

Filling Out the Picture: The Bible's Big Story, Part 2

Review

- Definition: All of life lived according to the Word of God, by the grace of God, through faith in the Son of God, united by the Spirit of God, to magnify and enjoy God.
- Core Idea: God rules and controls all things in creation, salvation, and history (*the sovereignty of God*)
- Connecting the Dots – the Bible's Big Story:
 - The Bible: 66 books, ~40 authors, ~1,500 years in the making
 - The Big Story: **creation by God, rebellion by man, rescue by divine intervention**:
 - *Old Testament*: The failure of Adam, Israel, and David's house leads God's people into exile.
 - *New Testament*: The victory of Jesus as the last Adam, the new Israel, and the better David re-creates God's people and leads them into a new creation.
 - Two Covenants: **a relationship that God establishes with us and guarantees by his word**:
Covenant of Works – broken in Adam (Genesis 2:15-17; Hosea 6:7)
Covenant of Grace – won in Jesus (Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 8:6)
- Summary: Because of its emphasis on how God's covenants unite God's story across the Bible, the Reformed understanding of the Christian faith is often called "**covenant theology**."

Today

- Last week we saw *what* covenant theology *means*, but ran out of time...
- This week we will pick up where we left off, and look at *why* covenant theology *matters*...
- Why is it important to emphasize the fundamental unity of the Bible story and God's work in history?

One God

- There is no difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament.
- Modern critics claim otherwise, but an honest reading of the New Testament makes this impossible...
- The being of God is the same...
 - Genesis 1:1-3 – there is one God, yet there is also a Spirit of God and God creates by his word...
 - Proverbs 8:22-31 – Wisdom is described in personal terms: "beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always..."
 - John 1:1-3 – "the Word was with God, and the Word was God..."
 - Acts 5:4, 28:25 – the Holy Spirit is referred to as God in personal terms
- The character of God is the same...
 - A righteous judge – "God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day." (Ps. 7:11)
– "...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." (2 Thess. 1:7-8)
 - Merciful toward sinners – "But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared." (Ps. 130:4)
– "To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (Acts 10:43)
- The actions of God are the same...
 - Exodus 3:2-6 – "the angel of the LORD" identifies himself as God: "I am the God of your father..."
 - Exod. 19:18, Acts 7:38 – the LORD descends on Mount Sinai; "the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai"
 - 1 Cor. 10:4, Jude 1:5 – the angel of the LORD are appearances of the Son of God before he became a man

One Religion

- There are not two different religions taught in the Bible (Judaism vs. Christianity), but one religion.
 - “And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” (Leviticus 26:12)
 - “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)
 - “In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:22)
 - “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” (Rev. 21:3)
- *The great “Immanuel” promise at the heart of the OT is what the NT declares to be fulfilled in Christ!*

One People of God

- There are not two different peoples of God in the Bible (Jews vs. Christians), but rather one people.
- *We have the same history*
 - 1 Corinthians 10:1 – Paul tells Gentiles in Corinth that Israelites were “our fathers”
 - Galatians 3:7, 29 – “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring...”
 - Romans 2:28-29, 9:7 – ‘Jewishness’ is not a matter of ethnicity, but a matter of the believing heart
- *We have the same Savior*
 - Luke 24:25-27, 44 – everything in the Old Testament was ultimately pointing to Jesus
 - John 8:56 – “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”
 - Ephesians 2:11-16 – Jews and Gentiles saved/united in Christ, “one new man in place of the two”
- *We have the same mission*
 - Exodus 19:1-6 – God calls Israel “my treasured possession... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”
 - 1 Peter 2:9 – Christians are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you...”
- *We have the same destiny*
 - Matthew 8:11 – “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”
 - Revelation 7:4-10 – those sealed from Israel’s tribes listed alongside those from “all tribes and peoples”
- *The church’s relationship to Israel is not replacement, but fulfillment – not apple to orange, but tree to acorn!*

One Plan of Salvation

- There are not multiple ways to get to heaven, but only one way to God – faith in his saving promises.
- Naming his wife ‘Eve’ in the wake of God’s curse, Adam showed faith in God’s 1st promise of a Savior (Gen. 3:20).
- Abraham believed God’s promises (Gen. 15:6) – and is cited as the model of faith (Rom. 4, Gal. 3).
- Job confessed that his Redeemer lived, and that he would someday see him (Job 19:25-27).
- The writers of the Psalms believed that God would redeem them from death (Ps. 49:15, Ps. 73:24-26).
- The prophets of the Old Testament foresaw the “sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories” (1 Pet. 1:10-11).
- *Both OT and NT believers were Christians – the OT believers looking forward, NT believers looking back!*

One Purpose for History

- Everything in history is part of God’s “plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth,” (Ephesians 1:10).
- “And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. (Acts 17:26-27)

One Strong, Sure Hope

God isn’t making it up as he goes – either with his story or with ours. All our days were written in his book before the first turning of the page (Ps. 139:16). All things must therefore work together for our good (Rom. 8:28). We have the double promise of Jesus himself: though suffering must come before glory, it’s going to be okay – because suffering comes before *glory*.