

The Truth of God's Larger Story

Grace and Truth—part 4

April 30, 2023

DAY 1: God's Larger Story



1. Postmodernism is the predominant philosophical thought of our time. It dismisses God as central to life and meaning. This “deal with the devil” is a tragic mistake. The price of admission for buying that hellish belief, that there is no God, is to find out that you also bought another hellish belief: that there is nothing outside ourselves that gives us a rock-solid metric for good and evil, right or wrong, and nothing outside of ourselves that gives us meaning in life. This may sound noble in the university classroom, but living in the reality of life, this gives us absolutely no foundation for how to think when life gets incredibly hard and painful.

2. Henry David Thoreau captured the result masterfully with the following words.

3. “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.” - Henry David Thoreau

Last week we did a deep dive into absolute truth, and covered the four lenses that tell us about the truth of God, life, human beings, and how life works. We looked at some of the different facets of God's truth—His commands, statutes, precepts, law, etc.

This week we'll look at the 30,000-foot view of the bible.

God's truth helps us keep the moment and the story of life straight.

When life gets incredibly difficult, when suffering occurs, when heartache and pain come knocking at your door in the middle of the night, how are we to think about what's going on. The bible gives us four great chapters of His story. He tells us the purposes for which He is pursuing in our lives, whether its seasons of blessing or seasons of suffering.

The truth of God's story, from start to finish, Genesis to Revelation.

DAY 2: CHAPTER 1: CREATION

1. The story of the bible is understood in four great chapters of life. What we think is real will determine how we live.

2. God's story to man begins with the very first book and verse in the bible.

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

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Genesis 2:20 But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^x he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

3. The bible tells us that God made the world and everything in it. Human beings are the crown of His creation. We are loved and treasured. We are meant to enjoy God Himself, and the blessings of rich relationship with others. All of the world around us was given to humanity as a gift.

4. Genesis tells us God is the sole source of the entire created order. Nothing exists of its own power. It is His truth that gives the world its order and structure. His truth gives us understanding for how the world really works. His laws are the basis of *physical* nature and *human* nature. His word guides us regarding morality (ethics), justice (politics), finance (economics), aesthetics (the arts), and clear thinking (logic).

Psalm 119:91 All things are your servants.

5. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: CHAPTER 2: FALL

1. Something is wrong. Through sin, evil entered the world. Through sin, death entered the world. Our God-given capacities to be good have been marred. Some of the results include broken relationships, broken people, broken lives. In many ways to which we are unaware, we become not only victims of sin but antagonists of sin.
2. The primary, central problem to life is not “out there.” It is “in here.” We are both antagonists and victims. We need two kinds of rescue.
3. Just as creation is universal, so was the fall of man. Every part of creation is affected by man’s evil. The worst effect of the fall is on our thinking. It is now twisted away from God and twisted inward toward ourselves as the central operating priority of every human being. It is exacerbated by the fact of our blindness and denial of this even happening.
4. Human evil began in the Garden of Eden. Sin is the refusal to let God be God in our life. We take over, believing we know better. We let our desires and feelings dominate our thinking and acting.
5. Self-centeredness is our default approach to life. As C.S. Lewis described, every human being is now curved in on himself. Around here, we call it, “first me, then you.”
6. When Adam and Eve sinned, we saw the immediate effects: they blamed God and each other. They threw God and each other under the bus. Conflict was born. Justifying self became a way of life.
7. Under the following verses, jot down what strikes you.

2 Cor. 4:4 The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel.

Ephesians 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Colossians 3:8 But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, foul talk from your mouths. Do not lie to one another seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature which is renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.

Galatians 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: CHAPTER 3: REDEMPTION

1. God's third chapter is the redemption of fallen mankind.

Ephesians 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...

2. Redemption is as comprehensive as Creation and the Fall. Redemption is not just the saving of our souls. It is the redemption of every part of us—emotions, thinking, desires, volition, relationships, daily habits, etc.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world but be conformed by the renewing of your minds that you may prove the will of God, His good, pleasing and perfect will.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come.

3. In this Ezekiel passage, underline the words and concepts that describe God's redemption.

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸ Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. ³⁰ I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. ³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. ³² I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, people of Israel!

4. The vast majority of the bible is dedicated to the story of redemption, the two-pronged rescue of fallen mankind. The story begins with the promise of a Messiah that could reverse the fall of human nature.

Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

1 Corinthians 15:45 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

John 1:4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

5. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: CHAPTER 4: RESTORATION

1. The last chapter of God's larger story will be in eternity.

*Ezekiel 37:26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an **everlasting covenant**. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever.*

²⁷ My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

2. The book of Revelation gives us masterpiece, 30,000-foot view of God's final restoration in heaven.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'

*⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "**I am making everything new!**" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

*⁶ He said to me: "**It is done**. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.*

3. The offer of restoration is offered to everyone, but there are many who will turn their backs on God's gospel of truth and reconciliation, choosing to be their own "masters" and "captains of their souls."

⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

4. The gospel story incorporates all of these "re" words.

- Redemption
- Restoration
- Renew
- Repent
- Restore
- Regeneration
- Reconciliation

5. What strikes you from today's devotional?