

How to Study the Bible: Redemption Story

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is one story of redemption. Understanding the elements of the biblical metanarrative, or overarching story of Scripture, will help you understand how each passage fits within the larger context of the redemption story. The biblical metanarrative includes four parts: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Look for these elements as you study the Bible, knowing that the individual stories merge into the Bible's one great story of hope and redemption.

CREATION

The Bible begins by introducing the main character of the entire story: God. God is from everlasting to everlasting, existing outside of time and space as three persons in one being: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the Creator of all things, the One around whom all things revolve, the Sustainer of life, the Author of existence. God created everything from nothing—the earth, the heavens, the waters, land, seas, and all animals and birds. Finally, he created man and woman in his own image to reflect his glory and enjoy relationship with him. God declared all his creation very good (Gen. 1:27, 31). Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed, living in the garden as cultivators and children of God.

FALL

In Genesis 3, Eve listened to the deceitful lies of Satan (who appeared as a serpent) and believed that God had withheld good from her and Adam. She desired what God had forbidden—to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Her longing to be like God conceived disobedience. When Eve and Adam both ate the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened,



they realized they were naked, and they hid from God. Sin brought about the death, shame, and depravity that every human experiences.

Humanity bears both the image of God and the sin nature of Adam. We are “sons of disobedience” and “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Eph. 2:2; Rom. 3:23). Our hearts are no longer oriented toward God and neighbor but toward self. The fall distorted our desires, rewired our hearts, and separated us from the original unhindered fellowship with God that Adam and Eve experienced in the garden of Eden. Because “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), we live under the curse and power of sin, in dire need of deliverance—as witnessed throughout the Israelites’ repeated rebellion against God’s words, ways, and will. Unless God intervenes, every person is under the punishment of sin and deserves the just wrath of God for disobedience.

REDEMPTION

Praise God that the story does not end with our rebellion! While Satan aimed to destroy God’s good creation and his people, God had—and always has—a greater plan. Redemption is God’s miraculous work of grace to save his people from sin’s dominion.

God promised a Savior would one day come to crush the serpent, establishing a foundation of hope that unites all of Scripture (Gen. 3:15). God called Abram from among the nations and promised to make him a nation through which all the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12). Through Moses, God gave the Israelites the law and made a covenant with his people (Ex. 19–24). God instituted the law and a sacrificial system to temporarily atone for sin. God’s people needed a Savior, a mediator to come and rescue them from their cyclical rebellion. God sent the prophets to declare this message to the Israelites, pointing them back to the covenant and calling them to repent of their sin and live lives of faith in him.

In the New Testament, God sent the promised Savior: Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth to live a perfect life, call people to repent and believe, and die on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sins (Mark 1:15; Heb. 10:10). Jesus Christ fulfilled the law of God revealed in the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17), releasing sinners from its demands when they trust in him for forgiveness of their sins. On the cross, Jesus bore the wrath of God for his chosen people



and rose again so they could be freed from sin's tyranny to new life in Christ (Isa. 53:5–6; Rom. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:17). Under the new covenant inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, children of God are given the Holy Spirit to transform them to become more like Christ and empower them to live for God's glory (Rom. 8:16; 2 Cor. 3:18). God's redeemed people now live in fellowship as his church, following God's commands to go and make disciples of all nations and to love God and their neighbor (Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 12:29–31).

CONSUMMATION

Since the ascension of Jesus after his resurrection, believers look forward to the day when he will come again for his people to establish the kingdom of God forever. The book of Revelation reveals the consummation, the fulfillment of all God's purposes. Jesus Christ will come again and will destroy Satan, the adversary (Rev. 20:10). He will make all things new, including a new heaven and new earth where righteousness will dwell (Rev. 21–22; 2 Pet. 3:13). When he returns, Jesus will establish his visible rule and God will dwell with his people again. For now, we live with steadfast hope in Jesus' final victory and our eternal future in his presence.

