

The Biblical Story

Introduction

“In the beginning, God . . . “ and off the reader goes . . . moving into another world . . . the world of story. Once having begun the journey he will careen through history, not stopping until he ends up at the final resolution. But the Bible is not just any story. It is the greatest story ever told; full of winding trails, rough seas, varied and unique persons; old as well as young, living, dying, mourning and laughing. It is ultimately a happy story, yet all too frequently, tragic. It is the story of many men and women, but really just one Man. It is, more importantly, the story of God; the great, unseen Being, who cannot be perceived by human eyes, ears or senses, the God of the great unknown.

Why a story? Why does an author choose to tell a story rather than just reveal 20 secret principles of life and let it go at that? Or perhaps the author might list 20 characteristics of God, or a list of doctrines. Very simply stories are able to communicate a message that no other medium can communicate. It cannot be done with poetry, or epistles, or with 20 secret principles, or even with 20 doctrines determined by church councils.

Story reveals character. And it does it like no other communication vehicle. It is through the story’s plot that one is able to come to know the very heart of the main character. For instance, if a husband wanted to tell someone about his wife and why he loved her, he might describe her beauty, personality, charm, intelligence, and even her ability to water plants with the best of them. That would be a lot of good information. But none of those statements would be the reason that made her stand out from the rest of many women with similar traits. The ultimate trait that endeared her to him was her character.

Now he could have simply stated that she had character, but no one would really know what he meant. He could say she was kind or caring and that would be good, but it still would not be enough. It would not relate the emotion, the passion, and the depth of her kindness. For him to relate that character, he would have to tell a story. It would be a real story that included how she responded to the tough times, how she took care of him when he was sick, how she had confidence in him when no one else would, and even how she stuck with him and forgave him even when he had wronged her, or even worse . . . he had wronged her in public. His story would invite the listener to go with him on his journey as he related the different difficulties she had suffered, and how she had sacrificed, unrewarded and un-thanked, time and time again. The listener would ride with the husband and relate to his situation, as this mate was the recipient of her loving and sacrificial responses, over and over. By telling how she had overcome each conflict, the storyteller would be able to relate a passion that would never have been understood had he simply said that she had “character,” or related her positive and negative traits.

That's what story does. Story is plot. Plot shows how the main character interacted with, and overcame, a problem in his life. Plot shows how this protagonist dealt with that problem, or conflict, so that the reader can see this main character in action. He sees his heart. In other words, the reader will see the main character's reasoning, the philosophy of life that allowed him to ultimately emerge victorious? The reader then can take that philosophy and apply it to his life so that he also can be successful.

It is, as James says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials . . ." James' point is that conflict presents a unique opportunity to exhibit the character received from God, the character of mercy. Without trials, mercy would never get a chance to be exhibited, and thus the character would never be expressed. On the other hand, trials may reveal an evil, self-centered character.

In the Bible, God is the main character, the Protagonist, the Hero. This story will show how God is confronted with opposition and destruction. The reader will, by means of the story, watch God respond to that conflict. It is in the way God overcomes the conflict that the reader will discover God's character. God will respond to this conflict by sacrificing Himself for the sake of His enemies. It is this very sacrifice on man's behalf that will cause man to admire this God and to worship Him forever.

Very early in the story, God reveals His plans, His goals, and His desires. God's purpose was simply to create a universe over which a "man", Adam, would rule on His behalf. This man was to represent all that God was through all the creation. All was well and good until a conflict occurred which threatened God's goals. This conflict was simply that the "man," who was created to represent God, failed. He didn't simply err. He turned God's creation over to God's enemy, Satan. God then would have to respond to overcome, not only the conflict itself, but a rebellious man and an evil antagonist. What would He do? It is in His action that the reader learns about this God, His character. It is knowing this character that is the reason why man will worship Him into eternity.

God will act in an amazing way. In short, He will move to establish His Son as the Man who will rule in place of Adam. But on the way to establishing His Son as Ruler, He will sacrifice Him for the sins of the old rebellious man and all who come from him. It is in this re-establishment of His dominion over creation that this great, awesome, unknown God will become known. His character of sacrificial love and mercy will be displayed beyond anything that one could imagine. He would sacrifice Himself to save the world that rejected Him.

Only when the reader knows this story, will he know this God. In addition, since this is the story of man's history, the reader will find himself in the story, and cannot avoid that fact. He cannot opt out since his life has been created by God to be a character

in the story. Thus as a character in the story of God, a man can side with this God and His Son and emerge victorious with them. He can place his confidence in this God who has demonstrated that He can deliver man through the death of His Son into the earthly kingdom yet to come. Or he can choose to disbelieve the story, disbelieve God's revealed character, and go with his imagined options and reject this God and His Son for alternatives that are not real . . . choices with disastrous and eternal outcomes. He cannot opt out. There are only two ways and to not choose God and His Son is to choose eternal disaster.

The story reveals that God had one purpose from the beginning. That purpose was to establish His Son on the throne of the universe. And knowing this Son and His sacrifice will reveal the character of this God, the great, awesome God of creation.

This God is exclusive. One must come through the provision of His Son. Understanding this sole purpose of God shows that universalism and inclusivism cannot work.

It is like a rich neighbor giving a birthday party for his son. If your son is a friend to the rich neighbor's son, he will be invited to go and eat ice cream and cake, wear party hats, play games, and generally have a great time. If your son doesn't like his son then your son will be excluded . . . no party hats, no games, no great time. In fact, your son won't even be allowed on the property. He will be on the outside looking in. This is the case with God. God loves His Son. If you love His Son then you will be invited to the great feast of all time, the Kingdom of His Son (John 3:35-36).

“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who does not believe in the Son will not see life and the wrath of God abides on Him.”

Only through the story will the reader understand God, the love He has for the Son, and the love They both have for their creation.

And so the story of God begins . . . and off we go . . .

“In the beginning, God . . .”