

The Big Story of the Bible, Seen First in Genesis

Genesis is the first of 66 books in the Bible. Initially, the reader of the Bible may find himself thinking these books and stories are not connected. However, a closer look reveals one continuous story from the Tree of Life in Genesis 2 to the Tree of Life in Revelation 22. The narrative begins in the paradise of Eden, with God dwelling with Adam and Eve, and the story ends in a new paradise with God dwelling with his people in perfect harmony and peace forever. The Bible's meta-narrative (big story) has four major movements: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation. The first two occur in Genesis, and micro-examples of the other two appear in the Genesis account.

Creation (the origin of the world and humanity)

The details of God creating the heavens and the earth are presented in Genesis 1 and then presented again with more specifics in Chapter 2. The first three days are devoted primarily to separating, while the remaining days are focused on filling the sea, sky, and land with the sun, moon, and stars and then the earth with fish, birds, and animals. On day six, God creates domestic animals, wildlife, and humans. Males and females are made in His image, and He gives them two mandates. First, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and second, subdue the earth and have dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth. In Chapter 2, God put Adam in the garden to begin subduing it, and he exercised dominion over all living creatures first by naming them. Finally, God gave Adam and Eve a moral choice in the Garden.

The Fall of Man (paradise lost)

With only one prohibitive commandment, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Gen 2:17), Adam and Eve disobeyed God and fell from their state of innocence. Neither had ever sinned. They were created in perfection, in the image of God, but they were not robots programmed only to obey. God gave them a moral choice: to obey or not to obey. Deceived by the serpent's words, Eve ate, Adam ate, and both were instantly aware of good and evil. Their evil was the knowledge that they had disobeyed God's one commandment. In an instant, sin entered the world, and death through sin spread through the whole human race. (Rom 5:12). In Genesis 4, Cain kills Abel out of jealousy and envy, and Lamech promises to be more sinful than Cain. The fall worsens. Other "falls" can be seen when righteous Noah gets drunk, and something ungodly happens in his tent (Gen 9), or when all of humanity was not filling the earth, instead they were building a tower to the heavens (Gen 11), or Abram when was telling half-truths about Sarai being his sister (Gen 12). "All have sinned and [all] fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). The need for redemption is an ever-present reality.

Redemption (salvation from sin and the second death)

The reader of Genesis sees redemption, or being saved from sin, for the first time when Yahweh sheds the blood of an animal so Adam and Eve's nakedness can be covered (Gen 3:21). Awareness of nakedness was one of the first consequences of their sin. Then God saved eight souls from his global judgment of sin in an ark (Gen 7). In Genesis 22, the angel of the LORD saves Isaac's life with a ram caught in a thicket that gives its life, and Isaac is saved. The ram dying instead of Isaac serves as a type and foreshadowing of the substitutionary death of the Son of God for the sins of the whole world. Jesus of Nazareth is both "Isaac" and the "Ram." He is the ultimate son of Abraham through whom the covenant will be fulfilled. He is the Lamb of God (John 1:29), offering Himself to save humanity from the bondage of sin and death. In Jerusalem, the Christ (Yahweh's Messiah) was crucified, buried, and rose again on the third day to redeem all who believe in Him for their salvation from sin and the second death (1Co 15:1-4; Gal 3:13, 4:5; Rev 20:14, 21:8).

New Creation (paradise restored)

The final movement is consummation and restoration. Genesis 6-9 presents a micro-example of "new creation." God ends all life on this earth (Gen 7:23) and starts over with a "new" earth with only those saved in the ark. The global destruction of the earth by means of a flood foreshadows the eventual end. An end that doesn't happen because of global warming, a meteor strike, or a nuclear war. God has already determined the end (Isa 46:10). Having secured the redemption of all who will be saved, Christ Jesus returns to the earth to bring this story to an end and start a new one. He will destroy Satan, the Anti-Christ, the false prophet, and all His enemies, raise the dead (the saved and the lost) (Acts 24:15), and judge all of humanity (Rev 20). The lost are sentenced to an eternity in the Lake of Fire. At the same time, the redeemed are given glorious bodies (Phi 3:20) and granted entrance to the eternal kingdom on this new earth, magnificently recreated with King Jesus ruling on His Father's throne for all eternity (2Pe 1:11, 3:13; Rev 21). The Ancient Serpent is defeated once and for all. And everything that the Fall lost will be restored, even better, in and through Christ.