

PART V

An Introductory Illustration for Gospel Narrative

Matthew 10:5-6

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "**Do not go in *the way of the Gentiles***, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

(Mat 10:5-6)

Application

These verses occur in the Gospel of Matthew, 10:5-6. Here is what Jesus is saying by way of reading the imperatives.

- Do not go to the Gentiles
- Do not go to the Samaritans
- Go only to Israel

If you were preaching this verse and needed to apply it to your audience, what would you say? You couldn't tell your audience to go to the Gentile nations, since that is clearly restricted by this verse. In fact, if these imperatives are for the audience, they are restricted from taking the gospel to anyone but Jews.

So, this verse is seldom preached and most move instead to Matthew 28:19.

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee . . . ¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying . . . ¹⁹ "Go therefore and **make disciples of all the Gentiles** (i.e., "nations") . . ."

(Mat 28:16-20)

In general this is what the imperatives instruct.

- Make disciples of the Gentiles (i.e., "nations"). Note that when the word for "Gentiles" or "nations" is used in the plural in Matthew it always excludes Jews. Jews are designated by the use of the singular, i.e., "nation." Thus this command would be only to go to the Gentiles and exclude the Jews.

Summary

The question is; why does Jesus say **not** to go to the Gentiles one time (10:6) and then later in the book say to go **exclusively** to the Gentiles (28:19)? On what basis does the church (or you) use Matthew 28:19 instead of Matthew 10:5-6? How do you explain the difference in use? You cannot just pick and choose. The text itself must determine the application, not the reader, based on his present perception of what works.

Frequently interpretation of the gospels simply takes what Jesus says or does and applies it to ourselves, negating the things that don't seem applicable and accepting the things that seem to be good to do. Because of this some assume that Jesus is speaking to us as Jesus did to the apostles. Of course, by doing that, one incurs a difficulty to one's orthodoxy, since if one assumes this verse is the proof text for them, it necessarily excludes Jews.

Solution

It is important to notice that both commands are in a historical story or historical narrative. In other words, they tell something that happened in the past. Obviously the author does not mean that everything in a historical narrative is to be duplicated by the reader in his own situation. Thus, neither command of Jesus is, by itself, an indication that the reader should obey it! This is obvious since many commands by Jesus to the disciples are clearly not to be obeyed (e.g., "Go . . . find a donkey . . . and a colt . . . bring them to Me." (Matthew 21:1-2))

How one applies Gospel narrative is only found by learning how the author seeks to communicate a message to the reader, and from that message how the author wants to alter the reader's behavior (i.e., application). After learning how an author constructs narrative to impart meaning, only then may the reader know what the author wants the reader to do. Note the following command by Jesus to two disciples that no one thinks about applying in their own case.

When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "**Go** into the village opposite you, and immediately you will **find** a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; **untie** them and **bring** them to Me.

(Mat 21:1-2)

Why is it obvious to the reader that he is not to duplicate this imperative(s)?

- The reader is not approaching Jerusalem
- The reader is not with the historical Jesus in that situation and thus getting a donkey for Him would have no purpose
- Should the reader attempt to obey the command to search for the donkey he would not likely find one, and if he did it is unlikely that the owner would

agree for him to take it, and further even if he did and the owner consented, Jesus would not be waiting to use it.

The point is that it is an historical situation, a one-time incident that cannot be duplicated by the reader. In other words, the event/story is included in the historical narrative for some other purpose than direct application! So the question is, how does one apply (or not apply) these passages in both Matthew 10:5-6 and 28:19, especially since the same historical issues are present?

- The reader is not in Israel where Jesus will send the disciples in 10:5-6
- The reader is not one of the 11 (or 12) disciples to whom Jesus historically issues both commands
- If the reader did go throughout Israel with the message of Messiah, he would not be able to heal every disease and every kind of sickness as the disciples could, according to 10:1.

Thus, what is the justification to choose one imperative over another?

It is important to proceed to learn about historical narrative and how it makes its message plain. Only through an objective process can one determine what the action is (application) that the author wants the reader to apply. The answer to the whole conundrum is the nature of narrative, the nature of plot. Plot is story and story changes from the beginning to the end. Story is non-normative. It is not written for the reader to imitate the parts. Story changes! It is only the overall message (philosophy) of the book that will apply to the reader, and then only as it contributes to the larger Biblical story.

How Narrative, Story, and Plot Works¹⁸

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times¹⁹” begins the great British novel. And off into the past history the author takes the reader, careening down a road on which he has never been. He continues to ride with the main character, through his joys and sorrows, troubles and victories, until things finally wind down in the final chapter.

Stories are plot. They move from a beginning to an end, with the situation changing as time elapses in what is called plot. It is in the change of the story that the meaning or the message of the author is communicated. By the end of the story almost everything changes from what it was at the beginning. The main character frequently is not the same as he was in the beginning. At minimum, this protagonist (normally the main character) usually has learned something that he didn't know in the beginning, either through additional knowledge or experience. The circumstances are always different in the end from those in the beginning. Typically by the end, the enemies of the hero protagonist are defeated and he is victorious.

The Story of the Bible involves Plot

If there is one thing that is not commonly understood in the interpretation of the Bible and of the narratives that form its parts, is that it is one story, one plot. Within this Biblical story, things must, by nature, change. No longer does the reader fear eating the fruit from the center of the Garden of Eden. No one pilgrimages to Mount Sinai to wait for Moses to descend with the Law. No one looks for Jesus on the dusty roads of Galilee so they might talk with Him or hope to touch the hem of His garment and be healed. No one will travel to Jerusalem to see Jesus hanging on a cross, nor witness His resurrection. No longer can one stand with Peter and watch as the first Gentile joins the body of Christ in Acts 10. And no one travels to Jerusalem to see the King, Jesus, sitting on the throne of Israel and the world, for that is yet to come. The Bible is a story, a plot, and things and events come and go so as to play their individual, unique, part in the story. These events appear, contribute their segment, and leave. Story involves . . . plot involves . . . change.

¹⁸ When the term “plot” is used by itself in this writing it assumes a “dramatic plot” where the individual events move from setting through conflict through rising action to a resolution and a denouement. It does not mean “episodic plot” or anthology where the events are linked only by common theme and, while they may move in consecutive order, do not move through the above progressive plot sequence. The Bible frequently is interpreted (very commonly) as episodic plot or anthology and thus introduces considerable error since these episodes do not have enough information in them to interpret properly. Thus the interpreter includes his own perceptions into the interpretation and introduces error.

¹⁹ From “A Tale of Two Cities,” by Charles Dickens.

Individual Stories Are Part of the Larger Biblical Plot

Yet the Bible is almost always taught with the individual stories having independent morality lessons as if they stood on their own apart from the overall plot. Proof texts are the only way of life with many teachers and preachers, and are taught, not only apart from their immediate context, but also apart from their place in the Biblical plot. It is interesting that there appears to be **no** story in the Bible that can be interpreted on its own without knowing the preceding events and philosophies, and frequently, what is to follow. Thus the lessons of past Biblical historical narrative **become unobtainable** without understanding what part of the story the event occurred and how that part contributed to the overall plot.

For instance, David and Goliath is a story that is all too frequently applied to an audience by saying the audience can, and should, imitate David. The way this is done is to make Goliath a symbol for some evil that those in the audience are confronting (e.g., “facing your giants of envy, lust, greed”). Yet to do that the interpreter must change the real killing of a man into someone simply fighting off his or her envy, greed or lust. It’s a long way from killing a real man to the suppression of one’s self-centeredness. If David and Goliath is an example for the reader then why doesn’t the reader do what David did? . . . because David isn’t there as an example of how the reader should act. And so the interpreter changes the giant to symbolize something like one’s envy. This is solely an invention of the interpreter. Very simply God did not put that story in the Bible to teach people about conquering evils in their personality. To derive that meaning from the story is, not only absolutely wrong, it doesn’t work in real life. While David did kill a giant, one cannot kill their envy, lust and greed. As much as one tries, and hopefully we do, envy, lust and greed just keep hanging around. They are much bigger than that. They will hang around as part of our being until one’s body (and their evil character) finally lies down in the dust.

The story of David and Goliath was not written as a separate morality tale. It is an event in a plot and by itself it does not contain enough information to be interpreted correctly (e.g., who are these Canaanites, who is this David, what gives the Israelites the right to take the land from its occupants, or to kill every man, woman and child of the cities it conquers?). One cannot know its meaning without knowing what preceded it and what follows it. As one tours through the Biblical story it will be seen that David is being equipped by God to be His unique Anointed One to rule over Israel and the world on behalf of God. God is showing David that as God’s King, David will be enabled to conquer Canaanites if he trusts God. So God conquers Goliath to show David he can do anything if he trusts in the God that established him as king. Now that David has accomplished that great feat, David knows experientially that he can conquer all the enemies of God.

Now since there is only one Anointed One of God (i.e., the Davidic king) the reader cannot be Him. David was that one. Today Jesus is that One. The reader is not David, neither is the reader Jesus. The reader is not God's Christ. The Bible is not about the reader. It is about the Christ, the One who will conquer all for God. Could the reader have accomplished the actions that were uniquely for the Christ, then he would not have needed the Christ to save him from the enemies of God and put him in the Kingdom.

It is stories like this, lined up in order, which fit into the overall story that will reveal God's purpose, to establish the rule of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Type of Literature of The Bible

Thematic or Plot

First of all, to begin with one must assume the Bible is inerrant and inspired by God. As the reader continues he will see the beauty and quality of this book. The text of Bible was ultimately from the hand of God and is without error in the form that God intended. If one does not determine that this is true historical narrative then the reader will become a judge over whether the story is accurate, which parts are accurate, and even more importantly whether the message is true. If the reader does not determine that this is inspired historical narrative then the reader will piece things together based on his perception of what is right and ends up with a book that reflects the reader's theology, a theology the Bible was written to contradict, not affirm.

Having that as a foundation the interpreter must determine the type of literature that is to be interpreted. Determining the type of literature is not simply additional information for the interpreter to add to his list of tools but is to be regarded as important as language and grammar. To not understand the type of literature and how it works is to negate the very form that the author chose to communicate his message. That form is unique and is chosen because it imparts meaning in a unique way. For instance, a parent might use a bedtime story to impart some moral lesson. A parent uses story to communicate a lesson, even though it is less direct than just giving a principle of life. For instance, a bedtime fairy tale is simply an illustration so the moral is more easily understood by giving an example of its use.

Historical narrative may be illustrative, but frequently it is foundational.

Several years ago the book, "1776" came out. It is the historical narrative of America's founding retelling the stories from the siege of Boston through to the victories of George Washington that founded our country. When one emerges from reading this book, one does not attempt to duplicate the great feat of Washington's crossing of the Delaware River. In fact, there is very little that one can duplicate from the book. The events of that book list the establishment details of this country. When reading it I understood deeply the blood that was given so

that I could have my freedom. And it urged me to a greater sense of patriotism. In other words, it detailed for the reader the foundation on which he stood in America so that he could continue to defend its freedoms, standing on a foundation already established by these brave men.

The Gospels do the very same thing. As historical narrative, we as the reader see the foundation established by Jesus Christ on which we stand and from which we continue. We do not attempt to duplicate the stories in our own life since they cannot be duplicated. Jesus entered the world in Bethlehem born of a virgin as prophesied. Jesus was tempted by Satan like the first Adam and emerged without sin. Jesus went to the cross as a perfect Lamb of God, died and was resurrected because of His own righteousness. He ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father to fulfill Psalm 110. Now that He has accomplished those one-time non-duplicable feats, I now can walk in His perfect imputed righteousness. This is the prime meaning of the Gospels, the historical record of the appearance of Jesus, the Christ of Psalm 2, so that I can affirm who I am and on what basis I walk, and what is my hope for the future.

Episodic or Dramatic Plot?

The Bible is story or narrative (“In the beginning . . .”). And since the author selected narrative it must be interpreted according to the rules of narrative. One must first answer whether it is simply a recording of historical events for documentation of what happened or is it a selection for a moral or ethical purpose? Once one decides that this is more than a documentation of history, the second question is; are the stories tied together loosely (thematically, and to be interpreted separately) or are they tied together in a purposeful sequence (plot) to demonstrate a meaning? These choices define the two types of narrative literature.

Note well: One must decide which type of literature the Bible is, since to choose wrong will introduce error into his/her interpretation. If one chooses “dramatic plot” and it is “episodic plot,” error will ensue. Should he choose “episodic” instead of “dramatic” plot, then again error will ensue. Events are interpreted as part of one or the other. It cannot be both!

The first type of narrative is an “anthology” or “episodic plot” where stories are gathered together because they have a common theme, yet may be quite diverse. While the stories are normally in a consecutive sequence, typically each story stands separately and individually demonstrates a morality tale.

Situation comedies are typically “episodic plot.” The old show “The Beverly Hillbillies” was typical of this type. While each episode shared a common theme of right and wrong (hillbilly justice) and they roughly moved chronologically (from the discovery of oil), they could be watched out of sequence and individually to determine the lesson from each episode.

The second type is called “dramatic (or “progressive”) plot” where the stories are tied together to demonstrate a dramatic progression (plot) to bring about a message or moral (of the story). In progressive plot each story only contributes its part to the overall story and does not carry a moral or ethical meaning apart from the movement of the larger story. In other words, the individual event’s major function is to contribute its part to the overall story and message. While there may be individual lessons to be learned they cannot be determined apart from the part that the event plays in aiding the understanding of the overall message.

An example of dramatic plot is a play. If one enters the play during Act II, Scene 1, and attempts to interpret that scene solely on what happens there, they will likely err. The reason is that the scene is based on what has gone before, and may not be understood completely without knowing what comes later. In other words, entering in that late scene does not give the reader enough information to interpret the scene and achieve the moral lesson of the play. An example of a difficult to interpret scene is “flashback,” or an “aside.” Since these are scenes that move apart from the chronological timeline, they must have the sequential plot that came before and after in order to understand how they fit and contribute to the meaning.

This is probably best illustrated by how movies are to be watched. If you and your family were to watch a movie, you would insist that everyone sit down at the very beginning. Why? Because they would miss out on the information that was given in the setting (first few minutes) and then would not be able to figure out the rest of the movie if they missed it.

The two basic types of plots, as mentioned, are anthology or episodic plot, or progressive or dramatic plot.

An Episodic Plot (anthology): This is generally in a chronological structure, but it consists of a series of loosely related incidents, usually of chapter length, tied together by a common theme.²⁰

Progressive or Dramatic Plot: This is generally a chronological structure as well but first establishes the setting and conflict, then follows the rising action through to a climax (the peak of the action and turning point), moves to the resolution and concludes with a denouement (tying up loose ends).²¹ Movement and change, particularly in a chronological progression to an ultimate purpose, characterize it.

²⁰ http://www2.nkfust.edu.tw/~emchen/CLit/study_elements.htm (06.01.2008). *Children's Literature*, "The Study of Literature." Instructor: Chi-Fen Emily Chen, Ph.D. 陳其芬, Department of English, National Kaohsiung First University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

²¹ Chen, p. 2.

But the most important thing to recognize is that all the parts contribute to a single message developed by knowing the whole changing plot.

The Biblical Story: A Collection of Stories (Episodic) or Plot (Dramatic)

By observation one can tell that the Bible's cohesiveness is a single story. It is a collection of stories that contribute to an overall story. In fact, there is nothing that is unrelated to the larger story. So, the next question is whether these stories are an anthology (i.e., episodic plot; a collection of diverse works²² with a common theme), or a collection that forms a progressive movement called "plot" or what is called dramatic plot.

The question of David and Goliath and its interpretation is dependent on whether one sees the Book of Samuel (and the Bible) as being episodic or dramatic with respect to plot. If Samuel is episodic then the story can be interpreted on its own with only a loose connection to the overall recording of individual events. If it is dramatic, then it cannot be interpreted without knowing the precise part that it plays within the plot of Samuel (and the Bible). Of course, the fact that it begins with a Judge, involves a conflict under Saul, and ends with David on the throne with the Davidic Covenant in hand demonstrates that it is not an anthology, but dramatic plot.

Common Theme

That the events of Bible have at least a common theme is also obvious. The fact that this story deals with a single genealogical line from Adam and Eve through the twelve sons of Jacob to the Davidic Kings ultimately ending in the Davidic Son, Jesus, must be admitted by all.

If the Bible is Episodic Plot then stories as Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, Judah and Tamar, Samson, David and Goliath, are to be interpreted on their own, only loosely connected to the rest of the Bible. Yet the story of Judah and his daughter-in-law, Tamar (Genesis 38), if left to its own, provides quite a quandary for the reader. God killed Tamar's husband, Judah's eldest son, for some (?) seemingly unstated reason. Judah then ordered his second eldest son to provide children for Tamar for some seemingly unstated reason (?). The son avoids this task and is stricken by God (again for some seemingly unstated reason (?)). Judah

²² Leland Ryken in his work "The Literary Study Bible" (Leland Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken, 2007, Crossway Books) holds Genesis as a collection of diverse works. By diverse it is taken to mean that they are not in the form of a dramatic plot, but have some common connection. This leads Dr. Ryken to misunderstand the interpretation of individual stories. For instance, he sees "Cain and Abel" as an illustration of psychological sibling rivalry disconnected from anything prior or following.

promises to give her the last son (for some reason) but doesn't really intend to. Tamar, now denied the youngest son, then pursued the father-in-law's seed through deception (dressed as a temple prostitute). Yet, for some reason (?) in the conclusion Judah complements her for this deceptive action ("you are more righteous than I.") This is a difficult story to tell to one's young daughter if is isolated as an individual morality story. In fact, if Tamar were not honored in the rest of the Bible (particularly Ruth 4), most would not hold her up as good. Thus, it becomes obvious that more information is needed than just the story found in Genesis 38. That information is found earlier in the story in the philosophy (particularly Genesis 2:24 and 3:15). Tamar then plays out this philosophy of God in such a way that her uniqueness, and her righteousness ("rightness" before God) becomes clear. However, the solution to how Tamar and Judah fit into this plot must be dealt with in depth during a study in Genesis as "dramatic plot."

Another story is the story of David and Goliath. This story has all the trappings of an individually interpretable narrative (e.g., individual morality tale). But when one analyzes it closely, one finds that much has to be inserted to make this palatable to the average reader as a simple morality tale.

David, as a young lad, determines on his own to go against a nine and one-half foot giant and kill him. He is victorious even though his king, who is much larger than David, and all the soldiers fear this enemy. Then David cuts off his head and carries it off as a spoil of war. Now while preachers try to change things and make the giant a symbol of some evil that those in his audience are encountering (e.g., lust, envy, etc.), the literal meaning is hard to escape. This type of action occurs not infrequently throughout the Old Testament where, on behalf of God, the leader killed His enemies along with their families and even their animals. Thus unless the preacher adds a lot of reader imagination and creativity (e.g., errant reader perception), the story becomes difficult to apply to an audience. The obvious difficulty is that today no one advocates the killing of unbelievers (or their families and animals like Joshua), which is exactly what David did. It was the very reason all the observers in the story praised him and even made up a song to celebrate this mass killing.²³

By seeing these two examples it becomes clear that if one chooses these as isolated individual morality tales (episodic plot) then errant interpretation will be the case. That is true because not enough information is available and the interpreter must bring too much of his own theology to the text and the story. If that happens, then the

²³ Interpreters of this sort are in essence trying to make the story palatable by changing the application to something less than killing. Yet, since many of them are literalists, they avoid the very interpretive issue of what justified David in killing another man, when they do not advocate that today. In order to interpret the passage, one must initially determine on what basis David could justify killing a giant. Yet that determination must include information from earlier in 1 Samuel, and indeed, earlier in the Biblical story.

Bible only tells the reader what he wants it to tell him (and he really didn't need the Bible story since he knew his conclusion before he came to the text). Thus, one can see that if the reader mistakenly considers a story as part of an episodic plot (an isolated morality tale) when it is actually a part of a dramatic plot then he will bring errant interpretations.

Dramatic (or Progressive) Plot

Dramatic plot is a planned sequence whereby things change purposefully from a beginning to some sort of resolution at the end. In other words, things are learned by a character(s) through the movement of events from a beginning to an end as he struggles to overcome opposition (conflict).

Now the simplest of plots is the type from which a difficulty (conflict) comes to the protagonist in the story and then is overcome in the progress of the story. It is in overcoming this difficulty that a lesson is learned.

For instance, in fiction, Cinderella progresses from a scrub-sister to a princess. However, the story is not simply a history of her movement through time, but a lesson in "how" she acted; i.e., what was her philosophy of life (or changing philosophy) that allowed her to achieve that success?

Another example is Ebenezer Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol." He moved from a "scrooge," despised by all, to a benevolent and kindly man who was admired by all. The question again is not what the progress of events was, or the situations in which they occurred, but what philosophy enabled him to change in order to "win?" These are progressive (or dramatic) plots where the movement clearly reveals the message by seeing how the protagonist overcame some difficulty. In both stories, the character(s), and subsequently the reader(s), learned something through the change wrought in the story. But the change was reflected by the philosophy of a major character and that is where the message lies. In Cinderella, the heroine's original philosophy (conscientiousness in the face of persecution) brings her to the resolution as the prince's bride. Thus her philosophy was a "winning" philosophy, and the reader gains insight by observing her winning ways. Scrooge on the other hand is the "fallible man" character whose philosophy changes from wrong to right. Because of that he wins in the end. Thus the reader is able to adopt Scrooge's winning philosophy and escape the error of Scrooge's (and the reader's own) original evil philosophy.

Dramatic or Progressive Plot in the whole

That the Bible is dramatic (or progressive) plot would seem to be obvious. The serenity found in Genesis 1—2 destroyed by the serpent is never recovered until the victory at the end of the story when the "serpent of old" is chained in Revelation 20:1-2 and placed in the Lake of Fire in Revelation 20:10. In other words, the Bible has several

obvious, progressive, parts; the serenity of the setting (Genesis 1—2), the change from the serenity to destruction and death, (Genesis 3) and the response to rectify the change (Genesis 4 through Revelation 19), and the denouement of the final kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:1—21:5). The final resolution in the re-establishment of God’s 1000-year kingdom on earth in Revelation 19—20 is followed by the denouement of the everlasting kingdom on earth in Revelation 21—22. This explains why the kingdom in Revelation 21 is described in the same terms used for creation in Genesis 1—2. It is clear that the serenity of the beginning has returned in the end. The Hero, God, is victorious in re-establishing His original goal. This is dramatic plot. Very simply then, the reader wants to determine the “philosophy” of this God so that he may adopt it for his own. Ultimately, the tree of life which was rejected by Adam and removed from his grasp becomes available once more in the end under the return to the garden with the New Adam.

Finding “Plot” in The Bible

The first question is whether there is a progression of plot. Specifically does the setting (Genesis 1—2), and the failure or conflict (Genesis 3), impact the rest of the Bible? Put another way, does the rest of the Bible describe the reaction to or a result of Genesis 1—3? Is there a moral or ethical change that takes place as a result of the conflict in Genesis 3? If that is the case then this is a dramatic plot and must follow the rules of such.

The Main Character or Hero

Determining the Main Character of the Book is essential to determining if there is a dramatic plot. Typically if there is one main character throughout the story, then a dramatic plot becomes more likely. If the stories are about Adam, then Cain, then Abraham, then Jacob and Joseph, then it is more possible that these are anthologies since the continuity may become limited to one person’s story and their success or failure based on the individual conflict that they overcome.

There are two types of main characters or protagonists. There is the “hero” and there is the “fallible man” protagonist. The hero does not change, but overcomes the conflict due to his unwavering rightness that becomes apparent by his victory over evil in the end. The reader will observe the right philosophy of the hero and adopt it for himself. Thus the message is in the hero’s winning philosophy or in the content of his “rightness.” In the case of the fallible man protagonist, he advocates some philosophy to overcome the conflict and it typically fails. But as the plot proceeds he alters his failing philosophy so that he can succeed. Finally, he discovers a philosophy that enables him to succeed in the end. The reader then will learn the same lesson as the main character by riding through his conflicts, and the resultant failures and solutions. Hopefully the reader will learn the lesson from the story and will be able to use the main character’s philosophy in his own life avoiding the philosophies that didn’t work.

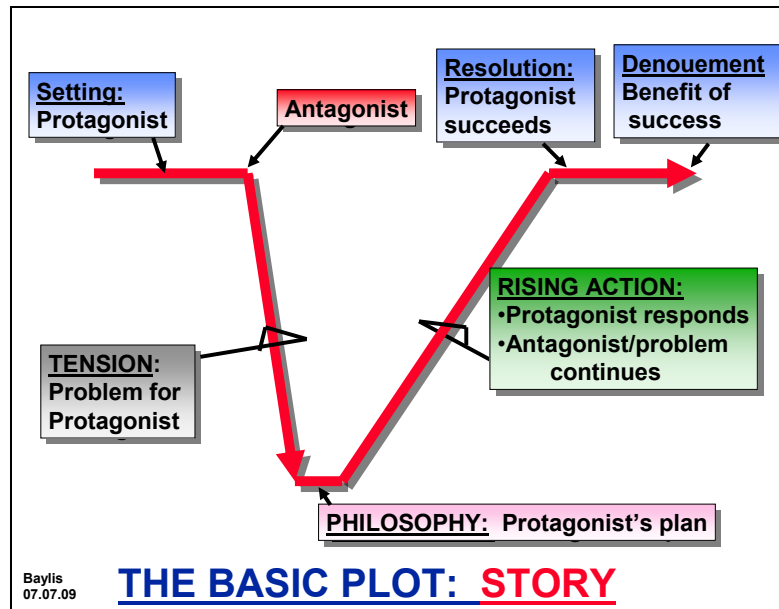
The Bible has a main character who has His purpose stated early the book. This Main Character is God. He never changes since He is the Hero and but continues His right purpose throughout the book. It is obvious that He continues to work with His images (representatives), mankind, in order to bring them to His right moral or ethical purpose. Thus the Bible is a progressive (dramatic) plot wherein the Hero, God, continues through the failure of his images in an attempt to achieve His purpose in His successful image, Jesus the Christ.

Whatever the Hero is doing it is very clear that it is a progression in plot. The promise by the Hero, God, of “Seed” in Genesis 3:15 is clearly followed through Seth. Then the promise of the Hero is expanded in Genesis 12 with Abraham as a nation that is, at least in a small way, developed in the 12 sons of Jacob by the end of Genesis. That Seed is once again picked up in 1 Samuel when David appears and then he is promised that his Seed will occupy the throne of Israel forever. That Seed is then traced through Kings and Chronicles. The seed line of Adam, Abraham and David is picked up in Matthew 1²⁴ and Luke 3 where it is traced to Jesus. From the point of the appearance of this fulfillment of the Seed in Jesus the Bible follows Him until He sits on the eternal throne in Revelation 21, delivering the rule of the earth back to the Hero, God the Father. Thus the progression in events with the success and failure of the potential representatives is seen until Jesus comes. Then God brings resolution through this perfect representative of the Hero, Jesus the Christ. Again, this validates the Bible as a dramatic (or progressive) plot.

The Story of the Bible

The parts of the story, the setting, conflict and rising action are clear as well as the resolution.

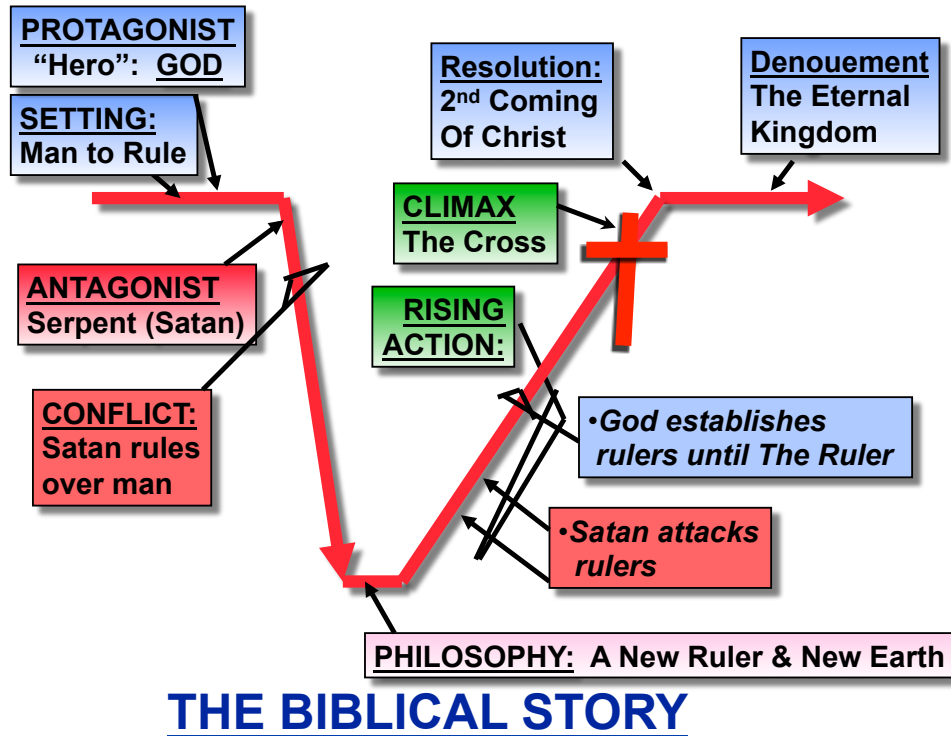
²⁴ The line in Matthew 1 is the Davidic King line that Jesus inherits. The line in Luke 3 is the seed line that traces Jesus’ actual physical inheritance back to David through Nathan back to Adam.



- Setting:** The situation at the beginning of the plot which sets forth the “set-up” from which the conflict will emerge. Typically this introduces the Protagonist (or “hero”), his desires. Also the antagonist will also be introduced. The identification of these two diametrically opposed characters is very important as it defines precisely the issues (good vs. evil) of the story.
- Conflict:** This interrupts the setting by the introduction of the antagonistic action toward the protagonist or his situation.
- Rising Action:** This is the movement of the protagonist to rectify the conflict and deal with the antagonistic activity. While there may be one conflict introduced by the antagonist, it may be that the conflict continues as the antagonist appears repeatedly to oppose the hero.
- Resolution:** This is where the antagonistic action is destroyed by the victory over the conflict.
- Denouement:** This is the bookend to the setting, the results of the victory that re-establish the purpose of the protagonist. Frequently this is defined as the “tying up of strings.”

The Biblical Story Plot

The Biblical story is thus in the form of a plot, with all the parts of narrative present.



The Setting

The setting goes from Genesis 1—2 until the conflict enters brought by the antagonist. During the setting, the Hero, God, is introduced along with His desires (good). God's desires to create a physical universe in which man will rule over it on His behalf.

The Conflict

The antagonist enters the picture in 3:1-6 and brings about the conflict by causing the failure of the representative of God, man. Now the man, who was the representative of God, now represents Satan. Thus all of creation now has been turned over to the rule of the evil antagonist, Satan.

The Rising Action (Philosophy)

The Protagonist then responds with His plan (philosophy) in Genesis 3:15, and more generally in 3:14-24. He is going to, very simply, destroy the old dead creation and everyone in it, including their leader, Satan. He will then bring forth a new Representative (new Adam) and a new creation that will represent Him fully.

The Rising Action (Activity)

The Protagonist will then move to enact this philosophy by bringing forth seed (Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah) until One comes who will ultimately be the One Ruler who will rule obediently.

God's action promised in the philosophy will be implemented as His Representative, the Christ, appears in the Gospels. But the antagonist, Satan, through his representative, the Pharisees, will execute Him. He will have died as a substitute for the sins of the old creation. God will then resurrect Him (victory over Satan's death threat) so He can return and rule God's kingdom on the created earth.

The Resolution (Anticipatory of the Ultimate Resolution)

This Ruler will then return to execute Satan and establish the rule of God in the earthly Kingdom.

The Overriding Plot (God's purpose, Satan's purpose)

It is important thusly to note the purpose of God that threads through every event, proverb, psalm, epistle, and then culminates in Revelation. It is also important to note the opposition to the Hero's purpose in the ongoing threat of the antagonist.

God's Purpose:

God's ongoing single purpose is to establish His Character through His Son on the Throne of the Universe.

In the Old Testament it is the hope of the Seed of the Woman that delivers and that Seed and message are to be carried by Israel to the Gentiles. In the New Testament it is the arrival of the Seed of the Woman in the Second Person of the Trinity, as He arrives, offers Himself to Israel who rejects, delays His judgment, and then returns to establish God's Character on the earth.

The Serpent's Purpose:

The purpose of the serpent is to oppose God's establishment of His kingdom (His character) on earth through His Son, through the deceit of man and, failing that, the killing of man.

The purpose of the serpent from the beginning is to oppose God's purpose by deceiving those who carry the Seed and the message (Israel) in the Old Testament. In the New Testament he will try to deceive the Son, and failing that to kill Him. Failing that, he will try to deceive the world, the followers of the Son, and continue deceiving Israel. In lieu of his failure to deceive he will kill the followers and Israel as martyrs.

The Purpose and Opposition in the Old Testament

Of course, Satan was successful at deceiving Adam and ruining the first creation. But following that God's purpose was to bring forth the Son (the New Adam) through the Seed. Israel was to be the carrier of this message but was deceived by the serpent and would not receive it themselves, and thus not take it. Therefore the whole of the Old Testament is to/about Israel who continually rejected the message for themselves and for those to whom they were to carry it, the Gentiles. This message is exemplified in Jonah who was deceived by the serpent and would not receive the message of mercy and refused to carry it to the Gentiles.

The Purpose and Opposition in the New Testament

The message arrives in the Son in the New Testament and is offered to Israel who is still deceived by the serpent and rejects the message in the Christ. The Christ then appoints 12 apostles to carry the message (Him) to the Gentiles in lieu of Israel's rejection. During this period of time (the church age), Satan continues to deceive the world and the followers of the Christ. If he cannot deceive then he moves to kill them through the opposition.

Matthew (the Gospels) as its Part in the Overall Plot

Thus the Seed of the Woman appears in the flesh (God's character itself) and offers Himself as the fullness of the message to Israel (Matthew 10—12) so they might embrace it and carry it to the Gentiles. Matthew 10:1-6 demonstrates this message going to them and by Matthew 12 they have rejected it, calling Him of Satan.

Thus the Message becomes the Messenger as well in lieu of Israel's rejection and appoints 12 apostles to carry this message to the Gentiles in the place of Israel (Jesus as the perfect Israelite). Thus the Abrahamic Covenant becomes fulfilled in Jesus apart from the fullness of Israel's participation. (Matthew 13—23).

But there is a delay before the Kingdom, as Israel must turn to Christ to fulfill the extent of the Abrahamic Covenant (seed as the stars of the heavens, the sand of the seashore). They will return in the 144,000 (Revelation 7) in the second one-half of the tribulation and minister for the Christ they rejected. It is then that the Christ will return and embrace His nation physically as He saves them and takes them into the kingdom. (Matthew 24—25).

Finally in the eternal state of the universe, Israel will fully play their function out as the Gentiles stream to the City of Jerusalem (Israel) to worship the King of the Jews (and the universe); the Son of God on the Throne of the universe. (Revelation 21:1—22:5).

Matthew (as representative of the Gospels) as Plot

Having seen the overall place of Matthew in the Biblical Story, it is important to see how the narrative of the story of Matthew itself plays out. Now as one proceeds to study the Book of Matthew they must determine whether it is anthology (Episodic Plot) as a collection of stories as separate morality tales, or whether it is Dramatic Plot where the story is a complete movement from beginning to end and each event plays only its separate part in building and contributing to the message of the plot as a whole.

Episodic or Dramatic Plot

The question is whether Matthew changes from beginning to end, i.e., progressive or dramatic plot. The answer is yes. Jesus, as a baby, is introduced as the Christ, and He appears on earth. By the end, He is dead, risen, and in heaven. Has anything else changed according to the author? The answer must be an absolute, "Yes!" The forgiveness of sins has occurred fully in the death of The Christ and Jesus has the very authority of God on earth (Psalm 2).

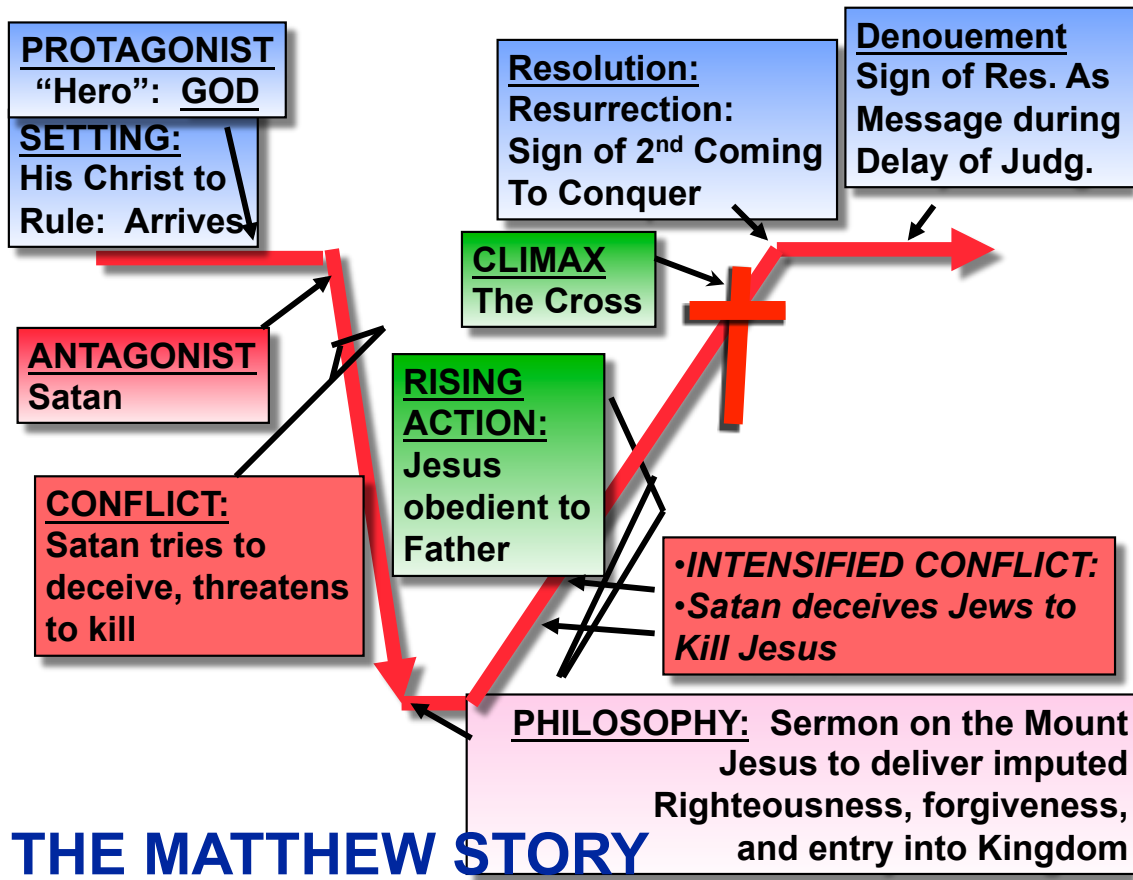
Conflict. Is there a place at which an evil character obstructs the pathway of the Hero, i.e., conflict? Again the answer is yes, at Jesus' temptation by Satan in Matthew 4.

Climax. Is there a place where the entire success of the Hero is at risk, i.e., climax? Again the answer is yes, at the cross.

Resolution. Is there a place at which victory by the Hero is clearly demonstrated, i.e., the resolution or validation? Again, the answer is yes, at the resurrection.

Denouement. Is there a place at the end of the story where the benefits of the resolution (victory) are enjoyed as a result of that event? The answer again is yes! The disciples are sent to the Gentiles to give the resurrection-validated gospel.

The Gospel of Matthew as story is thus in the form of dramatic or progressive plot, with all the parts of narrative present.



The Setting

The setting goes from Matthew 1--3 until the conflict enters brought by the antagonist. During the setting, the Hero's Representative, the Christ, Jesus, is introduced along with His desires (good). God's desires reflected in the Old Testament were to create a physical universe in which His Christ will rule over it on His behalf through the Nation, Israel.

The Conflict

The antagonist enters the picture in Matthew 4 and brings about the conflict by trying to once again cause the failure of the Representative of God, the Christ. Jesus will pass the test, being faithful to the Father, and will continue to proceed to demonstrate His obedience reflected in His words with His life as He goes to the cross.

The Rising Action (Philosophy)

The Protagonist then responds with His plan (philosophy) in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7 as Jesus reflects fully the philosophy of God revealed in the Old Testament, fulfilled in Himself. He is going to, very simply, telling people to reject the old dead creation, and their leader, Satan. He then offers them the new life, prophesied in the Old Testament to come in Him.

The Rising Action (Activity)

The Protagonist will then move to enact this philosophy by bringing being the One obedient to the Father and being the sacrifice for sins as predicted so that He can impute the righteousness of the Father (and Himself) to others.

God's action promised in the philosophy will be implemented as His Representative, the Christ, appears in the Gospels. But the antagonist, Satan, through his representative, the Pharisees, will execute Him. He will have died as a substitute for the sins of the old creation.

The Resolution (Anticipatory of the Ultimate Resolution)

God will then resurrect Him (victory over Satan's death threat) so He can return and rule God's kingdom on the created earth. Ultimately, resurrection is the sign that this Ruler will then return to execute Satan and establish the rule of God in the earthly Kingdom.

The Denouement

Based on the resurrection guarantee, the disciples will proceed to deliver the message of the Sermon on the Mount to the Gentiles, as Israel as been set aside for a time.

Conclusion

The difference between Matthew 10:5-6 and 28:19 becomes clear on how it will be solved. Matthew is plot! And as a dramatic plot, things, of necessity, change. Therefore what is a meaningful imperative early in the story may not be appropriate later in the book. In fact, since Matthew itself is part of a story, one must be careful to pronounce any imperative in the book as applicable without analyzing the narrative of Matthew and its part in the larger narrative of the Bible.

The command of Matthew 10:5-6 was there because Jesus, as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Promise, was sending the disciples only to Israel because they were to be the priests to the Gentiles (Genesis 12:1-3) by delivering that message of Messiah as the

forgiveness of sins. Israel was to accept it and take it to the Gentiles. However, Israel rejects (Matthew 12) and Jesus prepares 12 Jewish disciples to take that message to the Gentiles in lieu of Israel during the age to come (church age). That is the message of Matthew 28:19.

Later (Matthew 24-25) Israel will repent and take that message to the Gentiles as well and thus the nation will take its proper place in the Abrahamic Covenant. Until then the message will go to the Gentiles in the Apostolic Doctrine.

The Explanation of Matthew 10:6

One of the first things to notice is that the Bible, in general, is not about Gentiles. While there are Gentiles (Job, Ninevah), the historical literature, the Pentateuch, the prophets are, in the majority, about Israel. The next thing to notice is that the Gospels are the same!! While they do have Gentiles in them (the Samaritan woman, the centurion), they are few and far between. The Gospels are about Israel!

The Abrahamic Covenant: The Gospel to the “Families of the Earth”

When one reads Genesis 12:1-3 and the promise to Abraham, it is not uncommon to pass over the phrase, “in you (Abram) shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” The question must be asked as to how Abram (Israel) would bless all the Gentiles? Would it be in prosperity? That is, would they benefit physically by Israel giving them “things?” The answer is an unqualified, “No!” It was by giving them God’s word, and that word was the message of deliverance through the “Seed of the Woman” in the Old Testament and the reality of the appearance of the Christ in the New Testament.

Israel, in the Old Testament, had to receive that message and obey before they could transfer the message to the Gentiles (as Abram did in Genesis 15:6). Jonah was the perfect illustration of this problem as he took the message of mercy to the Gentiles, but rejected the very message he was taking. Israel rejected the very message they were given as well, the message of the coming “Seed of the Woman.”

The Gospels as the Message of the Christ to Israel

Thus, the Gospels are the record of the appearance of the Seed of the Woman and the presentation to Israel so that they can take Him to the Gentiles. Thus in Matthew 10, Jesus tells the disciples to take the message of His appearance to the “lost sheep of the House of Israel.” This is so that they can receive it for themselves and then take it to the Gentiles. But in Matthew 12 Israel rejects this Christ. In Matthew 13 Jesus turns to 12 disciples whom He trains to take the message in light of Israel’s rejection. So, following His payment for the sins of the world and His resurrection, Jesus authorizes 11 Jewish apostles to take the message of the appearing Christ to the Gentiles to fulfill the promise

made to Abraham. Thus the message goes to the Jews (and continues) in Matthew 10 and then through the 12 apostles (apostolic doctrine) goes to the Gentiles. So now the message of the crucified and risen Christ will now move to the world.