The Word of the Lord, Part 2

Paul Tripp: “The Bible is not an encyclopedia, but a story.”

**ACT ONE: GOD ESTABLISHES HIS KINGDOM (CREATION) Genesis 1 & 2**

The curtain opens on the Biblical drama—its first act is God’s creation of the universe. As a supreme ruler, God calls all things into being by His sovereign decree.

Each creature plays a part in this grand symphony of creation, and every part is declared “good.” God’s creative work climaxes in His creation of human beings to be like himself and to rule the world as His stewards. And for this reason the psalmist can declare:
 Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
 the world, and all who live in it.

 Let the rivers clap their hands,
 let the mountains sing together for joy.

**ACT TWO: REBELLION IN THE KINGDOM (FALL) Genesis 3:1-13**

Bright anticipation characterizes the opening of act two. God had given Adam and Eve everything they need; their lives are rich and full as they delight in God and the gifts He has given. God had placed one restriction on them:

Their apostasy further ravages the harmonious relationship enjoyed previously between humanity and the non-human creation. Every relationship and every part of human life is now defiled by their betrayal. Already, even death has entered the world. As the

curtain closes on act two, Adam and Eve are in the middle of a mess. The whole world is now befouled by their rebellion.

**ACT THREE: THE KING CHOOSES ISRAEL (REDEMPTION INITIATED)**

***Scene One: A People for the King***

*Rising Tide of Sin and God’s Faithfulness (Genesis 3-11)*

How will God respond? Judgment and promise
The next few millennia, recorded for us in a few brief chapters (Gen. 3-11), are the story of two interwoven developments: a.) the increasing darkness of sin and
b.) God’s faithfulness to His promise to banish that darkness.

*Recovery Plan for Creation: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12 to end)*

In spite of human rebellion, God does not abandon His plans for His world. About two thousand years before Jesus, God sets into motion a plan that will lead to the recovery of the world. This promised plan has two parts:
1.) Out of this mass of rebellious humanity, God will choose one man (Josh. 24). God will make this man into a great nation and give that nation a land and bless them.
2.) God will extend that blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18).

The rest of the book of Genesis traces the ups and downs of this two-fold promise.

*Freed from Slavery and Formed as a People (Exodus*

Four hundred years elapse before the story resumes. Abraham’s descendants, now known as Israel, grow numerous in Egypt. But success brings its own problems. Egypt’s king begins to perceive this expanding racial minority as a threat. To stamp out the perceived danger, Pharaoh reduces Israel to slavery. The book of Exodus opens at the height of Israel’s oppression under Egypt. Into this scenario of intense pain and tyranny God chooses Moses to liberate Israel from the brutal rule of Egypt so that Israel can return to God.

Their task is to mediate God’s blessing to the nations and to act as a model people attracting all peoples to God (Ex. 19:3-6). This is the calling that will shape Israel from this point on: they are to be a showcase people and model before the nations that embody the beauty of God’s original design for human life. After giving them this task, God gives them the law to guide their lives,and the people of Israel commit themselves to living as God’s faithful people.

In **Leviticus** we see how Israel is to live in communion with a holy God.

The book of **Numbers** contains the story of Israel’s journey from Sinai to Canaan. Unfortunately Israel’s unbelief requires that they spend forty years in the wilderness before arriving at Moab, on the threshold of the Promised Land.
In **Deuteronomy**, Israel’s leader, Moses, instructs Israel on how they should live when they arrive in the land.

***Scene Two: A Land for the King’s People***

*Entering the Land: Joshua and Judges*

The **book of Joshua** tells us how God keeps his promise to give Israel the land.

**The book of Judges** tells a sad story of how Israel turns from God and continually succumbs to the Canaanite pagan worship and lifestyle and ends with two

stories that illustrate Israel’s foul rebellion and with Israel’s repeated cry for a king to deliver them from this mess (Judges 21).

*Kings and Prophets*

Samuel is the last great judge, as well as a priest and prophet. **The two books of Samuel**, named after him, tell of a time of great change within the Israelite nation. Israel asks God to give them a king so they can be like the other nations (1 Sam. 8:5, 19-20). So God uses Samuel to appoint Saul, and then David, as the first kings over His people.

.. the splitting of the nation. The majority of the tribes break away in the north (Israel), leaving behind a few southern tribes (Judah).

From this time on, the two halves have their own kings. The books of **1 and 2 Kings** and **1 and 2 Chronicles** tell their stories. The story is of a downhill slide. Far from being a showcase to the nations, God’s people push his patience to the point at which He expels them from the land. God seeks to halttheir deadly course by raising up prophets to call them back to repentance. Elijah and Elisha are the prophets who feature most prominently in **1 and 2 Kings**. Through theseprophets, God promises that if Israel will return to him He will be gracious and continue to work with them. He also warns that if Israel continues to rebel He will bringjudgment and finally send them into exile. As Israel’s situation becomes more incurable, the prophets promise that God has not given up. In fact, He promises He willsend a future king who will usher in a reign of peace and justice. This promised king will achieve God’s purposes for His creation.

722 B.C the northern kingdom

586 B.C. the southern kingdom

*Exile and Return*

The ten tribes of the northern kingdom are scattered to the corners of the earth. The two tribes of the south go into exile in Babylon. Exile is a devastating experience for the Israelites. What happed to God’s promises and purposes? Had he given them up for good? During this exile, God continues to speak to them through prophets like **Ezekiel**, explaining why this crisis has come and assuring them that they still have a future.

The Old Testament ends with Israel resettling in the land, but resettling on a small scale and facing huge threats. They live in the shadow of the super-powers of their day. With the promises of the prophets echoing in their ears they wait for the day when God will act to deliver them and complete His redemptive work. As the curtain falls on act three, Israel has failed to carry out the task God gave them at Sinai, but hope remains because God has made promises.

**INTERLUDE: The Intertestamental Period**

During this 400 years, Israel continues to believe that they are God’s chosen people and that God will act in the very near future to bring His kingdom.

**ACT FOUR: THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM (REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED)**

The curtain rises. Into this setting of feverish anticipation for God’s kingdom steps a young Jewish man, Jesus of Nazareth. He announces the kingdom has

come—*in him!* God is now acting in love and power to restore the creation and humanity

to live again under the kind rule of God, the way God designed it all in the beginning.

The gospels, **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**, tell the story of this man Jesus, who claims to be sent by God to accomplish the renewal of the creation. Jesus, however, is not the kind of king Israel is expecting. “The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. And behold, I am with you always.”

***ACT FIVE: SPREADING THE NEWS OF THE KINGDOM (THE CHURCH’S MISSION)***

***Scene One: From Jerusalem to Rome***

The book of Acts begins with the sudden and explosive coming of the Holy Spirit, whose coming the prophets and Jesus, himself, had promised (Acts 2). He comes, intent

on bringing the new life of God’s kingdom to all who turn from sin, believe renewal has come in Jesus, and are baptized into the emerging kingdom community known as The Chuch. This new community is established and commits itself to doing those things that God promises to use to renew in them the life of the resurrection: the Word of God, prayer, fellowship with one another, and the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:42).

Acts ends without finality for a reason. The story isn’t finished. It must continue to unfold until Jesus returns.

***Scene Two: And Into the Entire World***

This is our place in the story! The church picks up Israel’s task of being a showcase of what God intends for human life (Ex. 19:3-6; cf. 1 Pet. 2:9-12**). The church is to continue the kingdom mission that Jesus began** **among the Jews, a kingdom established now among all the people of the earth.**

***ACT SIX: THE RETURN OF THE KING (REDEMPTION COMPLETED)***

The marvelous imagery directs us to the end of history and to the restoration of the whole of God’s creation.

***I am making everything new!***