



the Hero's tale

Reading and Understanding Jesus
as the Centerpiece of the Seed Promise
in the Biblical Story

Patrick J. Griffiths

The Hero's Tale

Reading and Understanding Jesus
As the Centerpiece of the Seed Promise
In the Biblical Story

Patrick J. Griffiths

Copyright © 2009 by Patrick J. Griffiths. Published by Torn Veil Publications,
the publishing arm of Waukesha Bible Church

Waukesha Bible Church
S53 W24079 Glendale Road
Waukesha, Wisconsin 53189
www.waukeshabible.org

Printed in the United States of America.

Cover Design: <http://eikonik.deviantart.com/art/5-Smooth-Stones-44910026>

All rights reserved solely by the author. The author guarantees all contents are original and do not infringe upon the legal rights of any other person or work. No part of this book, except for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, may be reproduced in any form without the permission of the author. The views expressed in this book are not necessarily those of the publisher. Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture quotations in this publication are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

◆ For Christ and His Church.

About the Author

Dr. Patrick Griffiths is an energetic teacher with a passion to shout the supremacy of God in all things, by finding, celebrating, and declaring that Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come. This is achieved through the systematic study of God's Word, an activity Pat has dedicated his life to. He was saved at the age of 17, immediately enrolled in Bible College, and subsequently pursued an M.Div, Th.M, and a D.Min degree. For over 35 years, he has taught students of all ages and has mentored many for vocational ministry. His heart lies in the local church and her mission to carry this message of grace to every tongue, tribe, people and nation.

Table of Contents

1	The <i>Story's</i> Subject Matter.....	1
2	The Villain Appears.....	7
3	The Hero Foretold.....	16
4	The Hero Arrives.....	22
5	The Hero's Work.....	27
6	The Hero's Legacy	30
	The <i>Story's</i> Epilogue	38
	Endnotes.....	42

The Story's Subject Matter



In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1).

We are accustomed to reading stories, and often our stories begin with, “Once upon a time in a magical land lived” The Bible is such 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. However, 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, wars, defeat and victory.

Often we read the Bible as if it were a rulebook or a work of fiction, rather than a true 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 have read *SHOGUN* written in 1975 by James Clavell. 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 end. This same idea rings true with J.R.R. Tolkien’s classic work, *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis.

Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart note the significance of this idea in their introduction to, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*.

It is no accident that the Bible comes to us primarily by way of narrative – but not just any narrative. Here we have the grandest narrative of all – God’s own story. That is, it does not purport to be just one more story of humankind’s search for God. No, this is *God’s* story, the account of *his* search for us, a story essentially told in four chapters: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.¹

It is perhaps a cliché but “**History is His Story.**” His *Story* is not simply what we read from Genesis through Revelation, but **all history is His Story.** God did not simply work through a nation called Israel. He moved the Assyrians, Babylonians, and all the inhabitants of a land called Canaan. God was not simply writing a *Story* that included only a select few people groups. His *Story* includes the Mayans, Russians, Hispanics, Ethiopians, Africans, Europeans, Asians, American Indians and people groups whose names we do not know; and whose names are forever lost to us. Yet God knows each person in His *Story*. Each one served and serves a purpose. God moves all of history to fulfill His *Story*. Each past, present, and future moment moves the *Story* forward.

Inside the biblical *Story*, there are five parts or ideas unfolding the person and purpose of God. God’s person and purpose provide the subject matter or theme of the *Story*. These five parts are as follows: **First**, God existed before the *Story*. He wrote the *Story* (Gen. 1:1, 31). **Second**, creation is the stage on which the *Story* exists. **Third**, God is the primary character of the *Story*. **Fourth**, the secondary character is humanity. **Finally**, the *Story* has six distinct and underlying acts or plays. They are as follows.

- Act 1 - "God: The Supremacy of God"
- Act 2 - "Creation: The Power of God"
- Act 3 - "Rejection: The Mystery of God"
- Act 4 - "Redemption: The Grace of God"
- Act 5 - "Re-Creation: The Reversal of God"
- Act 6 - "Worship: The Purpose of God"

These six acts appear in various forms throughout the one *Story*. The *Story* uses the imagery of a ruler, reign, and realm where the king enters into covenant (a binding oath or promise) 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 exist in obedience to their Creator.

Inside the larger expressions of creation, transgression, condemnation, redemption, re-creation, and worship, which weave throughout the various sub-plots, there are seven definable stages. There is one central figure who binds the entire *Story* together and around which the *Story* evolves. In His presence, the *Story* takes on significance and meaning. In His absence, the *Story* struggles in a labyrinth of unsolvable enigmas and life dissolving dead ends. Within the *Story* He becomes the Hero who saves creation from utter destruction and delivers the enslaved from an unmerciful and ruthless taskmaster whose existence and sole agenda is to destroy and overthrow the Hero's gracious and generous rule. The Hero's *Story* unfolds chronologically from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22.

- Chapter 1 - The Subject of the *Story* -
The Person and Purpose of God
- Chapter 2 - The Villain Appears
- Chapter 3 - The Hero Foretold

- Chapter 4 - The Hero Arrives
- Chapter 5 - The Hero's Work
- Chapter 6 - The Hero's Legacy
- Chapter 7 - The *Story's* Epilogue

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. Everything fulfill this end. **God's activities are always part of this one purpose.** This is notable by considering the following thoughts.

- Prior to the fall of humanity, His reign was immediate and direct without any necessary mediation.
- After the fall of humanity and through the flood, select individuals beginning with Adam will mediate His reign.
- With the selection of Abraham, a single family will mediate God's reign.
- The reign of God will go from a patriarchal system to a prophet/judge selection to a monarchy.
- Inside the divinely appointed family, an individual son will be progenitor or carrier to a bloodline. The reign of God will shift from being tribal to that of being a distinct bloodline.
- The monarchy will be Judaic (Jewish) and Davidic (specifically through the line of King David). Through David's line comes the Messiah through whom God's reign will find its ultimate expression.
- Through the church, God continues to gather people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.
- From our present place in history, future events are parts of this 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 their facets, whether religious or routine are a part of this *Story* and is telling this *Story*. **All of the parts contribute to this *Story*. It is always about who God is, what He has done, and who His people are in Him.** It is always about Jesus. Because this is true, I do not believe any of life is wasted. Somehow, all of life contributes to the *Story* — no matter how delightful or damaging, no matter how pleasurable or painful, no matter how scheduled or surprising.

All who grew up in Christian homes 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 various pieces, seldom do we consider the various pieces as parts of one *Story*.

We seldom see the connection between the individual stories. Often we fail to see the overarching purpose behind all of it. We fall short in understanding how the subject matter, imagery, six acts and the various stages connect. Our intent in this short study is to grasp the storyline of Scripture and to see God working out His purpose flawlessly for His glory.

Let us not forget how nothing in the Bible is random. Everything is intentionally placed. **The Scripture does not record everything knowable, only what we need to know.** This statement is vital to 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 appreciate neither the beauty of God nor the horror of our rebellion against Him. Each story within the Bible contributes to two primary ideas. The first is the person of God and the second is the purpose of God. Although we speak of two ideas, there is really only one and it is God. The *Story* will begin where it ends . . . with God. God in all of His glory will receive the accolade worthy of His person and work. This is the storyline of the Bible.

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*. All of the chapters point to Him. The storyline has meaning only as it 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.** 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 of Christ; the failure is in not affirming who He is and what He does. As we read the Bible, let us not forget 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* exists. 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.

The Villain Appears

2

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1)

When we begin to read the Bible, it is not long before an evil element appears. In the *Story* of God, the villain is sin and the initial instrumentation is the devil. As incredible as this is, God wrote the villain into His *Story*. This alone makes its inclusion even more breathtaking. Although we cannot know fully why He wrote the villain into the *Story*, we do know the villain will show the power, justice, and grace of God.

Why the villain? "In fiction, villains commonly function in **the dual role of adversary and foil to the story's heroes**. In their role as adversary, the villain serves as an obstacle the hero must struggle to overcome. In their role as foil, the villain exemplifies characteristics that are diametrically opposed to those of the hero, creating a contrast distinguishing heroic traits from villainous ones." ²

One of the great problems that exist for many is how God can be the author of the *Story* and still write into the script the villain. I would like to consider three basic ideas present in the storyline.

First, God is the Creator of all things outside Himself (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16, 17).

In the beginning **God created** the heavens and the earth.
(Gen. 1:1)

¹⁶ For **by Him all things were created**, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷He 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 He creates. Thus, He may do what He wants with what is His, and what He does is always right.

Second, everything inside of creation is for Him (Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:9, 10; Col. 1:16, 17).

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Rom. 11:36)

⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ 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)

¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — **all things have been created through Him and for Him**. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Col. 1:16, 17)

All of creation serves God. Everything created exists in subjection to His rule. He may do what He wants with what is His. He can, if He so willed, allow everything to exist independent of Him. He can, if He so willed, allow everything to exist in complete dependency on Him. On the

other hand, He can, if He so willed, allow everything to exist in co-dependency with Him. Regardless as to the conclusion we make concerning the villain's appearance, it happened in a manner designed by the *Story's* author.

Finally, everything inside of creation will **ultimately glorify Him** (this includes the fall of all, the salvation of some, and the condemnation of others [Rev. 4:11]).

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)

This brings us back to the introduction of the villain. The fall of all is for God's glory. Remember, transgression will *ultimately glorify Him*. This does not mean one can say they sin to the glory of God. I personally struggle with the thought that sin is operating outside of the author's intent and somehow the *Story* did not have sin originally written into the script. If the fall of man is not 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. When comparing Christianity to other world religions or worldviews, C.S. Lewis, in his classic work, *Mere Christianity*, notes how, "The difference is that Christianity thinks this Dark Power was created by God, and was good when he was created, and went wrong." He goes on to observe how Christianity "thinks it is a civil war, a rebellion, and that we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed . . . and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage."³

Humanity chose to rebel against God by rejecting His expressed will and yet in the choice carried out God's will. What the interplay was between two wills I do not know or might never understand, but I readily accept.

In reading the *Story*, it is necessary to understand each episode/act as part of the ongoing *Story* and not in isolation from each other. If we fail to see the big picture and fail to make the necessary connections, this will have profound consequences for us in our understanding of the entire storyline. Thus, whatever purpose the villain's role has in the *Story*, has an integral part of the whole and not isolated from other elements within the *Story*.

What the "villain" does show is how the rift between God and man is so vast as to disqualify humanity from ever hoping to achieve resolution apart from the divine initiative. The intent is to show how sin is a part of the *Story*. Genesis 1 and 2 presuppose Genesis 3. Chapters 1 and 2 are setting us up for Genesis 3 through Revelation 22. There are four thoughts inside of Genesis 1, 2 and 3 that show how the villain's introduction into the *Story* are from the earliest chapters of the biblical narrative.

First, Adam and Eve's enjoyment of God's presence notes this idea (Gen. 1:26, 27).

²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:26, 27)

God immediately paints a picture of Adam and Eve's intimate communion with Him. Genesis lays down the idea of covenant and relationship from the start. He created humanity in order that they might enjoy His presence. God placed man in the Garden in order that man might worship and obey Him. Humanity served as a vice-regent for God. It is hard for us to process fully the interplay between God and man prior to sin, but Adam and Eve would fellowship with God in the cool of the day. This paradise was not because of the absence of pain and suffering or the presence of every notable pleasure, but rather the very presence of God and the enjoyment of such by Adam and Eve. This is what sin will destroy.

Second, a singular prohibition equally marks the idea (Gen. 2:16, 17).

¹⁶ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Gen. 2:16, 17)

God tested Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God could have withheld such a thing, if He so willed. Adam and Eve made thousands of choices every day and every one was completely moral. There was only one choice that would introduce death into the world, and it was to violate this singular prohibition. The test was to see whether they would obey God or their own desires. God Himself placed this prohibition before them. Before sin happened, God was already speaking of death. The statement in Genesis 2:17

implies we know what death is, or that Adam and Eve had an idea as to what this entailed.

Third, having no shame likewise marks the idea (Gen. 2:25).

And the man and his wife **were both naked and were not ashamed.** (Gen. 2:25)

Neither Adam nor Eve had any shame. There was no guilt between them. This is what sin will destroy. All of our relational tension is a consequence of sin's invasion of our soul. It is important to read 2:25 with 3:1. We are being set up by the author of the book for the events that are about to transpire.

Finally, the presence of a tempting serpent supports the idea (Gen. 3:1).

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1)

Although our immediate text does not tell us how the serpent became the tempter, he appears in the *Story* with relative ease. We go from the "very good" of Genesis 1:31 to, "Now the serpent was more crafty" in Genesis 3:1. Nothing up to this point is surprising. The *Story* builds to an initial climax whereby the first test appears. Satan, through the serpent, tempts Adam and Eve in the one area where the prohibition exists. Everything is perfect and now something dark enters the *Story*. The serpent immediately attacks God's integrity and position as Creator.

Sin is rejecting God's will and accepting self-will. This is sin at its essence. When we read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9, 10 these two opposing elements are present.

Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, **may your name be honored. May your kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven.** (Matt. 6:9, 10 [*New Living Translation*])

Whose honor do we desire, whose kingdom do we want, whose will do we seek, God's or ours? In the garden, Adam and Eve sought their glory, their kingdom, and their will. In all temptation, two choices confront us. Either we choose to accept the will of God or we reject the will of God. The issue is always whose will we are going to obey. That which God permits is for our pleasure and that which God prohibits is for our protection. Anytime we disobey God's declared will, we forfeit peace.

With sin comes death. Just as sin is a part of the *Story*, so also is death. "**Genesis 3 explains the human dilemma.** All the problems in the universe have their origin in the events of this historic account."⁴ This is where the *Story* takes a turn for the worse. God tells Adam and Eve that in the day they disobey they will die. Based on what we have already seen, we can begin to understand "death." There are six statements helping us comprehend what this "death" entails.

First, Adam and Eve rejecting God's will explains death (Gen. 3:1-7). Death is living under self-will. This is the essence of sin and it is the face of death. Adam and Eve determined they knew better than God. This continues to be the essence of our fallen condition.

Second, their attempt to cover their nakedness explains death (Gen. 3:7). Death is living with shame and guilt. Humanity is fully aware of this shame and guilt and has determined and attempted to do whatever is necessary to cover it. Their desire to undo what was done only compounds their problem. Nevertheless, all of the determinations and attempts have failed. This is the rise of world religions rejection of the true God and His purpose.

Third, hiding from God explains death (Gen. 3:8-10). Death is living with fear. "The Lord had evidently visited the garden and communed with Adam and Eve on many occasions prior to the fall. This time, however, the sound of God walking in the garden aroused fear rather than joyful anticipation."⁵ Ever since this moment in time, "The natural inclination of the heart is not to seek God but to hide from Him" (Rom. 3:11).

Fourth, their refusal to accept responsibility for their sin explains death (Gen. 3:11-13). Death is living with self-deception. Sin refuses to accept responsibility for its choices. Self-will is self-rule. In self-will, you are the ultimate authority and no one can hold you responsible. You are the law. Yet it is a law that brings death.

There is a way which seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death. (Prov. 14:12; cf. Prov. 16:25)

Fifth, the pronouncement of sentence against them by God explains death (Gen. 3:14-19). Death is living with suffering and misery. This is where our guilt comes in. We know we have transgressed God's will and have rejected His authority over us.

Sixth, their expulsion from the Garden of Eden explains death (Gen. 3:23, 24). Death is living with separation. **This is what was lost with sin and this is what God will restore in salvation. Mankind's quest to be "like God" removed him from being "with God."**

Lest we think what we have here is an ancient tale that has no bearing on who we are and where we currently exist, let us finish the *Story*. The Bible describes all of humanity as sinners by **identification** (Rom. 5:12-21). The Bible knows of only two types of people: those *in Adam* and those *in Christ*. Not only are we sinners by identification, but also by **participation** (Rom. 3:9-23).

Although we might argue it is unfair to accept blame for something we did not do, the Bible makes it equally clear we are active participants in an open rebellion against the rule of God in and over our lives. We struggle in understanding how sin can be a part of the *Story*, yet *until* we see sin as a part of the *Story* our ability to comprehend the grace of God is severely marred.

It is always difficult to end the *Story* here without telling you the rest of the *Story*. I will leave this chapter by simply noting how from the very beginning God planned a deliverer and deliverance. We can note two passages. **First**, God provides for a future deliverer (Gen. 3:15 ["the seed of the woman"]). **Second**, God provides immediate deliverance (Gen. 3:7, 21 ["the skin of an animal"]). Let us take hope knowing God is coming with a deliverer and deliverance.

3

The Hero Foretold

*And I will put enmity Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel. (Gen. 3:15)*

Earlier we noted how the Bible tells of a villain who sought, through deception and blatant tyranny, to overthrow the rule of God (Gen. 3:1-7). It is impossible to know why the Author included the villain in His *Story*, but his presence will show the power, justice, and grace of the primary character.⁶ In His *Story*, God can introduce the antagonist without undermining His person and purpose. In the *Story*, the antagonist, the villain acts freely yet within the purpose of the Author. The Creator, Author, King, and Hero exercises dominion over all creation.

Because the Bible is a *Story*, we can freely speak of its Author, villain, and Hero. Just as the Author wrote into the *Story* a villain, so also the Hero is spoken of as the antithesis to the evil. “The word ‘hero’ comes directly from the Greek language and means ‘defender, protector.’ Exceptional courage, nobility, and strength distinguish the hero. Usually the hero is the principal character and will fight for a cause.”⁷ God’s Hero is all this and more.

Even though the adversary is strong and inflicts significant damage, God works victory from defeat and hope from despair. The action of God’s enemies does not threaten Him. In fact, God uses that which works evil for His glory. Inside of this *Story*, God writes in the Hero. From the very beginning, God foretells of one who is to come and will bring ultimate defeat to the adversary (Gen. 3:15, 21).

Just as the transgression of all is a part of His *Story* and will bring Him glory, so also is the resulting condemnation. Both the mystery of God and the justice of God are for His glory. Such things are hard to grasp.⁸ Yet, just as it is wrong to view chapters of any piece of literature independent of the entire storyline, so also it is wrong to consider transgression and condemnation apart from the larger theme of the *Story's* purpose. God has not left us without hope. In addition to the villain and the sentence against him, He has written the Deliverer, the Hero, and deliverance into the *Story*. In this appears the greatest embodiment and display of God's grace.

God initiates the prophecy and for thousands of years keeps the promise alive through types and shadows. We have already noted how the *Story* is about the person and purpose of God. The presence of a villain and the "advent" of a Deliverer or Hero speak to God's purpose. Both the villain and the Hero magnify God's character.

When those whom He created rebelled against His wise and good rule, God extended mercy. The prophet Habakkuk remembered this when he prayed, "LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; **in wrath remember mercy**" (Hab. 3:2). This is what God does in Genesis 3:15. In His sentence against the insurgent, He remembers mercy.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed [Jesus Christ, God's Hero]; **He shall bruise you** [evil, sin, Satan] **on the head**, And you shall bruise him on the heel [the cross]. (Gen. 3:15)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon notes, "Here a blessed promise lies like a pearl in a shell."⁹ Four ideas are prominent in this prophecy. **First**, there is going to be an ongoing animosity between the offspring of the woman and that of the serpent. **Second**, each will inflict the other with injury. The serpent's injury is primary (i.e., "the head") and that to the woman's offspring is secondary (i.e., "the heel"). **Third**, this text speaks of something that is persistent and far-reaching. **Fourth**, the promise will come through the woman and not the man.

This text tells us a conflict will transpire between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent. Therein is the promise of future justice and grace against the present debacle caused by humanity. In addition to the stated prophecy, **God not only speaks. He acts.** Genesis 3:7 describes their shame, fear, and guilt and, as a result, their paltry attempt at addressing this newly "felt" corruption.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (Gen. 3:7)

Despite all humanity did and what this meant as an affront to God, God acts. He takes the first step and seeks the sinner, the rebel, the fallen, and He extends grace.

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. (Gen. 3:21)

This is an initial act of grace on God's part toward those who stood in rebellion against Him. New Testament Scholar Marcus Dods provides this commentary on what all this meant.

Adam took leaves from an inanimate, unfeeling tree; God deprived an animal of life, that the shame of His creature might be relieved. This was the last thing Adam would have thought of doing. He had to learn that sin could be covered not by a bunch of leaves snatched from a bush as he passed by and that would grow again next year, but only by pain and blood.¹⁰

Consider how vain this first attempt was at covering shame, fear, and guilt. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that all of our righteous works are as filthy rags. There is nothing we can do to undo what was done. Our depravity is so great that nothing short of God can undo what was done. What God initially foretold in Genesis 3:15 and “imaged” in 3:21 carries enormous implications as to the Hero’s character and mission. In this one verse, we can note five ideas. **First**, there is an established limitation as to what man can and cannot do. Man’s response to his shame, fear, and guilt was woefully inadequate. Only God could undo what was done. **Second**, there is the introduction of an innocent victim. The animal did nothing to deserve death. From the innocent would come the covering. **Third**, there was the shedding of blood. In sacrificing the animal, there is the shedding of blood. From the beginning, God’s pattern was established: “Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin” (Heb. 9:22). **Fourth**, there is the idea of substitution. The innocent animal sacrifice took the place of the guilty party. Adam and Eve were the ones deserving death, but another took their place. **Fifth**, an acceptable offering satisfied the immediate demands of the King against His rebellious subjects. God accepted the blood sacrifice of the innocent in order that He might pardon the sin of Adam and Eve.

These five elements help us understand the person and work of the future Hero. **First**, the Hero will be capable of doing something that the natural man cannot. **Second**, the Hero will be blameless of the sentence against Him. **Third**, the Hero will offer up His life and shed His blood. **Fourth**, the Hero's sacrifice will replace the shame, fear, and guilt of the deserving party. **Finally**, what the Hero does will satisfy the eternal demand for justice by the offended party.

From this initial event, God will continue to provide significant indicators to cultivate trust and stimulate hope in His subjects. He will promise to Abraham a seed through which the world would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). He will challenge Abraham to offer up his only son, and Abraham's faith will affirm that God will provide for Himself a sacrificial lamb (Gen. 22:8). God will speak of a Hero who rules and before whom all will bow (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17; Isa. 9:6, 7). He will provide graphic imagery in the delivering of a nation from bondage and the blood sacrifice that will preserve the first born among them (Exod. 12:13, 21-23, 27). He will give daily reminders to address temporal atonement for individual and national sin (the Book of Leviticus). Through constant and unbending repetition, God will create a longing for the permanent and eternal sacrifice brought by the Hero. All of Israel's sacrifices and feast days are shadows foretelling the greater substance and future fulfillment of the Hero who is to come. He will provide prophets who speak with such eloquence as to move future generations to worship (Isaiah 53). Finally, God will speak of a forerunner who will come in the spirit of Elijah before the arrival of the One, the Anointed of God, the Hero (Mal. 3:1, 5, 6). This forerunner is the divine pointer who will cry as the voice in the wilderness, "Behold,

the Lamb [i.e., the Hero] of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

In the *Story* of God, the condition of man is bleak beyond comprehension . . . but God. God will provide a way, an only way, and a way that He makes open. "God is the only comfort, He is also the supreme terror: the thing we most need and the thing we most want to hide from. He is our only possible ally, and we have made ourselves His enemies."¹¹ All of this prepares us for the coming and leaves us with a spirit of anticipation, of expectancy.

Imagine if we were Old Testament believers: We know in all of the shadows there is something more. Something more is to come, something more than what we have. We live contented, but we yearn. We live with promise, but unrest. There is a restless faith. There is uneasiness, there is something more, and we die in hope having not yet attained the promise. All of this leaves us with a spirit of hope. It is with joy we now consider, "The Arrival of the *Story's* Hero."

4

The Hero Arrives

4 "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5).

In the *Story* God wrote, He created a world in which His script would be played out. His *Story* includes individuals whose wills can reject His will and thereby cause sin to exist. Their rebellion places them in a position of shame, fear, and guilt. All of their attempts at rectifying the problem end in failure. Failure begets failure. Something or someone must come to their rescue. Fortunately, God's *Story* not only includes a villain, but also provides a Hero. God's *Story* describes the Hero as a deliverer who brings deliverance. Prophecy, promise, picture, type, shadow, and figure foretell and visualize the Hero. The foretelling created hope and caused the true believers to live in expectancy and anticipation. They looked and longed for the Hero's arrival.

Nothing in the *Story* of God is arbitrary or random. Everything contributes to the storyline. Everything and everyone moves the *Story* forward. As is true in many stories since then, there are parts to the *Story* that appear to make no sense or seem disconnected from the larger picture. It is not until the end of the *Story* that the reader has the "aha" moment. This is equally true of God's *Story*. Because we do not understand the part, or maybe the subplot appears dark and foreboding, we should not therefore conclude the *Story* is poorly written or the subplot unnecessary to the whole. For true believers, the ultimate "aha" moment comes when they meet the author of the *Story* face-to-face (1 John 3:1-3; 1 Cor. 13:12).

Our text tells us there was a “full time,” a time that was right (*NLT*), a time that was set by the Father (*The Message*). The Author of the *Story*, the Author of history, placed the various pieces in position in order that this moment, this time would exist for the arrival of His Hero. Various world powers and rulers, nations and governments, cultures and religions would all exist to form the perfect setting in which the gem of His person and work would shine most.

There was no delay or forced appearance. The Hero came at the exact moment determined by the Author of the *Story*. His arrival was so “perfect” that all who were looking for Him would find Him. Everything foretold and imaged find their “perfect” match in His arrival. He is the puzzle piece that cannot be forced.

For thousands of years those who believed in God lived with expectancy. All of the types and shadows pointed to something or someone more. “For the faithful Jew, one of the most important events described by God in the Old Testament is the coming of the Messiah to assert God’s authority on earth, to redeem His chosen to Himself. Most Jewish scholars see this described in the Old Testament in two ways. There is **outright prophecy**, a description of some attribute the Messiah will have or some fact that will be true of Him. There are **also pictures** in advance, or ‘types’ where events in history act as analogies to some truth about Messiah.”¹² It was by means of prophecies and types that God foretold and visualized the arrival of the Hero in the *Story* He wrote. It is safe to say, “The OT was preparing the way for Christ, anticipating him, pointing to him, leading up to him.”¹³

With the foretelling and imaging, the future part would have to correspond exactly to what was foretold and imaged. “For Jesus to truly be the Messiah described in the Old Testament, He would have to fulfill *every* Messianic prophecy.”¹⁴ Most conclude that there are at least 300 prophecies and types of the *Story’s* Hero in the Old Testament record. Because of the amount of previous information, the Hero’s arrival should be notable and noticeable. In light of the biblical evidence, this can lead us to only one conclusion. Jesus is the Messiah. He claimed it. Others claimed it. However, more importantly, He demonstrated it by His fulfillment of every messianic prophecy we know of, leaving no room for doubt. The mathematical probability that a single person could fulfill the prophecies listed is astronomical, yet Jesus did it. To get a feel for the probabilities involved, consider this:

Professor Peter Stoner (1888-1980) was Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College until 1953, and Chairman of the Science Division of Westmont College from 1953 to 1957. Stoner calculated the probability of one man fulfilling only a handful of the over 300 Messianic prophecies. In 1944, he published his research results in *Science Speaks: Scientific Proof of the Accuracy of Prophecy and the Bible*. Stoner concluded that the probability of one person fulfilling just eight of the specific prophecies was one chance in 10^{17} (one followed by 17 zeros). This is equivalent to covering the entire state of Texas with silver dollars two feet deep, marking one of them, mixing them all up and having a blindfolded person select the marked one at random the first time.¹⁵

How about one person fulfilling just 48 of the over 300 prophecies? Stoner calculated these odds at one chance in 10^{157} — way beyond statistical impossibility!¹⁶

To soften the threat of having to accept Jesus Christ as God's ultimate solution to humanity's problem, some assert that Jesus was something other than what He was and is. Although the following quotation from C.S. Lewis is lengthy, its weight warrants its presence:

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. We are faced, then, with a frightening alternative. This man we are talking about either was (and is) just what He said or else a lunatic, or something worse. Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God. God has landed on this enemy-occupied world in human form.¹⁷

Fellow believers, this is what we are working with from the Old Testament picture to the New Testament presence. It is for this reason we can join the innumerable host of past, present, and future believers in the reciting of the ancient creed.

[I believe] in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the
dead.

God's person, His Hero has arrived, and He has initiated the culmination of God's purpose for creation. It is with longing we wait for His next physical and visible return. All who love God wait with expectancy for the One Anointed Hero who will save them from their sin both individually and nationally. May we awaken from our lethargy and with passion pursue Him in love.

The promised deliverer would not simply arrive. It is not His presence creating the release, but His work. Therein lays the great fulfillment; it will be the person and work of the Hero that brings the promise of deliverance from the rebel's shame, fear, and guilt. It is now time for us to note the Hero's work.

The Hero's Work

5

⁴ "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5).

In the *Story* of God, both the Hero's presence and His work will conquer their shame, fear, and guilt. He will do what no one prior to nor following will ever do, "He will offer up Himself" (Heb. 7:27). Our text, Galatians 4:4-5, tells us what He does will secure for His people redemption from the Law and adoption as sons. The larger context provided by the Book of Galatians tells us how this end will be secured. There are three verses describing the event that "fills the gap" at the end of verse 4 and the beginning of verse 5. The first verse is Galatians 1:3, 4, the second is 2:20 and the third is Galatians 6:14.

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ **who gave Himself for our sins** so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. (Gal. 1:3, 4)

²⁰ **I have been crucified with Christ**; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then **Christ died** needlessly. (Gal. 2:20, 21)

¹⁴ But may it never be that I would boast, **except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal. 6:14)

The Hero's work was death by means of crucifixion. Jesus knew this was His "Father's business." When Jesus was requested by His disciples to eat after His conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4, He said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). When Jesus prayed in the Garden on the eve of His death by crucifixion, He prayed that "if it were possible for this cup to be removed from Him, then so be it. Nevertheless not His will, but the Father's will be done" (Luke 22:39-46). It was the Father's "pleasure to crush Him, putting Him to grief" (Isa. 53:10). When the Hero took upon Himself the sins of His people (2 Cor. 5:21) and finished the work to which He was called (John 19:31), both He and His Father rejoiced because of the consequences such actions on their part secured for their people (Isa. 53:10, 11; Heb. 12:2).

The Hero's work was "to be tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:12). It was not simply the cross that marked His work, but all of the temptations faced and conquered that led to the cross (Matt. 4:1-11). His battle for obedience and His submission to the Father's will was marked by struggle, blood, sorrow, pain, and even joy. He voluntarily did what only He could do; He gave His life for His sheep. He was in a bloody conflict that cost Him His life, and He was victorious in it. He destroyed the works of His enemy and paraded the defeated foe openly before all so no one would doubt or deny who won (Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:8). Our Hero stands with His foot on the adversary's throat, raises His arms and voice in triumph, and trumpets His conquest for all to see and hear. This is what the Father wrote into the script. His end and the means to that end can neither be denied nor defeated. Our God reigns!

One day, when times and seasons cease in all of heaven and earth, everything seen and unseen shall openly and unashamedly declare . . .

¹² “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” ¹³ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” ¹⁴ And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped. (Rev. 5:12-14)

Oh, friend and fellow pilgrim, this is the hope we have. Moreover, we now live in this truth. Let this be the transforming truth that shapes and guides us in this earthly pilgrimage while we still see through the glass dimly, knowing that a fuller and sharper image awaits (1 Cor. 13:12).

G

The Hero's Legacy

*¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20)*

In the *Story* of God, He created a world in which His *Story* would unfold. From the very beginning, a villain, an antagonist, are present. However, God also wrote into His *Story* a Deliverer who would bring deliverance. Biblical revelation and history foreshadow and image the Hero. The foretelling and figure were so exact that when the Hero arrived, all who were looking were able to identify God's Hero. The Hero came at a very specific time in history and with a distinct purpose. He came as a deliverer, and He brought with Him deliverance. The Hero has finished the work entrusted to Him by His Father; now He gives to His people the responsibility to carry on the work of proclamation to all the nations. Even though we acknowledge the *Story* of God, we often fail to see how we are living in the *Story* and how our lives are a part of the ongoing *Story* of God.

In God's *Story*, we are the means He has established for the proclamation of His *Story* to all the nations. This is His legacy to us. He left us with this inheritance. What we have in the *Story* is the only thing in life that is truly priceless (Matt. 13:44, 45). The *Story* is the treasure. Of all things created this is the one thing we cannot duplicate. The person and work of the *Story's* Hero is beyond us, and there is nothing we can do to undo what was done. This work is the treasure we are to share with all the nations.

Initially we spoke of the kingdom being the theme of the *Story*. Thus, it is important to remember **God's redemptive purpose is expressed through this theme and made known through a mission vocabulary. The mission of God is the establishment of His rule over all created things.** None of God's activity is trivial or unrelated. God's program is neither dysfunctional nor disjointed. Everything is a part of the whole.

Missions is the means God is using for the advancement and establishment of His kingdom. The Kingdom idea is the visual God uses to communicate His thoughts to finite beings. Thus to speak of missions is to speak of His kingdom. In addition, to speak of His kingdom is to lay hold of His eternal purpose, the *Story* of Scripture. Notice how our Lord ties all of this together in Luke 24:39-49.

³⁹ "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; ⁴³ and He took it and ate it before them. ⁴⁴ Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the

city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:39-49)

It is as if we have a large puzzle with various pieces, and the puzzle maker shows us the big picture and how all the various pieces now fit together. In looking at Luke 24, there are several notable features.

First, our Lord speaks to the foretelling and figuring of His arrival and work from the Old Testament text (vv. 44, 45). Our Lord reviews the *Story* in order to prove what is now apparent. All that He is and has done is in accordance with previous revelation.

Second, He accents the central idea of the entire *Story*, the sacrificial and vicarious suffering of the *Story's* Hero. Paul captures this idea in the phrase, “Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14).

¹ And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined to know nothing among you **except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.** (1 Cor. 2:1-2)

I firmly believe there is continuity inside of God’s kingdom program, but there is one thing that is significantly different from what we preach and what was preached prior to the cross and it is this: Christ crucified. All of the foretelling and figuring was exact enough for those who sought Him to find Him, but all of the foretelling and figuring was still a shadow of something greater. “The Old Testament picture was like a dark negative as compared to the white positive of the New Testament revelation.”¹⁸

Third, the Hero's coming had a distinct purpose. His work would secure for His people forgiveness for their rebellion against Him (v. 47a). This is the consequence of His cross work. The Hero's work was to remove from us our shame, our fear, and our guilt. This is what forgiveness means. It is only when we repent of our own self-efforts of covering our shame, fear, and guilt and accept His sacrifice that we are covered. This language resonates back to the Garden of Eden and the original act of rebellion by our initial parents, Adam and Eve.

Fourth, what the Hero **initiates**, His people are to **disseminate** (v. 47b). We are to be proclaiming the *Story* of God to our community, our nation, and our world. Nothing absolve us of this responsibility. No amount of delegation can fulfill our responsibility as a local church to think, pray, and act aggressively in the carrying out of our Master's wishes. This is His legacy to us. We are to share the *Story* with everyone everywhere at all times.

Fifth, our text specifically calls us to be witnesses of the *Story's* content (v. 48). We are to be retelling the *Story* to those around us. It is like gathering around the open fire and relating the *Story* to those who sit with us. It is sitting with our children and grandchildren and telling them the *Story*. Although much of what we learn is from the written page, we must remember our oral history. We are the witnesses to whom He has entrusted this legacy. No matter who you are or what you do, you are to be witnesses who tell of God's *Story*. We need to repeat the *Story* of God, creation, rejection, redemption re-creation, and worship, to all the nations, beginning in our immediate Jerusalem.

Sixth, the author of the *Story* provides the means for the fulfillment of His purpose (v. 49). He gives to those whom He saves the power to witness for Him, to tell the *Story* to others. No matter how formidable the task may appear, we have all we need to do what is necessary. You and I have the power to be witnesses of the *Story*, *God's Story*.

The mission for His people is to share His legacy. Luke 24:47 notes how the message is to "be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Luke continues this idea in Acts 1:7, 8.

⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:7, 8)

"All the nations" in Luke 24:47 are "the remotest part of the earth" in Acts 1:8. The thought of Jerusalem is common in both. We are to proclaim the Hero's legacy, His redemptive work on behalf of His people, to everyone, everywhere, at all times. The work of the witness is to be whom we are in whatever role we find ourselves. The *Story* exceeds its literary boundaries and is to overflow into every area of life. Every part of life is part of His *Story*. Each of us, in our own special way, is a part of this divine *Story*. This includes singles, homemakers and working mothers. It includes husbands who find themselves in repetitive jobs whose sole interest is to clothe their family, put food on the table, and keep a roof over their heads. This is a part of the *Story*. The *Story* has various sub-plots but every sub-plot keeps taking the reader

back to the six primary themes: God, creation, rejection, redemption, re-creation and worship. At times in the *Story*, it is the Author's delight to keep parts a mystery to the reader, but this does not make the mystery any less necessary. Its placement pushes us toward the Author and His purpose.

Our witness, no matter where we find ourselves, is to keep retelling the *Story*. It is not for us to edit the *Story*. Equally, there is no need for us to embellish the *Story*. The *Story* has enough weight to carry itself. It is a *Story* where Jesus Christ sits at center stage. He is the subject matter of all stories. Its retelling penetrates powerfully into each of the inner sanctuaries of the reader. The *Story* touches indiscriminately. There is power in the *Story* and in the retelling of it. God provides and performs all that He promises. When a parent speaks its words to their child or a grandparent to a grandchild, we tell the *Story*. When an aunt or uncle tells their niece or nephew, we tell the *Story*. When employees respond with integrity and honesty to their employers even when it might cost them their job, we tell the *Story*. The *Story* has power to change lives. It can change the defiled into a thing of beauty. It alters one's mindset and attitude. It changes everything. No one can encounter the *Story* without it touching his or her life. Yet there is an ever-present danger, a real threat to the *Story's* retelling. We can deny the *Story* by believing what those initial disciples in the book of Acts had is different from what we have. We deny the *Story* in the following manner.

Initially, we might believe our lives are too ordinary and do not see how who we are or what we do is a part of the one *Story*. **Secondly**, we might not see ourselves as a part of a local church or understand how this local church is a part of

the larger, global body of Christ. We do not see how we fit into the larger *Story* of God. **Thirdly**, our view of eschatology can greatly affect how we understand this idea. I believe it is wrong for us to deny the one *Story* of God. I believe it is wrong to think everything is worse now than during any other period. We have a very defeatist view of history. Wickedness will exist until Jesus comes. Moreover, our commitment or corruption do not determine the time of His coming, but His calendar. The Father has set a time for the Son to come (Acts 1:7).

We are to be highly optimistic because of how God unfolds and moves His *Story* forward. The entire Book of Acts is a testament to the carrying forth of the legacy. While more and more people groups hear the *Story*, we must always be working so every uttermost region becomes a Jerusalem. This is the greater work done by His disciples after the promised power, the Holy Spirit, came upon them. The author of Acts wants us, 2,000 years later, to be encouraged and empowered to continue what has already begun. The spread of the Hero's legacy has been constant and continues to this day. The gospel has been preached globally, and His kingdom has spread globally, but it is not over. Our Captain, our King, our Hero has never rescinded the order, "Go into the entire world and make disciples of all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem!"

We are not to live in defeat or in any way be discouraged. We must know and believe God has won the victory, and we are carrying out His continued conquest. Friend, you and I are living in a kingdom reality. It is different from what it will be, but it is no less real. When we see ourselves as a part of this one *Story*, then we will see that God is working and His

purpose is unfolding according to His timing. We are a part of this divine lineage and legacy. It is ours to possess and to proclaim. This is our legacy; this is our mission. Until the time set by the Father, we are to be busy telling the *Story* to everyone, everywhere, at all times.

All believers have the power of the Holy Spirit. Where we fail is in understanding the power and comprehending what we are to be doing. We are already where He wants us. What we need to do is simply do what God did: speak and act, proclaim and image the *Story*. We need to begin where we are at and allow the *Story* to spread naturally like a fire without boundaries. Much is done and much still needs to be done. This is our calling and this is our destiny. The *Story* God wrote includes you and me, and we are to tell His *Story* to every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. May we never tire of telling the *Story* to each generation.

The Story's Epilogue

Where do we go from here? Because the *Story* exceeds the boundaries placed on it, it engulfs everyone and everything that lies in its path. God wrote every detail into the *Story*. He knows what will happen before it happens simply because He is God. There is only one book that gives us “the rest of the *Story*.” It is almost exclusively in the book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation is notably apocalyptic literature. This means it uses symbolism to communicate its thoughts. **The meaning is not in the symbol but in what the symbol represents.** “It is literature born out of crisis and was a means of addressing that crisis to a religious community.”¹⁹ This means the intent of the literature was to explain present conflict and provide immediate hope. The book of Revelation is remarkably singular in its purpose. Chapter 1 opens with the following statement:

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, **the things which must soon take place**; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,² who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.
³ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; **for the time is near.** (Rev. 1:1-3)

We cannot abandon this singular idea when seeking to understand what the book contains. Everything about the *Story* is from God, through God, and for the glory of God. The centerpiece to the *Story* is the person and work of Jesus Christ as He works to save His people from their shame, fear, and guilt. The Book of Revelation provides “a last word” that enables the reader to see how the *Story* will end. Neither the

beginning, middle, nor ending of the *Story* are left to chance. **God neither wonders nor questions how the *Story* will end.** The Revelation is not simply speaking of something that is still hundreds of thousands of years in the future. The Revelation speaks of the *Story* “which must soon take place.” It speaks of a *Story* that is near, not far off. “When the author walks on to the stage the play is over.”²⁰ This “last word” explains our present conflict and provides immediate hope.

It is interesting to remember how the last handful of biblical books to be written were the Gospels ([Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John] “The Hero’s Arrival and Work”) and Paul’s last letters ([1 and 2 Timothy] “The Hero’s Legacy”). John wrote most of these works 25-30 years before the Revelation of Jesus (about 90AD). The Holy Spirit left us with a *Story* that highlights what is necessary for us to continue in the retelling of the *Story*. The *Story* will carry on with the continued expansion of His kingdom on earth until such a time (an exact and predetermined time) when the Father will send His Son once more to fully establish His kingdom on earth just as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). At such a time, there will be a revisiting of conditions as existed in the Garden of Eden. The villain will be in a place where God’s goodness does not exist. Those who persist in their rebellion against the King will similarly languish in the horror of the Hero’s absence.

The Hero’s work will prove lavish for those whom He calls His own. They will experience the fullness of His unveiled presence in unimaginable ways. They will bask in the King’s glory. All those things the created currently deem best will pale in the presence of their Creator, their Deliverer, their Hero, and God’s Hero. All of the shadows will give way to the substance. No longer will the shadow even tempt those

who live in fellowship with the King. Every residue of faith will give way to unhindered sight. In His presence is fullness of joy and in His presence are pleasures forever more (Ps. 16:11). We will forever be at rest. We will never experience discontent again. No sin, in any way, will taint the palatable presence of the King.

There will be no concern as to who is or is not present. There will be no concern of reward or missed opportunity. All regret is forever gone. We will not concern ourselves with streets of gold or gates of pearl. All those things currently occupying our thinking as it relates to the end times will be of no consequence in that day. In that day, all of our failure will give way to constant conformity. In that day we will finally and forever lay down the shield of faith used to quench the fiery darts of the devil (Eph. 6:16), our relentless adversary (1 Pet. 5:8).

Words like delicious, thrilling, mouth-watering, adrenaline pumping, mind blowing, and exhilarating will be fittingly inadequate to describe that which is exceeding abundantly beyond what we could possibly ask or think (Eph. 3:20). How can a creature possibly capture in language or act the Creator? How can the rescued speak effectively of the Rescuer? How can the delivered thank the Deliverer enough?

Yet this is the *Story's* end. There is coming a time when, "EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10, 11). There is coming a time when, "Every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, [will say], 'To

Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.' And the four living creatures kept saying, 'Amen.' And the elders fell down and worshiped" (Rev. 5:13, 14).

The *Story* will end where it began . . . with God: God, in all of His glory, receiving the tribute worthy of His person and work. This is the storyline of the Bible. It has been and will forever be about Him. It will forever be about who He is, what He has done, and who His people are because of Him. Let us never lessen our pursuit of Him. Let us find all He is as being enough in this life and in the life to come. May we now and forever determine to shout the supremacy of God in all things (Rom. 11:36) by finding, celebrating and declaring He is enough in this life and the life that is to come (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 4, 5) through the systematic study of His Word (2 Tim. 2:15) and to share this message with every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 5:9).

Amen and amen.

Endnotes

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. 14. [Emphasis his]

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villain>

³ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Collier Books, 1943), 50, 51.

⁴ <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/90-233.htm> The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, by John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-233, titled "What is Sin?" (Genesis 3:1-7).

⁵ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 92.

⁶ "Sin is obviously included in God's plan, but sin remains sin (Acts 4:27-28)." Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 88.

⁷ wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

⁸ Lewis echoes the thoughts of many when he says, "How did the Dark Power go wrong? Here, no doubt, we ask a question to which human beings cannot give an answer with any certainty." Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 53.

⁹ *Spurgeon's Devotional Commentary* on Genesis 3:15.

¹⁰ Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis*, 25, 26 quoted in Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 149.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹² <http://www.bprc.org/topics/fulfill.html>

¹³ D.A. Carson, "Matthew," in *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8:28.

¹⁴ <http://www.bprc.org/topics/fulfill.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.bprc.org/topics/fulfill.html>

¹⁶ Peter Stoner, *Science Speaks: Scientific Proof of the Accuracy of Prophecy and the Bible*, 1944, 109-10.

¹⁷ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 56. This same idea is present in Matthew 16:13-20 when Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

¹⁸ Ryrie, *The Grace of God*, 122.

¹⁹ <http://faculty.bbc.edu/rdecker/phd/depriest/1defined.html>

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.



WAUKESHA
BIBLE CHURCH

(262) 542-7177

www.waukeshabible.org