

God's Big Story



Act One:

Creation

The first two chapters of the Bible provide the foundations for God's big story. While many have debated the 'how' and 'when' of these events, the writer of Genesis is more focused on the 'who' and 'why' of creation. We are introduced to the main character of this whole story: our God who is all powerful, making everything out of nothing; relational and self-revealing, speaking all things into being; creative and purposive, filling and beautifying all He makes.

We are invited to stand in awe at His power and worship Him. We are also introduced to humanity: God's beloved, made in His image; created for relationships with God, one another, and creation; entrusted to enjoy and steward all He has made. We are invited to experience intimate relationship with Him.



Act Two:

Fall

It doesn't take long for the central conflict of God's story to arrive. The antagonist of this story, our enemy Satan, takes the opportunity to prey on humanity's freedom, tempting them to put their own desires and decision-making above obedience to their Creator's words. Adam and Eve disobey God, committing idolatry by placing something within creation (themselves) in the Creator's place.

The entrance of sin into the world mars God's good creation and distorts the relationships He has established. Humans find themselves separated from God, at war with one another, internally displaced by shame and at odds with all creation. We are left to wonder how God will restore all that has been broken.



Act Three:

Promise

The Old Testament story of Israel reveals God's plan of restoration. It begins unexpectedly: an old, barren couple called to leave everything and trust God to lead them. God promises Abraham land, descendants, a special relationship with God and blessing through them for the whole world. God rescues Abraham's descendants from oppression in Egypt, displaying His mighty power and compassion. He gifts them the Torah, His teaching and instruction, so they can respond to the relationship He has initiated by grace.

They are called to live differently, set apart to make known God's character and purposes. But once they enter the land God promised, they face the temptation to be like other nations around them. Israel's story is one of repeated faithlessness and God's abiding faithfulness. Eventually the people are exiled from their land, but God remains faithful and restores them, continuing to point toward a new day when He will send His promised King to bring restoration once and for all.

Biblical studies lecturer and all-around deep thinker Melinda Cousins steps back and gives us an overview of God's big story in six acts.

The story of God is a good story; a story of hope and promise, welcome and restoration. And it's a big story, told throughout the whole Bible and lived throughout the whole of history. It's a story that forms us, and one we are invited to live out and share with our world.



Act Four:

Redemption

The New Testament opens with a genealogy, linking Jesus to all the Old Testament promises and hopes. Jesus bursts onto the scene, announcing that God's kingdom has come near. Through His words and actions, He demonstrates the nature of this kingdom. The invitation to His disciples is to follow Him: they can participate in this kingdom life and make known its invitation to others. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom leads to many expectations as to how He will reign.

These are turned upside down when He is executed as a revolutionary by the Roman Empire after being unjustly accused by the Jewish leaders. It looks like defeat, not victory. But God raises Jesus to new life, meaning His death was a victory not merely over the Romans, but over sin, evil and death itself. He has opened the way to new life and a new era in history. Nothing will ever be the same again.

Act Five:

Mission

Jesus ascends to His rightful place ruling all creation, then sends His Holy Spirit to dwell within His people, empowering them in the new life of the kingdom. The Spirit forms a new community, the church, characterised by devotion to God, devotion to one another and devotion to the Good News of the kingdom. People notice the way they live and ask questions, seeking to be part of this new community.

As the Gospel spreads throughout the world, new communities are planted in new places, drawing together people from different ethnicities and statuses. This creates challenges as they learn to live as family and be on mission together. They are called to live differently to the world around them, making Jesus known to all. Here is where we find ourselves in the story.

Act Six:

Renewal

God's great story is not finished. God has always imagined the renewal and restoration of all He created. He will return and set all things right. In Revelation 21-22 we are given a glimpse of the renewal of all creation, pictured as a beautiful, perfect, renewed city of Jerusalem. This is not some 'white fluffy cloud-land', but the complete restoration and enjoyment of all the goodness of creation in all its fullness. In this renewed creation, all the beauty of human achievement and creativity is refined and gifted as the starting point.

All relationships are reconciled and restored. All consequences of sin, brokenness and conflict, are gone forever. And God comes to dwell with His people once and for all. What Abraham and the prophets could only imagine, what Jesus brought within Himself, and what the Spirit is now a foretaste of, will be our experience forever.