

The Big Picture: Through the Bible 4 times in 60 minutes

Bible overview – standing back from examining the leaves to see the whole forest.

Pastorally important:

Nancy Guthrie – lost two children in first 6 months – what brought her deepest comfort was the big picture of the Bible

Prosperity Gospel – very often the problem is not simply with a particular verse but a failure to understand the whole Bible story

Discipleship – not uncommon to find someone who reads the Bible regularly but has little idea of the gospel or of the overall shape of the Bible

In evangelism – changes the way we present the gospel

It's a Biblical thing to do a Bible overview:

- Deuteronomy 1-3; 26:5-10
- Psalm 78; 105-106
- Ezekiel 16; 20
- Acts – many sermons esp. 6-7; 13
- Galatians 3
- Romans 15:8 cf. 2 Cor. 1:20 - Promise → Fulfilment

4 runs through the Bible:

1. The Wedding Banquet
2. Two Men
3. Two Exoduses
4. Now and not yet

1. The Wedding Banquet

Matthew 21:33-46 is clearly a Bible overview but so is the next parable.

Matthew 22:1-14 – the Bible from beginning to end in 14 verses

- a) **The reason for Creation (v2)** – Before the creation of the world there was the Father, the Son and the Spirit – loving one another, enjoying one another, glorifying one another (John 17:26). And the Father, the King, wanted his Son to have a bride – he wanted someone else to be able to enjoy the Son. And that's why the world was created – to be a wedding venue. Genesis 1 is the construction of the wedding banquet hall. And on 6th day humanity was created – to be the bride of the Son, to be united to the Son, to experience his love and enjoy him forever – to feast as his banquet table. Genesis 2 you see the wedding rehearsal – human marriage is given as a picture and anticipation of the great marriage between Christ and the church. (You could trace that beautiful theme of marriage all through the Bible: Gen. 2; Ex. 34; Psalm 45; Song of Songs; Isa. 49, 61-62; Jer. 2; Ezek. 16; Hosea; Mark 2; John 3; Eph. 5; 2 Cor. 11; Rev. 19, 21)
- b) **The history of Israel (v3)** – Notice they had already been invited. The servants – that is the prophets like Amos and Hosea and Isaiah – they'd already gone to God's people and said,
On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine –
the best of meats and the finest of wines. (Isaiah 25:6)

And then they go out again and say, Come,

Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,

come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost. (Isaiah 55:1-2)

When you read the Old Testament prophets you are hearing them inviting Israel to the wedding banquet of the Son. You also get it in Proverbs 9 – wisdom prepares a banquet and sends out servants and calls out “Come eat my food, come drink my wine”

But Israel refused to come. They preferred to go to the banquets of idols and demons. They preferred to sit at the table of Folly and eat stolen bread and drink out of cracked cisterns. cf. Isaiah 25:6; 55:1-2; Proverbs 9:1-5

- c) **The history of Israel continued through to John the Baptist and the Apostles (v4-6)** They’ve refused to come – massive insult – He should have destroyed his people long ago or at least have given up on them but instead he sends out more servants – Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, all the way to John the Baptist, and on to the apostles – Peter, James, John – all to passionately persuade them to come to his banquet: “Everything is ready, forgiveness is ready, fellowship with God is ready, the living waters are ready, the true bread is ready” But v5, v6 – happened – Jeremiah thrown down a well, John the Baptist’s head on a platter, Stephen stoned.
- d) **The judgment of Jerusalem and the gospel goes to the Gentiles (v7-10)** - The city that is burnt is Jerusalem – and it was burnt – 40 years after Jesus by the Romans. Burnt as a sign that this people had rejected the one who had wanted to gather them under his wings as a hen gathers her chicks under her. Burnt as a sign that there was no more glory to be found in that city, the glory had departed. And just with the previous parable of the tenants – there is a movement from Israel to the Gentiles – you get it at the end of Acts as well – Acts 13 and 28 – if you won’t listen we’ll turn to the Gentiles, they will listen. And so the great wedding invitation goes out to the non-Jewish world – to Asia, to Europe, to Africa, to Australia.
- e) **The final judgment (v11-13)** – The thing about the guy not in his wedding clothes the main point is that he is not dressed for the occasion. It’s like turning up at work in your pyjamas or coming to church in a swimming costume – he’s just clearly not dressed for the occasion. Which means either he hasn’t got a clue what sort of occasion he’s really at – or he doesn’t care. Either way he is not there for the wedding of the Son. That’s the key thing – he hasn’t come to this banquet to enjoy the Son. This illustration works well in our context. You know how there are people who crash into events just for the food. See there’s a big tent and smell the food and they sneak in. And if you asked them, of how do you know Njeri and Mwangi. They’d have to bluff their way through. They didn’t even know it was a wedding. And that is exactly what can happen in the Kingdom. There can be people drawn in who are interested in the food – in the community – in the music – in the worship – interested in tapping into the power of God. But they haven’t grasped that this is a wedding banquet for the Son of God. v13 - In the Kingdom all is freedom because the Son has set you free. Outside is bondage – tied hand and foot. In the Kingdom is glorious light, the Sun of Righteousness. Outside is outer darkness. In the Kingdom is the joy of a great wedding banquet, the joy of knowing Christ. Outside there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And the only way you are in the banquet is you were chosen (v14) and the Son of God was tied up like an animal and sacrificed for you, he was cast out into darkness so you could be brought into the light, he went through the torment so you could be brought into the joy.

- How does that change the way we read the Bible?

Could dramatize story.

2. Two Men

Adam and the Second Adam
Noticed by Irenaeus (130-202)
Luke 3 – Son of God → Adam son of God
Acts 17:26-31 – one man, a man appointed
Romans 5
1 Cor. 15:47 – first man, second man

How does the Bible start? – creation, garden, tree of life, perfection, beauty, God and man dwelling together

How does it end? – recreation, garden city, tree of life, perfection, even greater beauty and glory, God and man dwelling together

First man is deceived, believes the lie that God is not good, chooses death rather than life, expelled from garden, cut off from tree of life, cut off from fellowship with God, cursed, takes the whole creation down with him.

Adam starts perishing, starts dying – like a cut flower – decay, heading for death

But immediately there is the promise (Gen. 3:15) of another man, born of woman, who will crush Satan and in the process he himself will be crushed.

The OT is the search for the second Adam:

- Noah – as an Adam in charge of the animals in the ark – like a new Eden – then emerging into a new world with the Adamic blessing and commission to be fruitful and fill – but then he disappoints
- Abraham – Gen. 12 – the Adamic blessing of the world
- Isaac – Gen. 26 – blessed with the Adamic/Abrahamic blessing, bringing a 100-fold harvest in a time of famine (cf. Matt. 13) and water out of dry ground
- Moses – tabernacle/Eden – Exodus 25-40 – God dwelling with his people, the cherubim, the lamp/tree
- Joshua – 10:24-25 cf. Gen. 3:15
- Judges – saviours (2:16), serpent crusher representative battling with deception (14:1-9; 16:5,21,30)
- Kings:
 - David – 1 Samuel 17 – crushing head of God’s enemy
 - Psalm 1 – the tree of life, first Adam and second Adam
 - Solomon’s rise and fall (1 Kings 1-11)
 - [Uzziah](#) (2 Chron. 26)
- Prophets:
 - Isaiah 1 cf. 53 – the first Adam and the second Adam
 - Jonah (fleeing the presence of God) versus Ezekiel (the Spirit-filled son of man)

Finally the second Adam comes.

Born of woman but like the first Adam he has no earthly Father.

He is tempted by Satan but he resists.

He shows that he is the one who can reverse every effect of the fall – sickness, blindness, demons, even death itself.

Like Adam he has to make a decision in the garden – a much harder garden – and he chooses God’s will.

As Adam was cut off from the tree of life so Christ goes willingly die on a tree that he might become the tree of life to us. At the very moment the serpent has the heels of the seed of woman nailed and it looks like he has triumphed, the serpents head is being crushed, Satan is being disarmed, mortally wounded, decisively defeated – Gen. 3:15//Col. 2:15.

And then Jesus rises again on the first day of the week – as the firstborn of a new creation.

He’s met by Mary – do you remember what she mistakes him for? – the gardener – and he is – he is the second Adam remaking Eden for us.

- Does it matter - to how we read the Bible and how we preach?

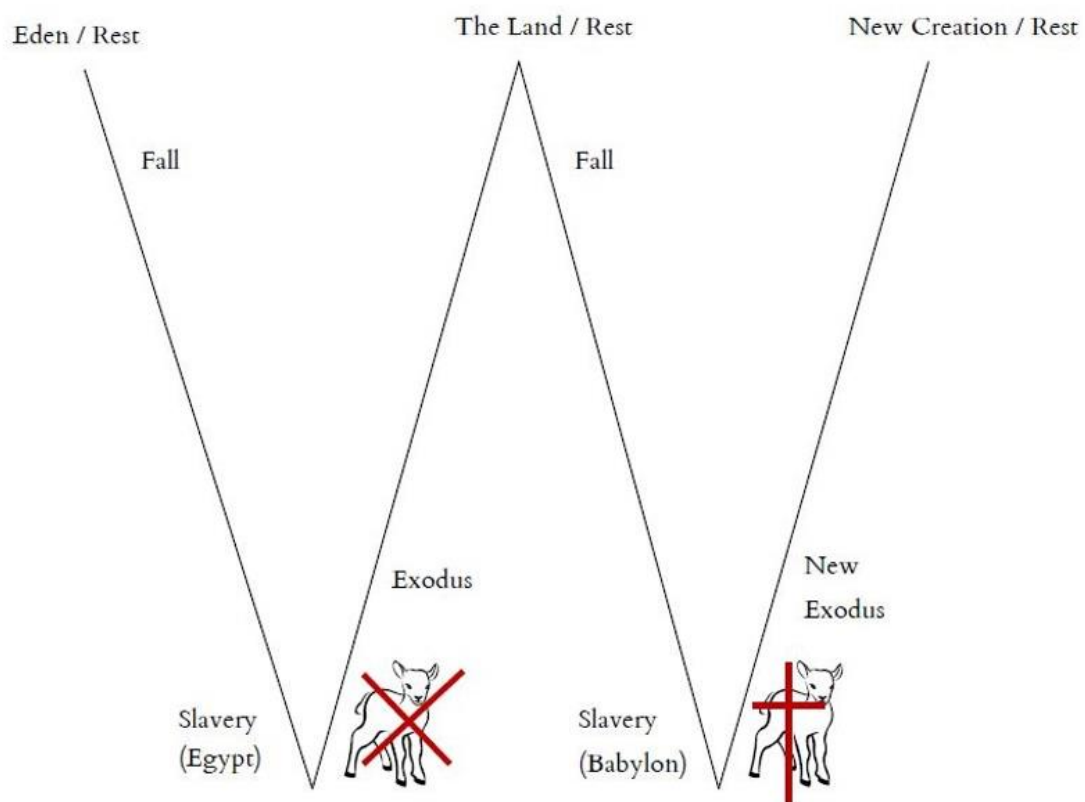
“In God's sight there are two men – Adam and Jesus Christ.” Thomas Goodwin from 1 Cor. 15:47 – we either hang off the belt of one or the other. Everyone after Adam is born in him – connected to him like the branches of a tree to the root – and so they die – 1 Cor. 15:22a. So evangelism is not about offering two options – heaven or hell – with us as a neutral observer (Or worse – “have this lifestyle upgrade”) - No – the Bible assumes we are born in Adam – perishing, cursed – we don’t just need motivating, we don’t need a bit of a boost, we need to die and be born again in Christ – we start as a branch in Adam’s rotten tree and we need to be cut off and grafted into Christ.

Two men – you're in one or the other - we all start in Adam – but now we can be in Christ – you can be cut from the tree of Adam and grafted into Christ.

Caution: Don't try to see this everywhere – push everything to fit this – but don't be surprised when you see hints of Adam and the New Adam, of paradise lost and paradise restored – because that is the big storyline of the Bible.

E.g. 1 Chron. 1:1; 4:9-10 – Jabez – looks like he might be a new better Adam to reverse the Fall with the mention of the pain of childbirth, blessing, enlargement, removal of evil and pain (cf. Gen. 1:28; 3:8, 16) but he dies and the genealogy moves on.

3. Two Exoduses ¹



Eden – perfect Sabbath rest

Fall

Downhill all the way to slavery in Egypt

Physical but also spiritual – see that in places like Ezekiel 20 – Israelites are worshipping idols

The way out of this slavery is through a Lamb dying, blood over door, angel of death, corpse in every house

Point of Exodus is not just release but to bring them to a new Eden, new Sabbath rest – a land of milk and honey where God would dwell with them again.

That the end of the story?

No – good for about a generation – while Joshua's with them but then they fall again and it's really just a long downward spiral all the way through the books of Kings and Chronicles till you get to another slavery and exile from the land of rest – this time in Babylon.

¹ Credit for this overview and diagram go to Jim Sayers, Communications Director of Grace Baptist Mission UK.

But the prophets promise a new Exodus followed by a new Eden and a new Creation – Jer. 16:14-15//; Isaiah 11; 40; 65

They come back 70 years later but it never as good as the prophets said – it's ok but it's nothing even close to the glory that was promised & particularly Neh. 9:36: "Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves."

Then hundreds of years later John the Baptist cries out "Behold – the Lamb of God"

Jesus stands on a mountain with Moses and Elijah and discusses his coming 'exodus' (Luke 9:31 – Greek word for departure).

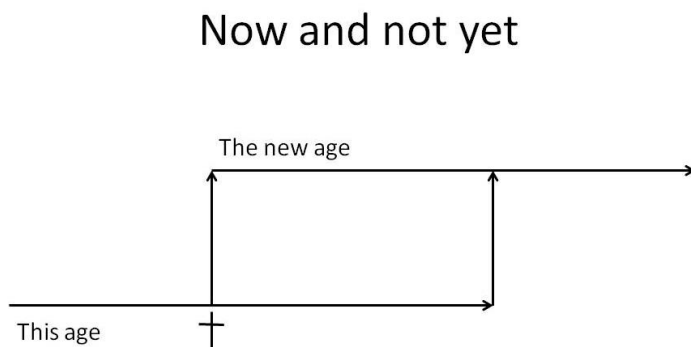
Then a few months later you get to the time of Passover, and the Lamb of God is slain, and they even raise a hyssop branch up to him (exactly what was used to paint the blood over the doorposts) and none of his bones are broken (cf. Ex. 12:46) – he is slain instead of you and me so that we would be freed from bondage to sin and death and the devil and brought to the promised land, the new greater Sabbath rest.

That is a great story isn't it?

We like stories but what are the stories we tell in our pulpits? Are they this story?

4. Now and Not Yet – life of faith and tension

The last part of the diagram (since Christ's death and resurrection) is a bit more complicated than in the 'W' diagram...



Such an important thing for us to get our heads around

The Exodus has happened and the New Age has started

We have been freed from bondage to hell and the devil – we have been taken out of Adam and grafted into Christ – we are seated with Christ on high – we've been adopted by the Father – we have every spiritual blessing

But we're still here – we're still in our decaying bodies, we still get sick, we still sin, other people sin, there's persecution and disasters, and car accidents, and Jesus is not physically here with us, ruling over everything, this is not The New Creation is it?!?!?

Then one day there will be part two of the Exodus – the consummation – when Jesus returns and this age finishes and there is no more pain or crying or suffering and we see Jesus as he is and we are made like him.

For Now - The Kingdom of God, The New Age – is Now and Not Yet

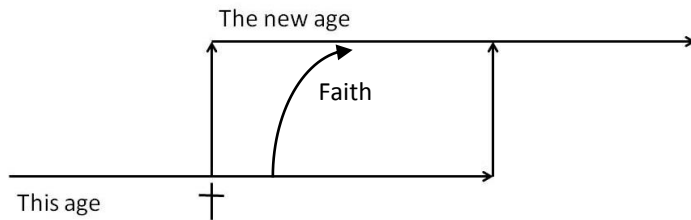
the great sacrifice, the great victory has happened, the promises have all been fulfilled in Christ, we have all the spiritual blessing but much is still ahead

The Book of Hebrews has a lot about this. All the way through there is the paradox that we are already there – at the holy mountain, with access to the most holy place, at the great Rest – and yet we are not yet there, we are still in the wilderness pushing forward, longing for the coming City.

Hebrew 11 gives a Bible overview showing that this has always been the case – all the way from Abel onwards there has been this disconnect/paradox/tension between the now (promises with a little foretaste) and the

not-yet (consummation and fulfilment of the promises). And what bridges the gap is called faith – a forward looking hope and longing and groaning and eager expectation and confidence in the promises of the coming age.

Now and not yet



Just think of a few of these examples through the Bible:

- Noah in the ark (Genesis 8) – a long uncomfortable year with no visible hope on the horizon
- Abraham in the land – a sojourner in tents only owning a small burial plot but promised a great land
- The children of Israel in the wilderness – Numbers – manna every day, marching to the promised land
- King David on the run – anointed as king but a fugitive in caves
- Esther 8 – the great turning point in the story has happened but the critical day is still to come
- Romans 8 – notice the mark of those who have the Spirit