

Overview of the Bible's Storyline and Foundation Principles of Interpretation

Special Seminar
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1. Introduction

a. Approaching the Bible

i. God is.

1. And not just any "God," but the one, true God who has revealed himself in the Bible.
2. God is One, and there are three Persons who are this One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. God is the foundation/source of all being.

ii. God speaks.

1. God's revelation is real.
2. God's revelation is true.
3. God can be known.
4. God's revelation is the foundation/source of all knowing.

b. Nature of the Bible

i. It is God-breathed: inspired.

1. All Scripture is God-breathed to be the rule of faith and life (WCF 1.2).
2. 2 Timothy 3:16
3. God is the ultimate author.
4. God used human authors.

ii. It is true: infallible and inerrant.

1. "The *infallible* truth, and divine authority thereof" (WCF 1.5), and "the *infallible* rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself" (WCF 1.9).
2. "Inspiration is that extraordinary, supernatural influence exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and therefore, perfectly infallible" (Warfield, "Inspiration and Criticism," *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*).
3. Ps. 19:7-9; Jn. 17:17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
4. The Bible is true to life.

iii. It is necessary and sufficient.

1. "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture" (WCF 1.6).
2. 2 Tim. 3:15-16.

3. The Bible is necessary if we are to know God as Redeemer, and the Bible is sufficient in giving to us what we need to know and to believe.
- iv. It is understandable.
 1. "All things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them" (WCF 1.7).
 2. The purpose of God in speaking is to reveal his ways and will to humanity. It follows, then, that he intended his words to be understood.
 3. Ps. 119:105.
- v. It is authoritative.
 1. The objection basis of the Bible's authority: "The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God (WCF 1.4).
 2. The subjective reception, or, "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the words in our hearts" (WCF 1.5).
 3. An important aspect of the Bible's authority is its finality – it is the *final* authority in all religious controversy.
 4. "The Church is to finally appeal unto them" (WCF 1.8). To appeal to the Scripture is to appeal to the Spirit who speaks in the Bible (WCF 1.10).
2. The Big Picture: Seeing the Plot from Beginning to End
 - a. Creation
 - i. Teaches us about God.
 - ii. Teaches us about humanity.
 - iii. Teaches us about the created world.
 - iv. Teaches us about relationships.
 - b. Fall
 - i. The great disruption.
 - ii. Sin is crouching and pouncing.
 - iii. The curse is far and wide.
 - iv. Sin is presented as it really is, scandalous and disastrous.
 - c. Redemption

- i. The surprising promise.
 - ii. The unfolding plan.
 - iii. The unexpected and ultimate hero.
 - iv. The startling solution.
 - d. Consummation
 - i. A greater hope.
 - ii. A greater Eden.
 - iii. A greater peace.
 - iv. A greater fellowship.
 - v. A greater worship.
- 3. A Slightly Lower View of the Big Picture
 - a. Creation and Fall (primeval history)
 - b. Covenant (Patriarchal history and early Israel history)
 - c. Exodus (redemption, law, and wilderness)
 - d. Conquest and Settlement (history and hero)
 - e. Monarchy (the court, Psalms, and wisdom)
 - f. Exile and return (reformation prophets)
 - g. The life of Christ
 - h. Spread of the Church
 - i. Explanation and Significance of Christ (Epistles)
 - j. Victory (apocalyptic)
- 4. Why Read the Greatest Story of All?
 - a. To know God.
 - b. To love God and your neighbor.
 - c. To live before God.
 - d. To glorify God.
 - e. To enjoy God.
 - f. To worship God.
- 5. Letting the Bible Shape Your View of Life
 - a. Who God is.
 - b. What God does.
 - c. Who we are.
 - d. What the world is: what is seen and what is not seen.
 - e. What God's involvement in human affairs is.
 - f. What salvation is.
- 6. How to Read the Bible.
 - a. Remember the storyline (the big picture).
 - b. Read the Bible in context.
 - c. Read the Bible according to genre.
 - d. Read the Bible with care and attentiveness.
 - e. Read the Bible prayerfully.
 - f. Read the Bible humbly.

Recommended Resources

Helps for Introducing the Bible's Nature and the Bible's Themes

1. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
2. *From the Mouth of God* by Sinclair Ferguson
3. *Ryken's Bible Handbook: A Guide to Reading and Studying the Bible* by Leland Ryken, Philip Ryken, and James Wilhoit

Helps for Old Testament

1. *Beginning at Moses* by Michael P.V. Barrett
2. *He Gave Us Stories* by Richard L. Pratt
3. *Christ of the Covenants* by O. Palmer Robertson

Helps for Seeing the Big Picture

1. *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* by D. A. Carson
2. *Welcome to the Story* by Stephen Nichols
3. *God's Big Picture* by Vaughan Roberts