

A Guided Walk-Through the Biblical Narrative

A synopsis of Genesis 1-11

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The pinnacle of this good creation was humanity; made in his image and given the glorious task of ruling everything as his royal representatives. The description of the garden – a slice of God's order in the uncultivated world – reinforces the special vocation human beings have been given. Alongside this vocation the Lord has given them wide permission as well as a single prohibition to observe. Tempted to question God's good intentions to them they transgress the prohibition, pervert the permission, and neglect their vocation and are driven from the garden.

This is not, however, the end of God's plans or of his commitment to them. In judgment there is grace, but destructive power of sin escalates until the whole the world is destroyed. Even this doesn't wash away the problem of the human heart and soon the world returns to its rebellious ways. Given God's commitment not to destroy the world again, the question becomes, what will he do to bring about his purposes in an unfaithful world?

The answer begins with Abram...

Part 6

26. Luke 9:18-27

Why this text is important to the narrative.

At nearly the mid-point of Jesus' ministry we find this turning point; Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Christ (or Messiah). This recognition is critical as it correctly identifies Jesus as the Lord's anointed and the one who will usher in God's kingdom and fulfill his plans and purposes.

What is striking is what follows Peter's declaration. It is only at this point that Jesus begins to teach that the Messiah would suffer, die, and be raised to life. While there was a great deal of variety in Jewish thought about the Messiah, the suffering and death of the Messiah was not part of it! Jesus reorients the disciples to God's plans and purposes, or tries to! The struggle to understand this forms a tension in the narrative!

For further reading:

- a. Luke 9:10-17. The feeding of the 5000 is a miracle that is told by all four gospel writers – an important story for them and for us. It echoes Moses' leadership of the Israelites and God's provision for his people in the wilderness. It points to the provision of Jesus – the bread of life (see John 6:1-15, 25-40).
- b. Luke 9:28-36. In Luke's account, the disorienting teaching of Jesus that the Messiah had to suffer and die, is followed by the transfiguration. Jesus is transformed before Peter, James, and John. They briefly see his glory – along with Moses and Elijah – as “proof” that his unexpected predictions are, indeed, the very word of God.

27. Luke 2:7-22

Why this text is important to the narrative.

Jumping ahead in the narrative we come to the Last Supper. The setting is the Passover; the remembrance of God's salvation from slavery in Egypt in accordance to his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord's great act of salvation was not, however, the end, but a beginning. The people of Israel were invited into a covenant relationship *after* they were saved. Jesus makes reference to the new covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31-34) and there is a parallel in the salvation and new relationship in Jesus with that which he refers to in the Passover.

For further reading:

- a. Luke 23:32-43. Jesus' death, just as he said it would happen, transforms his death from a tragic accident or political miscalculation to the divine will. His death, with all its implications – as Passover lamb – has led to endless meditation and adoration. This becomes the basic of the Christian ethic (see Phil. 2:5-11).
- b. Luke 24:1-12. The resurrection, again as Jesus predicted, was the divine vindication of all that Jesus had said about himself and his suffering!

28. Luke 24:1-12

Why this text is important to the narrative.

Jesus' interaction with the two disciples reminds us of how difficult it was to understand how the suffering the Messiah could have possibly been the will of God. Jesus "begins with Moses" in his explanation to them; a reminder of the ways in which Jesus saw himself as part of God's plans and purposes.

29. Acts 2:1-41

Why this text is important to the narrative.

In fulfillment of Jesus' promise the Holy Spirit is poured out on the disciples. This is seen as a sign of the times – a fulfillment of prophecy – and an indicator about who Jesus is! It is the birth of the church; the new kingdom of God.

30. Revelation 22:1-5

Why this text is important to the narrative.

In this "final" scene of the Bible we see all things made new (see Rev. 21:1-8). The heading in the NIV is "Eden Restored". There are differences – it is a city rather than a garden – but once again God is with his people in perfect harmony. This is the future we are moving towards and which we are invited to participate in!

There are (obviously) many more passages we could have beneficially looked at, but hopefully this brief overview has helped you grasp the big story of the Bible!