

Connecting the Dots: the Bible's Big Story

Review

- **Goal:** Explain the Reformed understanding of faith and life with clarity, humility, and no 'Christianese.'
- **Definition:** All of life lived according to the Word of God, by the grace of God, through faith in the Son of God, united by the Spirit of God, to magnify and enjoy God.
- **Core Idea:** God rules and controls all things in creation, salvation, and history (*the sovereignty of God*)
- **History:**
 - Often in church history, clarity about what we believe has come through conflict.
 - Our denomination grew from the 'Reformed' & 'Presbyterian' branches of the Protestant Reformation.
 - Without *abandoning* what we believe, we seek to be "as united as possible" with other churches.
 - Without *apologizing* for what we believe, we want to be *humble and sharpened* by other churches.

Today

- How does the sovereignty of God appear within, and connect to people, in the story of the Bible?
- The Bible contains 66 books, written over ~1,500 years by ~40 authors... what holds it all together?
- To answer these questions, we will look at both the *story* of the Bible – and *the story behind the story!*

The Story of the Bible

- The Bible's most basic division is between the Old and New Testaments – yet note the parallels:

Old Testament	New Testament
God creates the universe	God begins to re-create the universe
God creates the first man, Adam	God becomes the "last Adam," Jesus Christ
Adam rebels against God his father (<i>sin</i>)	Jesus Christ obeys God his father perfectly
God promises a sacrifice to save man from sin	Jesus becomes the sacrifice to save man from sin
Adam's sin infects all his natural descendants	Jesus' work covers all his supernatural descendants
God establishes a society to show the world the truth about God, man, sin, and salvation (<i>Israel</i>)	God re-establishes his society to show the world the truth about God, man, sin, and salvation (<i>church</i>)
Despite great prosperity, Israel fails	Despite great suffering, the church prevails
Israel waits for Christ to come & make them new	We wait for Christ to return & make all things new

- Within this overall story, the story of the Old Testament divides into ten basic stages:

Stage	~Dates (BC)	Books	Action
Prologue	Creation – 2200	Genesis 1-11	Creation, sin, the Flood, the tower of Babel
Patriarchs	2200 – 1805	Genesis 12-50	God calls Abraham; his family becomes Israel
Exodus	1446	Exodus 1-19	God rescues Israel from slavery in Egypt
Wilderness	1446 – 1406	Exodus 20 – Deuteronomy 34	God leads Israel through the wilderness
Conquest	1485 – 1375	Joshua	Israel conquers the land of Canaan
Disintegration	1375 – 1050	Judges – Ruth	With no king, Israel spirals into anarchy
Unification	1050 – 930	1-2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11, 1 Chronicles 1 – 2 Chronicles 9 Psalms – Song of Solomon	God gives Israel kings: a man after their own heart (Saul), followed by a man after his own heart (David), then Solomon's "golden age."
Division	930 – 586	1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 25 2 Chronicles 10 – 36 Isaiah – Zephaniah	After Solomon, Israel divides into two nations: Israel (10 tribes) & Judah (2 tribes). Israel annihilated by Assyria in 722 BC.
Exile	586 – 538	Jeremiah – Daniel	Judah exiled to Babylon, with a promise of future restoration; Solomon's Temple burned.
Anticipation	538 – 400	Ezra-Esther, Haggai-Malachi	Judah returns, builds Second Temple... but still waiting for God himself to return.

The Story Behind the Story

- Across the timeline of Bible history and amidst all its details, what holds the story together?
- The answer is God himself – the relationships that he established, guaranteed, and unfolded with man.
- Another name for these relationships is ‘**covenant**’:

What is a covenant?

A relationship that God establishes with us and guarantees by his word. (*First Catechism #24*)

- Did you know that the *entire story of the Bible* can be summarized as a series of two covenants?

Name	Terms of Relationship	Scripture
Covenant of Works (CoW)	<i>Promise:</i> everlasting life <i>Requirement:</i> perfect obedience <i>Representative:</i> Adam <i>Represented:</i> all people united by natural birth <i>Penalty:</i> death and separation from God	Genesis 2:15-17
Covenant of Grace (CoG)	<i>Promise:</i> everlasting life <i>Requirement:</i> fulfill requirements/pay penalty of broken CoW <i>Representative:</i> Jesus Christ <i>Represented:</i> all people united by new birth <i>Penalty:</i> death and separation from God	Genesis 3:15 – John 3:16

The Covenant of Grace – God’s Rescue Plan

- From Genesis 3:15 – Revelation 22:21, the “covenant of grace” unfolds like a movie through phases:

Phase	Story Element	Main Bible Texts	Key Points
Adam	Overall Plot	Genesis 3:15, Genesis 3:21, 4:4	God will provide a Savior who will save by suffering; God establishes blood sacrifices to picture this suffering.
Noah	Setting	Genesis 8:21-9:17	Salvation comes by passing through judgment; God promises to preserve creation until salvation done.
Abraham	Characters	Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15:6, Genesis 17	God’s plan will center on a people, place, and promise; The Savior will be born of this people in this place; Salvation comes through believing God’s promise; The seal of the promise is passed on to children.
Moses	Conflict	Exodus 19-20, Deuteronomy 27-28	The people of God become a holy nation; The place where they live is a picture of new creation; Their failure shows that salvation requires a new heart.
David	Hero	2 Samuel 7:8-17; Psalms 2, 72, 110; Psalm 22, Isaiah 53	The fate of God’s people will depend on a King; This King will be both a man and more than a man; This King will save God’s people by bearing God’s wrath.
Prophets	Catastrophe	Hosea 6:7 2 Kings 17, 23-25	Like Adam, Israel breaks God’s covenant; Their faithlessness leads to annihilation and exile...
Christ	Climax	Romans 5:19, Matthew 2:15, Jeremiah 23:5-6; John 3:16, 7:37-39	Jesus is the new Adam, new Israel, and new David; After his resurrection, he pours out his Holy Spirit; The Spirit gives new hearts, faith, and unites us to Jesus; The Spirit equips the church to worship, work, & witness.
New Creation	Happy Ending	Revelation 21:1-7 Revelation 22:1-5	All bad things will finally and forever come untrue; God’s people will dwell with him forever in unending joy.