or faculty of choice. Thus, everyone, everywhere, at all times has the power of choice. **Second**, to deny man's will is wrong. To place it on the same level as God's will is wrong. Regardless as to what any of us might believe about man's will, we should not see it as being equal to or superior to God's will. Man's will cannot trump the eternal purpose of God. **Third**, no one, apart from God, has total or absolute freedom of choice. Our choices are limited. **Fourth**, how the will of God interplays with the will of man is, for me, a mystery that I do not understand but I willingly accept.

As this relates to our thoughts in this study, mankind chose to rebel against God by rejecting His expressed will and yet in the choice carried out God's will. Again, what the interplay was between these two wills I do not understand, but I willingly accept.

## B. The salvation of some is for His glory

With the rebellion of the creature against their Creator a question arises, "How can our previous fellowship be restored" (Job 9:2). "What must we do to be delivered from this condition" (Acts 16:30)? This is a dark dilemma and one that is incapable of being "fixed" by mankind.

God's choice to redeem His people presupposes a fall by them from Him. Redemption happens because debt exists. The same is true of all salvific terms such as justification, reconciliation, fellowship, and propitiation. The need for justification presupposes a standing that is unrighteous. The need for reconciliation presupposes hostility. The need for fellowship presupposes separation. The need for propitiation presupposes anger.

Unless we are Universalists, we believe only a percentage of humanity will be saved. Those who are saved are for His glory. Something is limiting the application of Christ's work on the cross and it is either the choice of man or the choice of God. My interest in this area is significant, but my intent this morning is to simply note how the salvation of some is for His glory and not to explore what I believe as to why the application of the atonement is limited.

### C. The condemnation of others is for His glory

Everything created and divinely revealed unfolds the person and purpose of God. I do not know or understand how in the justice of God against the rebel brings Him glory, but it does. Let us not forget the dark side of grace. Consider the Red Sea and the conquest of Canaan.

All of Scripture affirms God as Creator. Scripture speaks of a fall into sin, the salvation of some and the condemnation of others. This is the storyline of Scripture.

#### **SHEPHERDING THE PEOPLE:** (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Nothing existing today is outside of His person and purpose.
2. Your life is part of His story. Do not believe for one second that you are outside of His control or care.
3. Our present national administration is a part of His purpose and He will receive glory.
4. Our present national economy is a part of His purpose and He will receive glory.
5. Our responsibility, our act is to affirm Him as creator and as in control.