

The Big Picture

GOD IN THE CENTER FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

From Eden to Eternity

The Bible isn't a collection of disconnected stories, moral lessons, or theological principles scattered across sixty-six books. Although it records actual historical events, it isn't simply a history book or a science book, for that matter. It includes poems and songs, laws and prophecy, letters and wisdom literature. And although each of these was written within a particular time and place and to a particular audience, they do not stand alone.

Much can be gleaned from studying the context and content of the individual components of Scripture, and we should study them carefully. But if we study them only as individual parts, we can lose sight of the larger story they are telling together.

Together, the individual parts of the Bible stand as a unified, coherent narrative that records the unfolding of God's plan and purpose throughout time. Every event, every book, every character, every command, every prophecy, every promise, and every poem has a place within the larger story of Scripture. And at the center of that story is God.

Think of Scripture as a stained-glass window. The many different stories and texts of the Bible are like individual pieces of colored glass, each with its own place and purpose. But just as those pieces of glass come together to form a larger, coherent picture, the individual parts of Scripture come together as one overarching narrative. As we step back, the pieces begin to reveal the bigger picture: the unfolding story of God.

And this is what makes the story unlike any other. The God at the center of Scripture is not merely a character within its story. He is the God who has spoken through His Word (2 Tim. 3:16), making Himself and His glory known throughout its pages. We come to know Him through what He says and what He does, through His interactions with people, and through His presence, provision, judgment, mercy, promises, and faithfulness throughout the biblical story.

This is His story. And through it, He invites us to know Him.

We begin our journey by widening our view. Imagine looking down from 30,000 feet. From that height, individual details recede, and the larger landscape comes into focus. In much the same way, we are going to begin by stepping back from the individual stories and passages of Scripture so we can see how they fit together within the Big Picture.

The View From 30,000 Feet

From this perspective, Scripture presents a unified story centered on what the triune God planned in eternity and executed in time. We see Him accomplishing His purposes in creation and redemption and bringing all things together in Christ. And we see where the story is going: God dwelling with His people forever and displaying His glory through it all (Eph. 1:9–10; Col. 1:19–20; Rom. 8:19–23; Rev. 4:11; 21:1–5).

Scripture's overarching story unfolds in four major movements: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation.

Creation

The big picture begins with God's creative act. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). He fills the heavens, the earth, and the seas with life, and in its original state, the created order was good. He creates humanity in His own image, blesses them, and gives them a unique place and purpose within the world He has made (Gen. 1:26–28). When God looks upon all that He has made, He declares it "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

The New Testament takes us even further, revealing that all things were created through Christ and for Christ and that "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16–17; cf. John 1:1–3). The story begins, then, with God and His good creation, a world made by Him, sustained by Him, and ultimately existing for Him.

The Fall

Yet humanity's rebellion against God, the Fall, brought sin, death, and brokenness into God's good creation. When Adam and Eve rejected God's word and rebelled against His rule, the consequences extended far beyond Eden. Sin entered the world, death came through sin, and death spread to all humanity (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12). What God had declared "very good" was now marred by sin, and humanity was alienated from the God who had created them.

But the Fall did not bring God's story to an end.

Redemption

God does not abandon humanity to this condition. Even in Eden, amid the judgment that follows humanity's rebellion, God gives the first glimpse that sin and the serpent will not have the final word (Gen. 3:15). From there, the story of Scripture begins moving toward redemption as God works throughout history to accomplish His purposes.

That redemptive purpose unfolds through promises and covenants, through Abraham and the nation of Israel, through sacrifice and kingship, and through the words of the prophets.

Again and again, the story points forward, building expectation for the One who is to come. We will return to each of these threads later and trace them more carefully through Scripture. For now, from our 30,000-foot view, we are simply watching them converge on Jesus Christ.

Christ was "foreknown before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20), and "when the fullness of time had come," God sent His Son (Gal. 4:4). Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus deals decisively with sin and death and provides reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:8–11; 1 Cor. 15:3–4). What God had been unfolding throughout the biblical story reaches its climax in Christ.

But even redemption is not the end of the story. The God who created all things is moving His story toward the day when He will make all things new.

New Creation

The biblical story culminates in God's final victory over sin, death, and evil and the renewal of His creation. What begins in the opening chapters of Genesis reaches its fulfillment in the closing chapters of Revelation. The creation that has been subjected to corruption will be set free from its bondage to decay (Rom. 8:19–23), and God declares, "Behold, I am making all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

The parallels between the beginning and the end of Scripture are striking. The tree of life, from which humanity was barred after the Fall, appears again (Gen. 3:22–24; Rev. 22:2). The curse is gone (Rev. 22:3). Death, mourning, crying, and pain are no more (Rev. 21:4). And most importantly, God dwells with His people: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man" (Rev. 21:3).

The story has moved from creation, through the devastation of the Fall and God's work of redemption, to New Creation. God has not abandoned what He made. His redemptive purposes reach beyond rescuing humanity from sin to the renewal of creation itself, where His people will dwell in His presence forever.

The Bible begins with God creating the heavens and the earth. It ends with a new heaven and a new earth, with God dwelling forever with His people. Everything in between tells us how we get from one to the other.

What Makes This Story Worth Following

Seeing the biblical story as a whole allows us to see more than a sequence of events. We begin to see the God who is at work throughout them. The God who creates is the God who judges sin, keeps His promises, shows mercy, provides redemption, and will one day make all things new. From beginning to end, the story reveals His character and His purposes.

And at the center of that story stands Jesus Christ. The promises and expectations of the Old Testament move toward Him, and through His death and resurrection God accomplishes the redemption toward which the story has been moving. In Christ we see both the seriousness of sin and the depth of God's love and mercy (Rom. 3:23–26; 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:24).

And seeing that story should do more than increase our knowledge. Scripture's unfolding revelation of God's character and purposes calls us to worship, trust, and obey the God who stands at its center.

The Big Picture, then, is not ultimately about discovering how brilliantly the Bible fits together. It is about discovering the God who stands at the center of it all.

What Does This Reveal About God?

When we step back and view Scripture as one unfolding story, we begin to see that the Big Picture is ultimately a revelation of God Himself.

God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. The story begins with Him. Everything that exists owes its existence to Him, was created through Him and for Him, and continues to depend upon Him (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16–17).

God is holy and just. The Fall reveals the seriousness of rebellion against God. He does not ignore sin or treat evil as insignificant. His judgment is real and righteous (Gen. 3:14–24; Rom. 3:23–26).

God is merciful and gracious. Judgment is not the end of the story. Even after humanity rebels against Him, God continues to pursue His redemptive purposes, ultimately giving His Son for our salvation (Gen. 3:15; John 3:16–17; Rom. 5:8).

God is faithful. Across generations and centuries, God keeps His promises and continues to accomplish what He has purposed. What He promises, He brings to fulfillment (Gen. 12:1–3; Gal. 4:4–5; Heb. 10:23).

God has made Himself known in Jesus Christ. The One through whom all things were created is also the One through whom redemption comes. In Christ, we see God’s character and redemptive purposes revealed most fully (John 1:1–3, 14, 18; Col. 1:15–20).

God will bring His story to its appointed end. Sin, death, and evil will not have the final word. Christ will return, creation will be made new, and God will dwell with His people forever (Rev. 21:1–5; 22:1–5).

From Eden to eternity, the story is His. The God who created all things, who acts in judgment and mercy, who redeems through His Son, and who will one day make all things new is the same God we encounter throughout its pages.

And the more clearly we see the story, the more clearly we should see Him.

The Big Picture Is Just the Beginning

For now, we have stepped back far enough to see the whole landscape. From Creation to Fall, from Redemption to New Creation, Scripture tells one unfolding story, and God stands at the center of it all.

But a view from 30,000 feet can only show us so much.

In the weeks ahead, we will begin moving closer. We’ll return to the beginning and look more carefully at Creation and the Fall, asking what those opening chapters reveal about God, humanity, sin, judgment, mercy, and the direction the biblical story takes from there.

Then we’ll continue tracing the threads we have only glimpsed here: promise, covenant, redemption, God’s presence, kingdom, sacrifice, the promised Messiah, the Holy Spirit, and new creation. We’ll watch those threads develop across books written by different authors, in different places, across centuries, and see how they belong to one unfolding story.

There is much more to see.

For now, we have the map.

Next, we begin moving closer.