

# The Story of the OT

Fall 2014

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## Introduction to Chapter 1

### *Four-Chapter Story*

The Bible can be viewed through a number of different “lenses.” Seen from different angles can help a reader understand the different thematic emphases, different plot lines, unique character development, etc. But many scholars, theologians, and Bible teachers boil the story of the Bible down to what is frequently referred to “the four-chapter story.”

The Four-Chapter Story is self-descriptive. It is a story made up of four big movements, four major portions that drive the narrative along. These four chapters are:

- Creation
- Fall
- Redemption
- Restoration

*Creation.* In the Bible, Creation is recounted in the first two chapters of Genesis. Genesis 1-2 tell the story of how everything was made, how God came to interact with His people. It is a chapter of beginnings, as we’ll see shortly. Now, in many respects, Creation gives us a picture of *the way it’s supposed to be*. Creation gives us an understanding of how we and the world around us were designed to operate and thrive on God’s earth.

*Fall.* In the *Fall*, *Creation* is broken. Genesis 3 captures the moment where Adam and Eve rebel against God. Sin enters the world and contaminates everything that God created. Sin is *not the way it’s supposed to be*.<sup>1</sup> Sin is the exact opposite of what life in God’s world is supposed to look like. Our form and function in the world has been corrupted. Our design has deteriorated. Our sin has brought relational distance between ourselves and our God, as well as ourselves and one another.

*Redemption.* Redemption is found throughout the Bible. The story of God’s calling, redeeming, saving, delivering, and sustaining a people is foreshadowed, promised, and prophesied throughout the Old Testament. But

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<sup>1</sup> Cornelius Plantinga, *Not The Way It’s Supposed to Be*, 7.

the picture of God saving a people from not only their enemies, but more importantly from their sins finds its culmination in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The storyline of a Redeemer in the Old Testament climaxes in a New Testament God-man who lives a sinless life, dies an unjust death, is raised victoriously from the grave in order to forgive sinners of their sin.

*Restoration.* Sometimes titled New Creation or Consummation, the story of Christ working through His Church and eventually making all things new is called *Restoration*. In Revelation 21-22, we get a vivid picture of the restoration of all things. God will not wipe away the earth and take us all to Heaven. Instead He will renew the earth and bring the Heavens to dwell with the earth. God will be restored to His people. Glory will so fill the New Heavens and Earth that there will be no need Sun or Moon. Everything will be as it was supposed to be.

*Bookends.* *Creation* and *Restoration* bookend the story, giving a glimpse of the way it's supposed to be and the way it will be. Yet we are still living in the body of the story. We are all digging ditches somewhere in the chapters of the Fall and Redemption.

People frequently say, "It is what it is." But through the story of the Bible, God says through Christ, "It's not what it has to be."

Now the Four-Chapter story is unbelievably helpful for organizing the whole Bible, but it is most definitely a view from space. For our purposes, this might be too broad. In an attempt to bring a little more organization and structure to our time, we will be seeking a little more specific framework for ordering our discussions.

#### *Biblical Theology and the History of Redemption*

It is also worth understanding how the History of Redemption works its way through the history of the world. **See the chart at the end of your documents.**

#### *The Kingdom and The Story*

Many different themes could be chosen to guide our study of the Old Testament. Redemption, glory, salvation, judgment, joy could easily all take functional centrality for our time together. And while these are all important themes that run throughout the storyline of the Bible, but I think one gathers them up in a compelling and comprehensive way. This is the theme of *Kingdom*.

A picture of a King, His Kingdom, and His reign and rule is painted over and over and over again upon the pages of Scripture. Kingdom is one of the big categories through which the Bible is both written and therefore should be read.

We will use the theme of *Kingdom* as the governing metaphor for our study. Though it is not the only metaphor used in the Bible, it is flexible enough to walk through the entire Bible, but formal enough to organize thought.

*Kingdom Defined.* Defining the Kingdom of God will aid our study for the next five weeks. Our definition of Kingdom will be taken from Graeme Goldsworthy and Vaughan Roberts.

The Kingdom of God: God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing.<sup>2</sup>

Roberts organizes his entire book, *God's Big Picture*, around this theme of Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> His categories are as follows:

#### **The Old Testament**

1. The pattern of the kingdom
2. The perished kingdom
3. The promised kingdom
4. The partial kingdom
5. The prophesied kingdom

#### **The New Testament**

6. The present kingdom
7. The proclaimed kingdom
8. The perfected kingdom

I've included a graphic Roberts produced to illustrate what's happening here. If you turn to the back of your handout, you'll see it.

His categories are especially helpful. While we won't formally use them, we will certainly be following a very similar pattern. And Roberts' work will constantly pop up within our discussion.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The King and His Kingdom: Creation and The Fall (Genesis 1-3)**

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<sup>2</sup> Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture*, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture*, 22.

Genesis is a book of beginnings, a book of firsts. The first everything. The first tree, the first animal. The first man. The first woman. The first sin. The first judgment. It's a book where God starts things.

### *Genesis at a Glance*

Genesis was written by Moses either in the 15th or 13th Century BC. In many respects, Genesis sets the stage for the rest of the Bible. Genesis 1-3 are arguably three of the most important chapters in the whole book. While most of Genesis appears to be a narrative, much of it's language is closer to a form of narratival poetry. Moses was a renaissance man of sorts, trained as a Son of Pharaoh. So it shouldn't surprise us that he was able to write the history of the world with more than just a subject and a predicate, a verb and some nouns.

### **The King and His Glory (Genesis 1-2):**

In the opening chapters of our story, we get a glimpse of the King in His glory.

*Gen. 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

*Gen. 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

**The King who is (v.1).** Before anything else was, God was. He exists eternally. He knows no end. He is limitless in every possible way. Before anything else was, God was.

Seated on the throne of eternity, the God of the Bible doesn't enter the scene, He doesn't come from stage right or left ... He simply is before anything was.

And because He was before anything else was, He is perfectly needless. As one who reigns from eternity past to eternity future, His makeup is not one of need or want, but one of total completeness, wholeness, togetherness, and perfection.

He delighted in Himself long before He created anything to delight in.

The theological terms for God's complete otherness and needlessness and self-existence is *aseity*. This King is so totally different than any other King, for He has no fault nor need. He is perfectly complete and content.

**The King who speaks (v.3ff).** Seated on the throne of eternity, this King speaks creation into existence. The language here is kingly language, where a King speaks and people respond. When Kings speak, things happen. Laws are decreed, nations are conquered, and people respond.

The King's power is found in what happens when he speaks. In this case, the King speaks and a world is created. A world with a sky and land, with water and animals. A world with foliage and mountains and streams and deserts and forests. When God speaks, things happen.

So God spoke, and everything that is came from nothing. God's Word carries not only effectual power, but creative power. For when the kings of men speak, they move or make something from things that already are. But when the God of the Bible speaks, He creates things from uncreated nothing. He takes what isn't there and makes something beautiful.

**The King who is good (v.4).** Finally, God pronounced His creation to be "good." What a good God, what a good king creates is inherently good. What flows naturally from a good and loving and wonderful king is inherently good and loving and wonderful. His creation emanates from His person.

He then goes on to create everything else. He creates dry land and vegetation. He creates the sea and creatures of the sea. Everything. And to everything God creates, He pronounces, He sings over, He rejoices in by saying "it is good" (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

*Gen. 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

*Gen. 1:27 So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.*

*Gen. 1:28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over*

*every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

**The King who reigns (v.26ff).** Because God has created all things, He reigns and rules over all things. His power and authority are matchless. As Vaughan Roberts says:

As creator of all, God is Lord of all. he is the rightful king over everything he has made.<sup>4</sup>

God is sovereign. His lordship knows no ends because he created everything.

**The King who creates image-bearers (vv.26-27).** Understanding kingship in the ancient world will aid our study.

In the ancient Near East a ruler’s image was set up in distant parts of his kingdom in order to indicate that his authority reached there. As images of God, human beings are to perform a similar function. Taken in conjunction with the holy status, Adam and Eve are to be fruitful so that their descendants may, as priest-kings, extend God’s temple and kingdom throughout the earth. This was God’ blueprint for the created world.<sup>5</sup>

Look at how God in His infinite wisdom used a concept that people knew in Moses’ day and reframed it to describe His created image-bearers. The God of the universe, the King over all things, creates a people who will bear His glorious image throughout His Kingdom. He speaks life into His image-bearers that they might express His glory, His reign, His rule throughout the earth.

While God reigns and rules over all things, the primary means by which He expresses that reign and rule is through His image-bearers. And so He creates image-bearers who will manifest His glorious character and nature in the world.

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<sup>4</sup> Vaughan Roberts, *God’s Big Picture*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to The New Jerusalem*, 78.

*Sun and Moon.* When the moon is out, it reflects the light of the Sun. The moon actually doesn't make *any light*, it reflects the light that the Sun makes. In the same way that the moon doesn't make the Sun bright, we don't actually make God glorious, we just reflect His light. We are mirrors to His glory.

*Unique Image-bearing.* These image-bearers reflect God's image uniquely. While all of God's creation reflect His glory, human beings reflect it uniquely. The only thing that God says is made in God's image is mankind. That is to say, that while all things are created for the glory of the Lord, mankind reflects and magnifies His glory differently, uniquely, better than everything else.

Now this isn't saying that God looks like us, that God does what we do, that God is a replica of us. Rather, it says that we bear His image, we mirror his character and nature, men and women. Both men and women are endowed with equal value and worth because both men and women bear the image of God as his crown of creation.

*Very good (v.31).* And once God had created people who will bear His image, He not only said that it is good, but that it is "very good." Only two other places in the whole Old Testament use that language of "very good."

*Judg. 18:9* They said, "Arise, and let us go up against them, for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you do nothing? Do not be slow to go, to enter in and possess the land.

*Jer. 24:2* One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. 3 And the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten."

One is talking about the land that God's people are to inherit, and God's people in exile, whom He will bless.

But out of the entire creation, God calls His image-bearers "very good." This means that you and me and your friends and your family and everyone everywhere is endowed with the blessing from God because we were created to bear His image in glory and splendor. That the God of the universe, who doesn't need anything, who doesn't need you or need me, yet still created a people to express His glory uniquely in the world is an unbelievable truth.

**The King who is Jealous for His glory (v.28).** God creates image-bearers to reflect and manifest His glory on the earth. In order to magnify the glory He already has, He then gives Adam and Eve marching orders to “be fruitful and multiply” to “fill the earth.” While all things reflect the glory and nature of our Creator God, His desire is that we multiply His glory mirrors throughout the earth, that He might be glorified more and more. So God says “make babies, have sex, fill the earth image bearers to reflect my glory.”

**The King who works and guards (vv.28).** On top of fruitfulness and multiplication, God says “subdue the earth; exercise dominion over everything that I have created.” In Genesis 2, Adam is placed in the garden and told to “work and keep it” (Gen 2:15). The word “to keep” carries the connotation of “to guard.”

The human couple are appointed as God’s viceroys to govern the earth on his behalf.<sup>6</sup>

Because God is a King who works and guards His Kingdom, we as his vice-regents, His under-shepherds are called to work and to guard the Kingdom.

**God’s Kingdom is a place where work is done, where culture is built, where the glory of God is manifest through everyday life.**

As John Frame notes,

Creation is what God makes; culture is what man does with creation.<sup>7</sup>

So in one sense, we are sub-creators. We take what God has made and bring the glory of the King to bear upon what has been broken by the Fall. We are to take what is and make sense of it through the lenses our King has given us. We have delegated leadership over what He has made and glorify Him by manifesting His Lordship over it.

This mandate includes all things we understand as culture. Is the Lordship of Jesus coming to bear upon how we understand art, music, food, history, agriculture, politics, etc.

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<sup>6</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 76.

<sup>7</sup> John Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, 98.

Questions:

What do you do for work?

Have you thought through the lens of Lordship when thinking through your work?

So in your work, your job is to bring the glory of the King to bear upon everything you're doing.

*Gen. 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*

**The King who dwells with His people (Gen 2:1-3).** When the King is finished creating, the text says that He rests. In the presence of His creation, God blesses His work and dwells amongst His people. God's image bearers live with Him in perfect harmony and access. Their relationship is *as it was created to be*.

The King dwells with His subjects in perfect harmony.

If genesis portrays the Garden of Eden as a sanctuary or temple-garden, a number of things follow: (1) Since the garden is a place where divinity and humanity enjoy each other's presences it is appropriate that it should be prototype for later Israelite sanctuaries. This explains why many of the decorative features of the tabernacle and temple are arboreal in nature. (2) Because they met God face to face in a holy place, we may assume that Adam and Eve had a holy or priestly status. Only priests were permitted to serve within a sanctuary or temple. (3) Although it is not stated, the opening chapters of Genesis imply that the boundaries of the garden will be extended to fill the whole earth as human beings are fruitful and increase in number.<sup>8</sup>

The presence of God with His people starts to emerge as a big category for understanding the Bible. Remember our definition of Kingdom:

The Kingdom of God: God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing.

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<sup>8</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 25.

The King of the universe, who reigns in ultimate splendor and glory, creates a world to reflect and image His glory. He creates a people who will manifest His character and nature and will reign under Him over the rest of His creation.

### **Rebellion in the Kingdom (Genesis 3)**

But as the story goes, a rebellion occurs. Instead of peace in the Kingdom, a revolt occurs in place where God dwells with His people.

*Gen. 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.*

*He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

**High treason (vv.1-6).** For Adam and Eve, life in the Kingdom came to a screeching halt. The personification of evil comes and tempts them. A pre-modern Benedict Arnold, a traitor of traitors, plants lies in their heads and pulls on the strings of their hearts. His whisper sounds like truth, but wreaks of deceit. He claims that Eve's understanding of the King's Word is wrong and that the King's Words were untrue.

She listened to the deceptive whisper of the deceiver, she took and she ate. Then she turned and gave some to her husband. He took and he ate, sending all of created order into a tailspin of de-creation. What God had made and deemed good, was now tainted and broken. Sin had entered the world all because two people had listened to a lie. They chose not to believe in God by disobeying His Word.

**At the root of sin is a disbelief in God by disobeying His Word.**

Instead of listening to her Creator and King, she listened to one who questioned the very foundation upon which she was building her life.

*Gen. 3:8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." 11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

**A broken kingdom (vv.8-13).** Now sin shapes and forms the faculties of men and women. While the King cannot be dethroned, his rule in their hearts has been shattered. They have usurped His reign for their own loves. They've left the true King to follow the lordship of something far inferior.

*Shame and guilt (v.8).* Before this moment, Adam and Eve had nothing to hide. They were completely naked. Their innocence, their purity, and their confidence was perfect. They felt no sense of insecurity for their relationship with their God was perfect and their relationship with each other was perfect. Because of sin, shame, guilt, and insecurity become part of a fallen world, a broken kingdom.

*The blame game (v.12).* Where there was once perfect harmony, now there was relational discord. Adam seeks not only to blame Eve — even though the text clearly says He was there — but more importantly seeks to blame God for giving Him Eve. His heart turned on the One who had made it, who had placed good desires within it, who had formed and fashioned His loves.

*Death (Gen 5:5).* Adam and Eve could live in the presence of God in perfect harmony forever and ever. They could partake of the tree of life until they were full to the brim.

But because they sinned, death became a reality.

We often hear the phrase "she died of natural causes." We understand what it means. Nothing tragic happened. Nothing surprised the deceased and/or their family and friends. But there are no natural causes of death. For there is nothing so unnatural, so outside of God's design than sin and therefore death itself. We were created for life and life abundant (John 10:10). And life is meant for the Kingdom of God.

Gen. 3:14 *The LORD God said to the serpent,  
"Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock  
and above all beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.*

15 *I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."*

Gen. 3:16 *To the woman he said,  
"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you."*

Gen. 3:17 *And to Adam he said,  
"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
'You shall not eat of it,'  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;*

18 *thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.*

19 *By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return."*

Gen. 3:20 *The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

Gen. 3:22 *Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" 23*

*therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*

**The merciful Judge (vv.14-19).** In response to their treasonous rebellion, God judges the serpent and the couple. And yet His judgment carries the fragrance of mercy.

*Judgment.* Eve's judgment includes increased pain and suffering in the act of childbirth as well as an idolatrous desire for her husband that will not be reciprocated.

Because Adam listened to the voice of his wife instead of his King, his work will be frustrated and toilsome. This isn't to say that work is inherently frustrating and toilsome, for God gave Adam and Eve the gift of work in the garden. Rather, this is to say that *now* his work will be wrought with exasperation.

*Mercy (v.15).* But couched within the judgment of the serpent is a glimpse of mercy. It says in v.15,

15 *I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."*

The word "offspring" here is singular. This text foresees One who will conquer the enemy, who will crush the serpent, who will bruise the head of the Evil One.

While Adam and Eve's actions have terrible consequences, all is not lost, for God introduces the idea that the serpent will be overcome through an offspring of the woman. From Genesis 4 onwards the reader's attention is directed to this offspring.<sup>9</sup>

There's a glimpse of a Redeemer, a Savior, a Lord who will defeat His enemy with authority.

Instead of God letting death consume his image-bearers, he extends mercy for life.

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<sup>9</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 107

*Exile (vv.22-24).* But His holiness demands separation.

Expelled from God's presence, they lose their holy and royal status and are unable to fulfill the commission God gave them to extend his temple and kingdom throughout the earth. By obeying the serpent, Adam and Eve take on his image and defile the earth.<sup>10</sup>

Sin creates relational damage for both our relationships with each other, but most importantly with God. The physical exile of Adam and Eve from the garden marks the relational distance between them because of their rebellion against His reign and rule.

No longer is Adam the one guards the garden, now there are angels with a flaming sword defending the kingdom and the King. The image-bearers now resemble broken mirrors, muddied images.

### ***Summary of The King and His Glory***

The picture painted in Genesis 1-3 is one where a King, seated in glory and splendor creates a kingdom to manifest His glory. He creates people who will reflect and mirror His glory throughout the world. He commands to be fruitful and multiply in order that His glory might spread throughout all the earth. His vice-regents form a spiritual and relational coups against their Creator and King, placing themselves on the throne of His rule. Their sin leads to a de-creation of the world that God made, a shattering or splintering of the kingdom God had in mind. Removed from His presence, they are spared their lives because He promises one who will conquer His and their enemy.

For a couple who listened to the mutinous words, "take and eat," God responds one day by sending that Redeemer. In a reversal of it's meaning and consequences, Jesus sits with His disciples, His closest friends and says, "**this is my body ... take and eat**" (Mark 14:22).

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<sup>10</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 107.