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# the gospel story

HOW MUCH would you pay to be written into a famous novel? That was the question posed a few years ago by a nonprofit organization called the First Amendment Project, which hosted a very unusual fundraiser on eBay. The Internet auction offered the highest bidder the chance to be written into the next Stephen King novel. Seventy-six bids came in. The winner paid \$25,100 to receive literary immortality by, ironically, being killed off in King's story. Other authors decided to help as well, including John Grisham, who promised to write the highest bidder (\$12,100) into one of his books.<sup>1</sup>

It's amazing to think that people would pay big money to be written into a famous story. Perhaps it reflects a longing deep in our hearts, a longing to find our place in a story bigger and better than our own personal story.

From the time we can put together syllables and comprehend what other people are saying, we are fascinated by stories. Chil-

dren love fairy tales at bedtime, even if they are the same adventures they have heard dozens of times. Teenagers flock to the local movie theater to experience the latest stories coming out of Hollywood. Even adults enter the world of stories, curling up on the sofa with a good book, whether a biography of some famous person, a fictional drama, a romantic fling, or the history of a nation. From kindergarten on, we *live for* stories. Something deep within the human soul hungers for narratives and the truths they convey.

But stories are not merely for our relaxation and entertainment. We do not only live *for* stories; we live *by* them also. How we understand the story of our world affects how we live.

The Bible is a library of books that contain many different types of literature. Taken as a whole, the Scriptures provide us with a grand narrative—a great story in which every person is invited to take part. God has chosen, through His Word, to tell His children *the Story*, not a bedtime story that rocks us into a gentle sleep, but the story that we wake up to in the morning that explains why we exist. God’s Story tells us who we are, what has gone wrong with the world, what God has done to redeem and restore His broken creation, and what the future holds for His people, those who accept His offer of salvation.

The fundamental questions that define our existence find their answers in the biblical narrative. And if we are to live *by* the biblical story, it’s important that we rightly understand it and the good news at its heart.

## Gospel Debates

As I have posted various definitions of “the gospel” on my blog, I have noticed that people hear the question “What is the gospel?” in different ways. Some hear this question and immediately think about how to present the gospel to an unbeliever. Their presentation usually begins with God as a holy and righteous judge. Then we hear about man’s desperate plight apart from God and how

our sinfulness deserves His wrath. But the good news is that Christ has come to live an obedient life and die in our place. We are then called to repent of our sins and trust in Christ.

Others hear, “What is the gospel?” and think quite specifically about the announcement of Jesus. They focus on Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. The gospel, according to this second group, is telling people who Jesus is and what He has done.

Still others hear the word “gospel” and think of the whole good news of Christianity, how God has acted in Christ to bring redemption to a fallen world. They focus on the grand sweep of the Bible’s storyline and how Jesus comes to reverse the curse and make all things new.

Though there is significant overlap among these groups, advocates of each position often discuss and debate the others, convinced that taking a different approach messes up the gospel.

The Story crowd says, “If you only focus on the announcement of Jesus, you leave out the reason we need good news.”

The Announcement crowd says, “You’re adding too much to the gospel, confusing the truth about our sin or our necessary response of repentance with the good news itself, which is only about Jesus.”

The New Creation crowd says, “If you only focus on individual salvation, you leave out the cosmic sweep of what God is doing.”

The debate can be frustrating because the groups tend to talk over one another. But for the most part, I am encouraged by these discussions. Christians—young and old—are seeking clarity on the message that is at the heart of our faith. The motivation behind these debates is to get the message right.

## The Heart of the Gospel

Having perused these gospel definitions carefully and followed the debates that surround them, I am convinced that the different approaches to “the gospel” are more complementary than

contradictory. Of course, there is only *one* gospel. At its core, that gospel is the specific announcement about what God has done through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to bring about our salvation. The announcement of Jesus is the gospel.

Yet this Jesus-centered message needs context. The Story group is right to insist that the story is needed if the gospel announcement is to make sense. And the New Creation crowd is right to insist that we place our individual salvation within the bigger picture of God's glory in the renewal of all things. This discussion brings us back to the threefold sense of the gospel I explained in the introduction.

The gospel is a three-legged stool. There is an overarching *story*, which recounts our history from first creation to new creation and demonstrates how God will be magnified as our all in all. Then there is an *announcement* about Jesus Christ—His obedient life, His substitutionary death for sinners, and His resurrection and exaltation as king of the world. This announcement finds meaning within the story. The announcement elicits a response (repentance and faith) that then births the gospel *community*, the church that puts on display the gospel announcement by holy living that provides a foretaste of heaven here on earth.

As we will see shortly, each of the counterfeit gospels harms one of the legs on the stool, which eventually leads to the toppling of the entire stool. So it is important that we think clearly about these three aspects of the gospel.

## Biblical Hints of the Gospel as Story

One of the clearest definitions of the gospel in the Bible comes from 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. Paul says:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to

you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

On the surface, it seems that Paul is speaking of the gospel in terms of the announcement: Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and has been raised from the dead. If the “gospel announcement” group is looking for ammo, they can add this passage to their arsenal.

But on closer inspection, we see that more is going on here. Paul repeats a phrase: “in accordance with the Scriptures.” Paul is linking the announcement of Christ’s death and resurrection to the promises made in the Old Testament Scriptures. The announcement is not divorced from the story. Rather, the announcement finds its meaning and fulfillment *according to the Scriptures*.

Paul is not the only New Testament writer who thinks this way. Each of the four Gospels also begins with a summary and recapitulation of Old Testament truth.

Matthew kicks things off with a genealogy, a long list of names that causes our eyes to glaze over. But just because we modern readers don’t understand the point of genealogies doesn’t mean Matthew didn’t. The ancestral line of Jesus that Matthew places at the start of his Gospel links Jesus to David and then back to Abraham. The point? Jesus doesn’t simply appear out of the blue. He is the faithful Israelite and the promised king through David’s line.

Mark’s Gospel is the shortest. He skips the story of Jesus’ birth entirely. No manger scene. No angelic chorus for the shepherds. No star in the east for the wise men. Nevertheless, Mark grounds his Gospel in the Old Testament. He starts by quoting from Isaiah the prophet (who had much to say about “good news,” by the

way). “As it is written” is Mark’s way of saying, “according to the Scriptures.” So Mark joins Matthew in hinting that we need to catch up on the back story if we are to make sense of Jesus.

Luke, the diligent historian, begins his Gospel by recounting the birth of John the Baptist. Ever the artist, Luke gives us the Old Testament backstory in a more subtle way: through song. When an expectant Mary visits an expectant Elizabeth, she bursts into praise. Her song places her squarely in the context of first-century Jewish anticipation of the Messiah: God “has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever” (1:54–55). Not long after, Zechariah prophesies, reminding us of David and Abraham. So Luke also relates the story of Jesus’ birth as the next chapter in a story already in progress.

What about John? The beginning of his Gospel harkens back to the creation narrative of Genesis 1: “In the beginning was the Word.” But John also reminds us of Jewish history, telling us that “the law was given through Moses; [but] grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

We need to pay attention to these hints we find in the Scriptures. The apostle Paul and each of the Gospel authors (in their own way) point us back to the Old Testament in order to make sense of Jesus. The gospel announcement—as powerful as it is, as central as it is to our faith—needs the gospel story in order to make sense.

## Knowing the Backstory

Imagine sitting down for the first time to watch *The Return of the King*, the final film in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. You start with the scene that shows Sam and Frodo approaching Morдор. From the music and intensity of the filmmaking, you gather that this must be a key moment in the story. But without any understanding of what has transpired in the past or any knowledge

of the shire, the ring, and the importance of these hobbits, you'd be hard pressed to know *why* this moment is so important or how the future of Middle Earth hinges upon Frodo's actions.

Television dramas work the same way. Many of them begin with a brief recap of scenes from previous episodes. The announcer begins by saying, "Previously on . . ." The retrospective clips remind you of the important moments in earlier episodes so that you can better understand what's going on in the current episode.

What do these clips communicate? That you are watching a story. And that if you want to understand what's happening now, you need to know what happened then.

We are two thousand years removed from the story of Jesus. We open up the Gospels and seek to understand them, learn from them, and apply them in a world much different from the one in which they were written. To be able to accomplish this effectively, we must keep the Gospels grounded in history. Without a clear understanding of the historical situation in which this announcement about Jesus is made, we are bound to misunderstand the emphasis of Jesus' message. We may be able to gather a few isolated theological truths, but the focus of the message may be off.

The sweeping story of God and humankind is written on the pages of Scripture, in poems, in psalms, in proverbs, in narrative, and in songs. But all of these genres combine to give us a history, and it is the story we are swept up into by the gracious providence of a loving Creator who desires to be endlessly glorified throughout all eternity.

So the gospel needs the story in order to make sense. The announcement may be glorious and true, but without the surrounding story, it can be misunderstood. It's important that we get the story right; otherwise, we will lose something integral to the plotline and wind up with a counterfeit.

## What Is the Gospel Story?

There are four main movements to the gospel story, and these four aspects accomplish several tasks simultaneously.

First, these movements answer key questions: *Where did we come from? What has gone wrong? What is the solution? What is our future?*

Second, each of these movements tells us something about God's character. God reveals Himself through the words He speaks and the actions He takes in each of these scenes.

Third, these movements highlight theological truths that we can state in propositional form. The story brings biblical and systematic theology together, placing propositional truths within a grand narrative. As we watch the story unfold throughout Scripture, we learn about God and ourselves in the process. So let's take a quick journey through the primary scenes of the gospel story.

### ***1. Creation***

The opening scenes of the Bible reveal an all-powerful God who speaks and the universe appears out of nothing. At His word, light pierces the darkness. He stretches the sky over the sea. He pulls dry land up out of the ocean and then gently massages it into mountains and valleys, hills and prairies. From the ground spring plants and bushes, solid oak trees and weeping willows, sunflowers and roses.

Like a painter splashing brilliant hues of color onto a canvas, God sends planets spinning and stars whirling into the vast expanse of space. He fills the sky with robins and bluebirds, eagles and seagulls, cardinals and herons. The sea teems with minnows and catfish, dolphins and whales, lobsters and crabs. On the land roam rabbits and horses, ants and elephants, puppies and mountain lions. Over and over again, like an artist admiring his handiwork, God looks at His colorful world and joyfully declares, "It's good!"

Then God made *us*. The first humans, Adam and Eve, lived in perfect harmony with one another and with God. As the pinnacle of God's glorious creation, we were to reflect the image of our Creator. We were given the task of ruling over this world wisely, an act of stewardship for the glory of our king (Genesis 1:28). We were to be mirrors of His majesty and a living testament to the good rule of our Father.

One Hebrew word sums up the picture of Genesis 1 and 2: *shalom*. Peace. Earth was full of God's *shalom*, the kind of peace in which everything works according to God's intention. The world was made for human flourishing, where we could live in joy in the presence of our Maker, worshiping God by loving Him and one another forever. Looking past all the galaxies and planets, looking through space and time, over and above the exotic creatures that filled the earth, God set His affections on us—His human image-bearers—whom He created to share in the joy of His love forever.

The opening pages of the Bible resonate with us because we know we were made for this kind of world. In *The Weight of Glory*, C. S. Lewis wrote:

A man's physical hunger does not prove that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that deep down we feel that the world has gone wrong indicates that we were created for a world that is right. The gospel story explains this longing for Eden by telling us that, in

the beginning, God created a world that He declared to be good. What does this movement of the story teach us about God?

- He is powerful.
- He is transcendent, directly involved in creation but not part of that creation.
- He is not an impersonal force like that imagined by the creators of *Star Wars*, but a personal being who delights in his creation.
- He is holy—set apart from us, the *Other*. He alone is God.

In the instructions He gives to Adam and Eve, God shows that He is to be glorified through obedience, through our submission to His gracious reign. Therefore, God has authority, the authority to create, to assign tasks, to forbid certain actions. But this kingly authority is not tyrannical or abusive. His authority is forever wed to His love, as a glorious display of fatherly affection for the good world He has created and entrusted to His human image-bearers.

## 2. *Fall*

Have you ever noticed how many children's films are about the main character being separated from his or her father? *An American Tail* tells the story of Fievel, a mouse whose curiosity leads him to a forbidden part of a ship full of immigrants. In a terrible storm, Fievel is swept out to sea and spends the rest of the film seeking to be reunited with his papa. When the moment of reunion finally comes, I get teary-eyed even now.

*Finding Nemo* is about a little fish who rebels against his father's wishes, gets caught by a fisherman, and ends up in an aquarium in a dentist's office. The film shows Nemo's dad, Marlin, traversing the ocean past sharks and jellyfish in order to find his son.

*Annie* is about an orphan girl longing to be reunited with her parents. *Home Alone* tells the story of a boy who wishes his family were gone (and comes to regret that wish!).

Stories of separation and reunion, exile and return strike a chord in our hearts. Why? Because these stories, in one way or another, mirror the great story of the world, which turns from a shalom-filled world of belonging to a devastating fall that leads to exile.

What happened? Adam and Eve rejected God's rule over them. We refer to their rebellious choice as "the fall," and because they represented all of humanity, their action affects us too. We speak of ourselves as "fallen," having a natural bent toward rebellion from the time we are born. The reason "fall" is an apt description of this event is because it implies that we have descended *from something* or, more accurately put, from *Someone*. We have fallen short of the glory of God.

Even though the world maintains traces of its original beauty, the ugly consequences of our sin have disfigured what was once perfect. Like a broken mirror that distorts the image, we no longer reflect God's glory as we should. Pain and suffering are part of our existence. Death has intruded into the world, and we all are haunted by echoes of the Eden we were forced to abandon.

*Sin* is a word that is fast disappearing from the modern lexicon. Sometimes even Christians dilute the word's meaning, minimizing the exact nature of what took place in the garden at the dawn of time and what takes place in our lives now as we daily choose our way over God's. We might think of sin as simply making mistakes. Or we might make ourselves out to be victims of suffering and evil. But sin is much more than these things.

Remember the Father who showered the world with His goodness and love in Genesis 1–2? This is the loving Father who owns us, who loves us, who cherishes His creation and seeks its good. He is the Father who watches over us and delights in our finding

delight in Him. Yet we have stomped off in defiance and chose to go our own way. We have broken His laws. Every sin we commit is like spraying more graffiti over God's beautiful painting.

Sin is personal. We are guilty of cosmic treason, asserting our own lordship over the lordship of God. We seek worth and value in something other than the Source of all worth. Our hearts are idol-making factories. We seek to worship anything—just not the One who has made us.

Make no mistake. Sin is *ugly*. And until you get a grip on just how ugly our sin is, you will never fully comprehend the gospel story.

The fallout from our sin is devastating. First and foremost, we are guilty before God and alienated from Him. The perfect fel-

lowship that Adam and Eve had with God in the garden of Eden has been broken. We are estranged from our Father. We have—through our attitudes and actions—declared ourselves to be His enemies. This rebellion results in physical and spiritual death.

Our broken relationship with God sends repercussions into all of society. We war against each other. We fight for recognition. The pride that would have us dethrone God is the same pride that

keeps others at arm's length. We are suspicious and angry, bitter and envious, deceived and deceiving.

We are plagued by shame and guilt—ashamed because our ability to reflect God has now been distorted, guilty because we have raged against our Creator in a remarkable display of rebellion. The evil of our sin attracts His personal, white-hot wrath. Ironically, our innate sense of justice causes us to long for God to be wrathful, to judge this evil. But we often fail to realize that for



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OUR LOVED ONES.**

God's justice to be enforced, we too must come under His judgment. All of us are guilty.

At the time of creation, the earth is shalom-filled. After the fall, the earth is shalom-shattered. God's intent to have humans rule the world rightly has been, temporarily, put on hold. Now, work is toilsome. Childbirth is painful. Natural disasters sweep over our lands. Nations rise against nation. Death snatches away our loved ones, and we sense its unrelenting approach hot upon our own necks as well. Even the created order groans under the weight of our sin.

The fall shows us that God takes sin seriously. He hates sin for what it does to us and to His good creation. He also hates sin because it is personally directed against Him and denies the honor that is due Him. He is firmly committed to upholding the glory of His name, for when His name is glorified, His people find their fullest joy in Him.

### ***3. Redemption***

Thankfully, the loving Creator who rightly shows Himself to be wrathful toward our sin is determined to turn the evil and suffering we have caused into good that will be to His ultimate glory. So the next movement in the gospel story shows God implementing a master plan for redeeming His world and rescuing fallen sinners. He will restore everything that our sin has broken.

Gospel storytellers too often jump from the garden of Eden to the death of Jesus on the cross. But the narrative of redemption doesn't begin in the New Testament. God reveals His rescue plan just after He exiles Adam and Eve from the garden. He promises that one of Eve's descendants will make right what she and Adam have done wrong.

The launch of God's plan takes place most clearly in Genesis 12. God chooses the patriarch, Abraham, to become the father of a great nation. Through Abraham's family (particularly, one

of Abraham's descendants), God promises to bring blessing to all the nations of the world. Though Abraham and his wife are elderly and past the years of childbearing, they take God at His word, believing that God can bring life from a dead womb. That kind of resurrection faith forms the heart of the people of God.

The rest of the Old Testament tells the story of God's chosen people, Israel. God acts on their behalf, rescuing them from slavery and bringing them to the Promised Land. God gives them the law to govern their lives together and to reveal the character of the holy God they serve.

All the seemingly needless details of the Old Testament actually serve the plotline of the Scriptures. In the temple worship, the office of the priesthood, the sacrificial systems, and the covenant that God makes with His people, we learn more and more about the rescue that God is planning.

But Israel, though called to be the people of God on behalf of this fallen world, cannot provide redemption. God's people are part of the problem. The law, though given by God for the good of His people, exposes human sinfulness and every person's need for God's righteousness. The sacrifices, though commanded by God, can never pay the price for human sin. They serve only to point forward to the perfect Lamb who will come to take away the sins of the world. Though appointed by God to rule wisely over His people, the kings of Judah and Israel demonstrate that they are far from being the King who will bring blessing to all nations through wholehearted devotion to God.

In the history of Israel, we see a pattern develop: blessing, rebellion, exile, return. God blesses; the people rebel; they are exiled; God brings them back. At the end of the Old Testament, Israel is nearly destroyed. The faithful remnant is exiled. And even as the people of God slowly find their way back to the Promised Land, they remain under foreign rule. They are longing once again for God to act, for God to bring about the climax of His

long-promised plan to restore the world.

The Old Testament is a story in search of an ending. The final pages show the people of God as scattered, waiting for redemption, hoping that God will act again to save them. The world continues to cry and groan under the weight of God's divine curse. The plan of redemption cannot go forward. God's reign—His kingdom—cannot be reestablished in the way He first intended unless a faithful, sinless human being was to offer the obedience required, pay the necessary penalty for sin (death), and be exalted as king over creation.

*Enter Jesus.* At just the right time and in just the right place, God comes to His people. But He doesn't come as the great Judge, purging the Promised Land of foreigners and reestablishing David's throne in Jerusalem. He first comes as the suffering servant.

In the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself comes to renew the world and restore His people. The grand narrative of Scripture climaxes with the death and resurrection of Jesus. By submitting Himself to His Father's will, even to the point of dying on the cross, Jesus undoes the curse of Adam. This Messiah-King takes upon Himself the punishment for human sin. His atoning sacrifice reconciles us to God, inaugurates His kingdom, and becomes the means by which we are remade into God's image. Jesus fulfills—through His perfect life of obedience, death in the place of sinners, and resurrection to new life—all that is necessary for God's rescue plan to be put into motion.

We will unpack the specifics of this gospel announcement in more detail in part 2. Right now, it is important to note that the way we can be caught up into this great story of redemption is by repenting of sin and trusting in Jesus.

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HIS PEOPLE [NOT] AS THE  
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THE SUFFERING SERVANT.**



#### 4. *Restoration*

The story doesn't end with redemption. God has promised to renew the whole world, and the Bible gives us a peek into this glorious future.

I remember with fond memories going to visit my grandparents as a child. My grandmother is an excellent cook, and we would visit once a week to have a meal together. From the moment we drove up to the house, we were greeted by the smells of the feast wafting into the driveway. The roast beef was cooking, and the cornbread was in the oven. Once I got a whiff of that fragrance, my stomach would begin growling. I knew what was coming!

In a far greater way, Christians are to live in the present by anticipating what God has promised in the future. We can smell the fragrance of new creation. The restoration of the world has already begun, but has not yet fully taken

place. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the life of heaven has invaded earth. The kingdom of God has begun to advance.

God has given us the Holy Spirit as the down payment on the future (see Ephesians 1:13–14). The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of what will eventually be

a reality for all who believe in Jesus: a new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).

God promises that the day is coming when there will be no more sickness and pain, no more sorrow and suffering, no more hidden tears and unanswered questions. The Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoevsky pictured restoration this way:

I have a childlike conviction that the sufferings will be healed and smoothed over, that the whole offensive comedy of human contradictions will disappear like a pitiful mirage . . . and



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**QUESTIONS.**

that ultimately, at the world's finale, in the moment of eternal harmony, there will occur and be revealed something so precious that it will suffice for all hearts, to allay all indignation, to redeem all human villainy, all bloodshed; it will suffice not only to make forgiveness possible, but also to justify everything that has happened with men.<sup>3</sup>

God is working in human history to make all things new. And nowhere is this more evident than in His initiative to call out a people—the church—and make them new by the power of His Spirit. The church is made up of those who have repented of their sins and trusted in the good news of Jesus Christ, specifically that Christ has died for our sins and been raised from the dead. When we place our faith in the crucified and risen king, we receive eternal life, the life of the promised world to come.

As the citizens of the kingdom that is coming, we become the presence of the future world. We don't build the kingdom or bring the kingdom, but we do seek to faithfully witness to the kingdom. And through His people, God continues to implement the victory Christ achieved on the cross. So we long with eager expectation for the day when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

The restoration of all things will take place in two ways. Christ will return to judge sin and evil, and He will usher in righteousness and peace. God will purge this world of evil once and for all. Since all of us long for justice, this truth causes our hearts to leap for joy. But since all of us are also sinners, this truth strikes terror as well. How will we survive?

The only way to escape the fair and furious judgment of God is to be on the side of justice on that day of reckoning, and the only way to be on the side of justice is by acknowledging our sentence served by Jesus' death and accepting our vindication proclaimed through His resurrection.

## Key Answers to Deep Questions

Herman Bavinck, a Dutch theologian, once summed up the gospel story this way: “God the Father has reconciled His created but fallen world through the death of His Son, and renews it into a Kingdom of God by His Spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

The gospel story answers the deep philosophical and spiritual questions that people wonder about: *How did we get here? Are people basically good or evil? Is there hope in this world? What happens when someone dies? What does the future hold?*

Apart from Christ, these questions cannot be answered consistently. That is why we as Christians must be bold enough to provide answers to these questions and expect the Holy Spirit to confirm these truths in the hearts of unbelievers.

This gospel story provides purpose for us here today. Over and over again in the Bible, we see how God uses actions and events intended for evil to bring about good. At the center of this narrative, we have the cross of Christ, where—within the greatest evil ever committed—God the Son provides the sacrifice for human sin and becomes the catalyst for cosmic restoration.

The gospel story also answers the longing that we have to be part of a story bigger than our personal stories but which is able to incorporate and add meaning to our individual experiences. Life is not random and meaningless. God tells us (and shows us) that there is a divine purpose at work behind all that takes place.

This desire for meaning and purpose behind our individual stories is wired into us as humans. The stories of this world can never succeed at tying all our individual stories together into one great meta-narrative. But where the world’s great stories fail, the gospel story succeeds.

We are part of a story that is about Jesus Christ, the King of the universe. The slain Lamb is the conquering King—through whom and for whom our world exists.

Ironically, when we live as if our personal story is at the center

of our universe, we struggle to find meaning and significance. But when Christ is at the center and we are pushed to the periphery, it is then—in that place of seeming obscurity and insignificance—that we find true worth and value, by giving glory to the crucified and risen King with whom we can become united through faith.

At the great finale of the history of this world, when the King returns and subdues everything under his feet, all of our unanswered questions will be resolved in light of the God who comes to dwell with man and wipe every tear from every eye.

C. S. Lewis called this new world “Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before.”<sup>5</sup>

## *Scripture Truths*

**THE GOSPEL ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL STORY:** *Matthew 1:1-17; Mark 1:1-3; Luke 1; John 1:1-18; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Hebrews 11*

**CREATION:** *Genesis 1-2; Psalm 19:1-4*

**FALL:** *Genesis 3; Romans 1:18-32; 3:9-20*

**REDEMPTION:** *Genesis 12; 17:1-10; Exodus 12; 2 Samuel 7; Isaiah 42:1-4; 53:4-11; Matthew 26-28; Mark 14-16; Luke 22-24; John 1:1-18; 3:1-21; Acts 2; Romans 3; Ephesians 2:1-10*

**RESTORATION:** *Acts 1:6-11; Romans 8; Ephesians 1; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; Hebrews 12:18-29; 2 Peter 3:1-13; Revelation 21-22*