

INTRO TO THE META-NARRATIVE – THE BIG STORY OF THE BIBLE

If I were to ask most Christians to give me an overview of the Bible, it would probably sound something like this: God created the earth, then there was a fall in Eden, then there was a great flood, then Abraham enters the picture and is about to sacrifice Isaac when God steps in. After that, Abraham's family goes to Egypt, where eventually they are brought out in the Exodus. Then they go to the Promised Land and establish a nation. Eventually King David comes along and things go well until the Babylonians take them away. Then some of them come back until John the Baptist and Jesus come on the scene. Then Jesus is crucified, resurrects and we have Pentecost. Then the disciples go everywhere spreading the Gospel, Paul writes a lot of letters and then we have the book of Revelation, and eventually Jesus comes back to take us to Heaven.

It usually goes something like that. Don't feel bad. The vast majority of folks would have trouble giving a coherent story line of the Bible. After all, the Bible is a large book with lots of smaller plot lines in it. And if we

are honest, there's a lot in it that we don't understand. We are 2 to 3 thousand years removed from most of it. **The bible "happened" on the other side of the world in a context that is totally foreign to all of us.**

If we continue to be honest, it can be boring to many of us. After all, how can an endless procession of shepherds and men in robes compete with what we see on tv? We live in an age where people purport to be "visual learners," which can translate to "I don't like to read." We live in a world of social media where we scroll through and past anything that isn't necessarily funny or deemed interesting. Even news articles now let us know how long of a read an article is. For most people, gone are the days of sitting down with a good book.

But a book is what God chose to give to mankind in order to bless us with His revelation of what He has done, our purpose and where it all ends. But I don't believe the Bible to be boring. In fact, as one of my favorite scholars has said, **"I dare you to bore me with the Bible."** It is full of intrigue, politics, war, relationships – both good and bad, the supernatural, and of course there are stories with nice endings also.

The Bible is full of all the things we see on tv and in the movies today. We love to watch as the good guys beat the bad guys. We love to watch superheroes whip up on super-powered bad guys. We love to watch the quests that hobbits and others go on, in order to find some long, lost relic in order to put things right again. All that is in the Bible. We just read over it.

Most of us, if we have been in the church for a long time, have been taught through filters.

Slide of filter

Filters are just that, filters that sift through things in order to control what comes out the other side. These come about through creeds, tradition, culture and denominations. Even non-denominational churches such as Calvary Chapel have filters. Some filters sift out the supernatural, while others sift out the more natural things. The ancient cultures in which and to whom the Bible was written are filtered out, leaving us trying to understand what is being said without the proper tools to do so. **But we don't need to be filtered from our Bibles. We don't need to be protected from our Bibles.** It is just this sort of thing that doesn't allow us to see, enjoy or appreciate the whole scope of the Bible; the meta-narrative, or the bigger picture. That is why the Bible has

come to most of in piece-meal fashion. But now it is time to see the Bible as the mosaic that it is.

Mosaic slide

A mosaic is a picture made up of a collection of small tiles, placed together to make a larger picture. You can't tell what the picture represents without seeing all of the tiles at one time.

It is impossible to enjoy and understand a book without knowing the major plot behind it. And that is what we are going to be studying for the next little while - the major plot behind the Bible. We will get into stuff like why did God create all this and mankind anyway? Why can't or doesn't He just "zap" people's minds in order to make them believe? Why is there evil in the world? If God knew what would happen in Eden, why didn't He do things differently? Do we have free will or are we programmed automatons? What's up with all the giants and fallen angels that pop up every now and then in the Bible? Why hasn't Jesus come back yet? All these things and more can be answered, but we may be uncomfortable at times as we learn these things.

The important thing to know is that if we read our Bibles as it would have come across to those who are in it, we can move from reading it or seeing it like that old, small

black and white tv I had when I was a kid, and we can “watch” it on a huge, super HD flat-screen. So, bear with me as we take a journey through the Bible and you’ll never see it the same way again, and it will never be boring again.

So, where do we start? Let’s look at some strange things – things that have most likely been filtered out or at the very least, been put on a shelf under the category of “What in the world is that all about?”

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ⁸ And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Did you catch that? God was in some sort of meeting with some group called the “sons of God,” and they were discussing what to do with Job.

Job 2:1 Again ¹there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ² And the LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ³ And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still ⁴holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him ⁵without reason.” ⁶ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁷ But ⁸stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will ⁹curse you to your face.” ¹⁰ And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”

There you go, its déjà vu all over again. Who are these guys, “sons of God” who are meeting with God? Let’s keep going.

Ps 82:1 ¹God ²has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of ³the gods he ⁴holds judgment:
² “How long will you judge unjustly
and ⁵show partiality to ⁶the wicked? *Selah*
³ ⁷Give justice to ⁸the weak and the fatherless;
⁹maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
⁴ ¹⁰Rescue the weak and the needy;

deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Psa. 82:5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Psa. 82:6 I said, “You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
nevertheless, like men you shall die,
and fall like any prince.”¹

Psa. 82:8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for you shall inherit all the nations!

What’s up with all this? It’s in the Bible, so we have to deal with it. We can’t run from it. We have to be honest – both spiritually and intellectually. Is this Mormonism? No, it isn’t. Is this polytheism? No, it isn’t. Relax, we will deal with this. Don’t be afraid of your Bible. Sit back and enjoy the ride. This is just an intro – a teaser, as it were. Let’s keep going.

Psa. 89:5 Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!
⁶ For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?
Who among the heavenly beings² is like the LORD,
⁷ a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,
and awesome above all who are around him?

8 O LORD God of hosts,
who is mighty as you are, O LORD,
with your faithfulness all around you?

God is definitely above all, but who are the holy ones – the council?

Gen. 6: 1 – 8 NKJV

1 Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them,

2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

3 And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” 4 There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of

the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

There’s that phrase, “sons of God” again. Who are they? And what is it with them coming to earth, taking women, fathering children and the result being giants? Once again, what’s up with that? Is it just an anomaly or is all this connected? And is it central to the Bible story or is it just some peripheral thing we don’t have to address?

Let’s continue.

Jude 6,7

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; 7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Now we have Jude speaking of “angels” having left their abode, and because of it, have been thrown into prison until judgement day. What does the phrase, “strange

flesh” mean? What’s up with all that? Now look at what Peter has to say about it.

2Pet. 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Peter and Jude are talking about the same thing, what we read about in Genesis 6. But why is that important? What does it have to do with us and the story of the Bible? Let’s continue.

Numbers 13: 32,33 NKJV

32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. **33** There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Let’s look at it in the ESV.

³² So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. ³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

Who are these giants, or Nephilim as the ESV translates it? Everyone remembers Goliath. How did he get to be that big and who are these giants in the land? Why are they there and from whence do they come? Remember Genesis 6? Let's keep going.

Dt. 32: 7 - 9

Remember the days of old;
 consider the years of many generations;
 ask your father, and he will show you,
 your elders, and they will tell you.
 8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
 when he divided mankind,
 he fixed the borders of the peoples
 according to the number of the sons of God.²
 9 But the LORD's portion is his people,
 Jacob his allotted heritage.

What's up with God dividing the nations and giving them over to the sons of God? There is that phrase again, "sons of God." What does it mean when it says that Jacob, or Israel is God's heritage?

John 1:12

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Those who believe become the "children of God" or Sons of God in the KJV? It's the same phrase in the Greek. How does this phrase or

term “sons of God, connect with what we have already read of it in the Bible?

1 Cor. 6:1 - 3

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

What does Paul mean when he says we will judge angels? How did that apply to the folks in Corinth? How does it apply to us?

Eph. 6:12,13

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Most of us are familiar with this verse. But what does Paul mean by principalities and powers? We will find out in the weeks to come.

We have jumped around a good bit concerning some really weird stuff. But we can't run from it. As strange as it may seem, these verses are central to all that has happened in history and these verses are not some sideline attraction to be swept under the rug. They make up the core plot that runs through the whole of the Bible and they affect our worldview.

- Don't freak out.
- Take things in stride.
- Your faith should be able to handle a challenge.
- People in the classroom.
- Enjoy the ride.
- See the meta-narrative, see the context of the Bible and be able to make better sense of what God has been doing and is doing in our world today.
- It's super groovy and I hope you can dig it!
- Next week we will begin this journey. And so much more of your Bible will make so much more sense. It will all begin to come together and then, as Paul Harvey used to say, you will have, "The rest of the story."

- God bless!