

OVERVIEW

This lesson expands upon the smaller pamphlet called *The Story* I give to new individuals.

The Story explains the storyline of Scripture at a high level. This high-level view of the Bible is called the *Big Picture* of Scripture.

The Big Picture is similar to the view a helicopter pilot has, versus a man on the ground. The focus is on the overview of the Bible, and not on the individual events. Some of the questions answered are, who is God? Who is man? What happened to cause the chaos we see in the world today? And, is there hope for humanity?

This view presents the storyline of the Bible in four different elements: Creation, Fall, Rescue (Redemption), and Restoration.

The first section gives an introduction, and the following section provides Scriptures to allow a person to delve into more details.

Creation (Gen 1-2)

Creation teaches us about the initial creation of the earth and heavens as God's abode, which he wants to share with mankind.

The creation was meant to be a global temple, where the transcendent God fellowships with mankind.

This narrative is presented to us mainly in Genesis 1 and 2. Adam and Eve, the first humans, were created by God and placed in the Garden of Eden. They were created in the image of God, with the purpose of displaying God's glory in the created realm. Dominion was one way that man displays the image of God. Man was created to reign, and to display God-like virtues in their relationships with one another, and to the creation itself. The analogy of a mirror has been used to describe the image of God. The mirror reflects the light of the Sun. Man was created to worship God as the center of their existence, and to live in peaceful, loving community with Him and with fellow men. Note that their identity was found in their Creator. The initial creation was peaceful and harmonious. Mankind was at peace with God, with fellow man, with the physical creation, and their bodies were functioning in a harmonious manner, with no death, disease or decay. They didn't have to worry about scarcity of food or a lack of safety. Everything was provided for them. They were commissioned by God to exercise dominion over the earth, to tend the creation and keep it orderly, and to reproduce, creating other fellow image-bearers of God, which would fill the earth with others who reflected the image of God.

The Fall (Gen 3, Rom 5:12-17)

The Fall teaches us about the disruption of this creation harmony.

This disruption occurred soon after the creation, and is described in the chapters of Genesis 3 and Romans 5. God allows Satan, through the serpent, to tempt Adam and Eve, as a necessary test of their loyalty and trust in Him and his goodness and truthfulness. Adam and Eve yield to temptation, and, in unbelief, reject God as their Sovereign Lord and Father. Upon rejection of God, a momentous, earth-shattering event occurred.

Consider all of the benefits that God provided for them in the initial creation. Adam and Eve had safety, security, and bountiful food. Their bodies were designed in a manner where death, disease, and decay didn't exist. They were at peace with God, between themselves, and the creation. They didn't have to worry about anything. In one moment of time, this changed.

This situation didn't affect Adam and Eve alone. Adam served as our representative when he rebelled against God. Because of his decision, mankind was plunged into separation from God. In a spiritual sense, mankind died, because God is the source of spiritual life, and mankind experienced a spiritual separation from Him. He experienced relational conflict in the family and society at the same time. The environment has been affected due to the Fall, too. The earth no longer produces food easily due to the results of the Fall. And, worst of all, he was expelled from the presence of God.

The state of the fallen man is being "in Adam". The fallen man is represented by his ancestor Adam, by virtue of physical birth, until he is redeemed. The time period called the "present evil age" begins at the point of Adam's sin.

Rescue (Ps 22, Is. 52-53, Matt 26-28, Mark 14-16, Luke 22-24, John 18-21)

Rescue is about God's rescue plan, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, to reverse the effects of the Fall.

After the Fall, God would have been perfectly just in leaving mankind in his sin, to suffer the consequences: eternal death. That's really what humans deserve for rebelling against God; all of us. Adam's sin is our sin, but we personally sin individually in thought and deed. Not a single person is sinless. God is just. This means that he always punishes sin and doesn't leave anyone that sins unpunished. God is merciful and loving, though.

This rescue plan was presented to mankind in the OT in "fuzzy pictures" such as shadows and types; vague prophecies of Jesus' rescue mission. The fulfillment of God's rescue plan, though, is comes to us in the NT, specifically the Gospels.

Because of this great mercy and love, the Father sent the Son, Jesus Christ, on a rescue mission to redeem mankind. Jesus, who is the unique God-man, acquired a second nature during the Incarnation, being fully God and fully man.

Jesus accomplished five things on this rescue mission: 1) he lived a perfectly righteous life, committing no sin whatsoever, in thought or deed 2) he died a substitutionary death on the cross to pay the penalty for man's sin 3) he showed man the image of God expressed in a human, so that we can imitate him 4) he planted the seed of his kingdom through proclaiming this kingdom, and entrusted it to his apostles 5) he revealed God the Father to us, and the potential sonship we can enjoy with Him and 6) he qualified to be our Messiah-King and High Priest through his sinless life and the sufferings he endured.

He will reign as Messiah at his return. God's purpose for mankind will be restored, in the sense that Jesus, the perfect Man, will reign over all creation. He has proven his worthiness to rule over all. He was totally sinless and obedient unlike our father, Adam. He demonstrated his great love for us, because he loved us enough to die an agonizing death on the Cross in our behalf, even while we were his enemies. And, he will share his reign with those who belong to Him.

Restoration (Rom 5:18-21, Rev 21-22)

Restoration teaches us about the restoration of fallen mankind from the curse of the Fall. This restoration has a current fulfillment and a future fulfillment.

The **current fulfillment** relates to the Church. When a sinner is redeemed, he becomes a new creation.. He experiences a change in status, identity, and behavior. The fallen man is represented by his physical ancestor, Adam, and is characterized by a sinful

nature. When he repents of his sins and places his faith in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the Cross and the resurrection, he is “born again”. His status changes from being “in Adam” to “in Christ”. He becomes a new creation in Christ. He receives a new nature that wants to please and obey God. His relationship with God is restored, and he experiences the presence of God in his life. He is added to the Church, the spiritual body of believers.

The Church operates as a new humanity, in Christ, and seeks to resolve conflicts between individuals in a godly manner, however imperfect this effort might be. They recognize Christ as their spiritual ruler and strive to submit themselves to him.

Believers are existing between two ages. They experience the “age to come” in an inaugural sense. This sense is not a complete fulfillment but is a partial fulfillment of the “age to come”.

And, Jesus himself is reigning in heaven. He will return to rule as God’s Anointed One, or Messiah, to reign over the New Heavens and New Earth.

The resurrection will occur at his return. The spirits of saints who have died will be reunited with their reconstituted bodies, which will be glorified. The bodies of saints which are still alive at Jesus’ return will be glorified without experiencing death.

The earth will be renewed, to remove the effects of the Curse. This New Earth will be a glorified version of the Garden of Eden, expanded to fill the entire earth. Those who are unrepentant and persist in evil will not share in this New Creation and will not be allowed to disrupt the harmony. They will suffer eternal punishment outside of this new creation.

Revelation 21, 22 describe the New Heavens and New Earth. Notice the sequence of events presented in the Big Picture narrative. Genesis 1-2 describes Creation, particularly mankind’s creation and the harmony in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3 describes the Fall. Most of the OT describes the promise of Christ and his rescue mission. The NT describes the fulfillment of this rescue mission. Finally, Revelation 21-22 describes the New Heavens and New Earth in a manner that mirrors the Garden of Eden.

This completes the overview of the Big Picture narrative. More details about each element are presented below.

CREATION

- God (YHVH) is Triune.
 - God (YHVH or Yahweh) is one in terms of Being (Gen 1:27, Deu 4:35, 6:4, 32:39, Mal 2:10, James 2:19).
 - God is three in terms of Persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19-20, 2 Cor 13:14).
 - Christians use the word “Trinity” to describe the Triune nature of God.
- God created all things through the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, Heb 1:10, Col 1:16-17).
- God is a communicative Being that reveals truth to us through His Word (2 Tim 3:16-17).
- God is eternal, unchanging, holy, merciful, loving, forgiving, compassionate, patient, kind, and longsuffering (Ex 34:6-9, Is 43:25, Num 14:18-19, Ps 25:18, 32:5, 103:3, 130:4, Isa 55:7).
- Adam and Eve were created by God in His image
 - They were created to image God’s nature, like a mirror reflects light, and to worship, honor and give thanks to Him (Gen 1:26-28).
 - They were given dominion over the earth, to reflect God in the sense of being his ruling representative over the created order (Gen 1:28).
 - The marital, family, and societal relationship are meant to image God’s communal nature; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have lived since eternity in community, reflecting love in this relationship. God’s nature is described as love (1 John 4:16).
 - Their entire lives, in all spheres of influence, were meant to reflect God’s holiness (moral purity) and love, as image-bearers of God.
 - They were created to worship and desire God, and to enjoy worshiping Him, because they are fulfilling their intended purpose.
 - They were created to find their identity in Him. Mankind has been blinded concerning this true identity.
- They were placed in the Garden of Eden, a paradise garden where they fellowshiped with God in His presence, enjoying peace, tranquility, wholeness and fullness in every way (the Hebrew word for this state is *shalom*). In a sense, the Garden of Eden was like a temple, where man enjoyed the presence of God and communed with him.
- They were at peace with God, between themselves, with the physical creation, and their bodies were not subject to death or decay (Gen 1-2).

FALL

- God allowed Satan to tempt Adam and Eve, through the serpent to test their trust and allegiance (Genesis 3).
- Satan tempted mankind to question God’s goodness, trustworthiness and truthfulness (Gen 3:4-6).
- Adam and Eve were given dominion over all the creation and should have thrown the evil serpent out of the garden, exercising dominion over him and the evil he represented, but they failed to do this (Gen 1:28). Cain made a similar decision in his personal life concerning personal evil, which is personified in animal-like language (Gen 4:7).
- Satan succeeded in creating doubt in Adam and Eve concerning God’s goodness. They sinned against God, breaking his moral law and rebelling against him (Gen 2:17, 3:1-7, 1 John 3:4). They chose to trust the lie of the serpent, rather than God (Rom 1:25). All mankind has made a similar choice to reject God and his Word.
- Fellowship and worship between God and man was interrupted. Adam and Eve’s existence no longer revolved around God (Rom 1:25).
- The image of God in Adam and Eve became marred or shattered, so that they no longer reflected the image (glory) of God anymore (Rom 3:23).
- Instead of reflecting the light of God’s glory, they began to dwell in spiritual darkness due to their separation from Him. Their thinking became distorted and futile, and they turned the creation into a false god which rules over them, rather than them ruling over it, according to the original design (Rom 1).
- Idolatry is the fundamental sin; we substitute God and a relationship with Him in order to pursue worthless substitutes (Rom 1).
- Adam and Eve incur the penalty of spiritual death, which is separation from God, who is the source of all spiritual

life (Gen 2:16-17, 3:1-24, Rom 6:23, Eph 2:1-2, 4:17-18, Col 2:13).

- As a result of their rebellion, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden and the presence of God (Gen 3:22-24).
- Adam is the representative of all fallen mankind, and his disobedience was imputed to all of mankind (Rom 5:17-19).
- Fallen man is "in Adam", a phrase used to describe the fleshly, spiritually dead, natural man who is not living a life in union with Christ (Rom 5:12-17, Eph 2:1-3).
- Fallen man is in a state of hostility against God and his laws, and as a result, he is an enemy of God and under His wrath and condemnation (Rom 1:30, 5:9, 8:7, Eph 2:1-3, 5:6, Col 1:21).
- Fallen man is in bondage to sin and Satan, and is being deceived by him (John 8:34, Rom 6:8, 1 Jn 3:8-10, Rev 12:9).
- Fallen man not only sins against God himself; he leads others into sin, including family and friends who are affected by the example of his disobedience. Sin is like a cancer that has wreaked damage upon us, our families, and society in general (Rom 1:28-32).
- Human society, called "the world", or the "domain of darkness", is Satan's instrument for spiritually deceiving mankind and enslaving them, until God liberates them (Acts 26:17-18, Col 1:13, Eph 2:1-10).
- Satan hates the image of God, and seeks to hinder man's salvation, and to render the saved man spiritually unproductive. He does this by various means, including bondage to sin, addictions, and unhealthy relationships.
- Adam's decision to reject God and his governance has cosmic implications for the entire creation. As a result, the physical creation reflects a bondage to decay (Rom 8:20).
- The cumulative effect of the Fall is called "the Curse" (Gen 3:14-19, Gal 3:10-14, Rev 22:3).
- The Fall begins a time period called "present evil age" or "this age" or "this world", which will continue until Jesus' return and the establishment of the "age to come" (Gen 3:14-19, John 16:11, 1 Cor 2:6, 8, Gal 1:4).

RESCUE (REDEMPTION)

- The Rescue was first promised on the OT, through shadows and types ("fuzzy pictures), and then fulfilled in Jesus Christ and his life, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection (Ps 22, Is 52-53, Matt 26-28, Mark 14-16, Luke 22-24, John 18-21).
- Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to redeem mankind from the results of the Fall (Col 1:15-23, 2:9, 1 Jn 3:5-10).
- Jesus was the "seed of the woman", being born miraculously of the virgin Mary, and destined to crush the head of the "serpent", who is Satan. His "heel" was bruised, referring to the crucifixion, but he crushes the head of the serpent, dealing a destructive blow (Gen 3:15, Rom 16:20)
- Jesus is fully God and fully man; he is the bridge between man and God.
- Jesus qualified to be our Messiah through conquering Satan and his temptations (Matt 4:1-11, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1-13), as Adam should have done in the Garden of Eden.
- Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life, showing us what the image of God expressed through a man looks like (2 Cor

5:21, Heb 4:15, 1 Pet 1:19, 2:22, 1 John 3:5). He reflected God's character perfectly (Heb 1:3).

- He died a substitutionary death on the cross, suffering the penalty for sin and the curse of the Fall in our place, even though he didn't deserve it (Gal 3:10-14, 1 Pet 2:24-25).
- The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross reflects God's justness as well as His sacrificial love and mercy; He never compromises with sin and always punishes it, but His mercy is shown in that He paid the penalty for our sin through Jesus Christ, and punished Him on the Cross (Is 52-53, Jn 3:16).
- Jesus qualified to be a faithful and sympathetic high priest, by experiencing temptations and suffering so that he can be compassionate towards those he represents (Rom 5:12-19, Heb 4:15-16).
- At the death of Jesus, the veil in the Temple was ripped. This veil was a physical representation of our alienation from God due to the Fall (Matt 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45, Heb 8-10). Jesus eliminated this barrier between redeemed humans and God.
- Jesus conquered over death, defeating it by dying on the Cross (Col 1:14-16).
- Those who are united with Him through faith share in the benefits of the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ. They are joined, or united with Christ in a legal and vital sense, and were crucified with Him, died with Him, and are resurrected with Him. They are joined with Him, becoming one with Him and sharing in his life. Read John 15:1-17, Romans 6, 7, Gal 2:20, 1 Cor 6:17.

RESTORATION (CONSUMMATION)

- The believer moves from a state of being "in Adam", represented by him and his death, condemnation, and sinfulness, to a state of being "in Christ", and represented by him and his life, justification and righteousness (Romans 5:12-20, 2 Cor 5:17, Col 1:27).
- The believer is justified, or accounted as innocent and righteous, on the basis of his faith in Jesus, his sacrifice on the cross and resurrection, and not by works (Rom 5:12-21, Eph 2:8-10).
- The believer is united with Christ in a legal and vital sense (Rom 6). Due to union with Christ, the merits of Christ's perfectly righteous life are applied to the believer upon salvation as a free gift; we are righteous because we are identified with Him and his righteousness (Rom 5:15-21).
- The believer is joined with Christ in a spiritual sense upon conversion, and enjoys union with him and other believers through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:17, 10:17, Gal 2:20, 2 Cor 13:5). He is placed into the body of Christ as a result of being born again (1 Cor 6:17, 12:12-13).
- Metaphors related to this union include the vine and the branches (John 15), the head and the body (1 Cor 12), the temple and the stones (1 Pet 2) and marriage (Eph 5).
- The two ordinances of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are related to this union with Christ. The believer is identified with Jesus' crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection through water baptism (Col 2:12, Rom 6:4, Gal 2:20, 3:27) and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:16, 11:27).
- The believer is joined to Christ in a spiritual sense through the Holy Spirit (Gal 2:20, 2 Cor 13:5). This union is important because it gives us spiritual strength

and allows us to grow in holiness, endure temptation, persecution and suffering (Phil 4:13).

- The believer is progressively transformed by the Holy Spirit into the image of Jesus Christ (who is God) over His lifetime, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as He continues to grow in grace and knowledge (Rom 8:28-30, Col 3:10, 2 Cor 3:18).
- Satan hates the image of God within the believer, and seeks to destroy it, as well as hinder spiritual growth (Rev 12:17). The Christian needs to be aware of Satan's devices, and draw close to God to avoid being rendered unproductive (2 Cor 2:11, James 4:7-10, 1 Pet 5:8).
- The believer is adopted by God as a son. God disciplines all his sons, so that they can share his holiness, and completes the work that he starts in them (Heb 12:3-11, Phil 1:6).
- God gives the believer works to do throughout His life, especially witnessing to the excellency of God and of Jesus and serving as an instrument in reconciling others to God, as New Covenant priests (Eph 2:8-10, 2 Cor 5:11-21, 1 Peter 2:9).
- The believer becomes a member of the Church community, which experiences the "age to come" in an inaugurated but not consummated sense (prolepsis).
- The inaugurated "age to come" began at Jesus' first coming (Matt 4:17).
- The fully consummated "age to come" begins at Jesus' coming, though (Heb 6:5, Eph 1:21).
- At death, the believers' spirit enters into the presence of the Lord as a disembodied spirit (Lk 23:43, 2 Cor 5:6-8, Phil 1:23). He enjoys the presence of God in heaven until the resurrection.
- At the general resurrection, when Jesus returns bodily to rule, the believer's spirit will be joined to his newly resurrected body and glorified, and he will have a body like Jesus' glorious body (1 Thes 4:14-18, 1 Cor 15).
- Rebellious mankind will be defeated at Jesus' return. Jesus will reign over all creation and exercise dominion over it. Jesus shares his dominion with the saints (Heb 2:6-8). His reign will be one of peace and righteousness (Isa 9:6-7, Dan 7:13-14, Heb 2:5-9, Rev 11:15-19).
- The entire physical creation will be renewed, and glorified mankind will dwell in the presence of God in the New Heavens and New Earth.
- This New Creation will be an expanded and glorified version of the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden was a mere "fuzzy picture" of the reality (Rom 8:19-23, Rev 21-22).
- There will be no more curse in this new creation (Rev 21:3-4, 22:3). Those who remain in rebellion against him will experience eternal punishment outside of this new creation. The exile of Adam and Eve from Eden, the banishment of unclean individuals from the camp of Israel, the exile of the nation of Israel from Canaan due to their disobedience are all types of this eternal punishment, which involves banishment from the blessing-presence of God (Rev 21:8, 27, 22:14-15).