

## SESSION 2: NAVIGATING STORYLINE & BIBLICAL THEMES

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify and use the storyline of Scripture to point to or prepare for Christ from the Old Testament.
2. Identify and trace significant themes through the Old Testament to their fulfillment in Christ.

### Using the Storyline of Scripture

Using the storyline of Scripture is the \_\_\_\_\_ and most widely recognized way of connecting an Old Testament passage to Jesus.

### Definitions and Descriptions

The storyline method is also described as metanarrative or \_\_\_\_\_ narrative.

Interpreters also refer to the storyline as \_\_\_\_\_ history or redemptive history.

We simply mean the \_\_\_\_\_ plot of the Bible.

### Foundations

The Bible tells \_\_\_\_\_ story in a unified structure by a divine author.

“No doubt, as many have stressed, Scripture consists of many literary forms, all of which must be interpreted carefully, but underneath all of these literary forms is an underlying story line, beginning in creation and moving to the new creation, which unfolds God’s plan centered and culminated in Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Gentry & Wellum.

The \_\_\_\_\_ and plot of the story is God’s saving work through Jesus.

“At the very center of this story is the man called Jesus in whom God has revealed his fullest purpose and meaning for the world.”<sup>2</sup> Bartholomew & Goheen.

When we teach from any portion of Scripture, we should teach with the whole story \_\_\_\_\_ especially the culminating work of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection.

When we teach the Old Testament, we need to know \_\_\_\_\_ we are in the story and how this passage contributes to the story of salvation.

### Keys for Using the Storyline of Scripture

Identify the \_\_\_\_\_ of the passage within the major divisions of the Bible.

**Creation—Fall—Redemption—Consummation**

Most of the Old Testament occurs in light of the \_\_\_\_\_ and in preparation for Redemption.

2. Simple Questions to ask of your passage to place it within the major divisions:

1. How does this passage reveal humanity's \_\_\_\_\_ for a savior in light of the Fall?

The passage is somehow showing man's sinfulness.

2. How does this passage describe the savior who will \_\_\_\_\_ redemption?

The passage is somehow showing what Jesus will do.

**Summary: Don't treat passages in the \_\_\_\_\_ as if they are \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Describe and relate the various \_\_\_\_\_ of the story (based on Fee & Stuart).<sup>3</sup>**

Bottom Level: The story of \_\_\_\_\_ and their experiences.

If we stop on this level, we may resort to making the story a \_\_\_\_\_.

If we ignore this level, we will limit the \_\_\_\_\_ of the event for both the Old and New Testaments.

Middle Level: The story of \_\_\_\_\_ and God's work for them.

Major Portions of Israel's story: Abraham and his family—Egypt—Exodus—Wilderness—Promised land—Monarchy—Divided Kingdom—Exile.

If we stop at this level, we will probably resort to \_\_\_\_\_.

If we ignore this level, we will limit our understanding of both Israel's and \_\_\_\_\_ stories.

"First of all, we must affirm whatever significance a particular event had in terms of Israel's own experience of God and faith in him. 'What it meant for Israel' does not just evaporate in a haze of spiritualization when we reach the New Testament."<sup>4</sup> Christopher Wright.

Top Level: The story of \_\_\_\_\_ through Jesus.

Identify how the passage **prepares for** or **points to** Jesus.

If we ignore this level, we miss the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible and the added significance Jesus brings to the Old Testament events.

Just as events in history take on added significance and meaning after the \_\_\_\_\_ of those events, Old Testament stories and teaching take on added significance in light of Jesus's culminating work.

**Summary: Don't get so focused on the bottom & middle levels that you \_\_\_\_\_ the top level.**

"You will not fully do justice to any individual narrative without recognizing its part within the other two."<sup>5</sup> Fee and Stuart.

### **Example: The Blessings and Curses of Deuteronomy 28**

1. Describe and relate the levels of the story.

Bottom & Middle Level: Both individuals and Israel will fail to \_\_\_\_\_ the blessings but will face the curses (Deuteronomy 28:64).

Top Level: Jesus takes the \_\_\_\_\_ of the law for us so that we may experience the blessing (Gal. 3:10-14).

2. Identify the place of the passage within the major divisions.

Israel continues the \_\_\_\_\_ instead of experiencing Redemption.

Jesus brings about the \_\_\_\_\_ from the curse of the Fall.

The blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28 do not give us a list to follow to \_\_\_\_\_ to be right with God, they show us we are under a curse for our failure to obey God.

But the New Testament shows us that Jesus takes our \_\_\_\_\_ and gives us his blessing.

### **Using Biblical Themes**

Using biblical themes is similar to using the storyline of Scripture but does not include all of the story.

### **Definitions and Descriptions**

Using biblical themes is also known as \_\_\_\_\_.

The interpreter traces a theme through the biblical story until it reaches its \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus.

### **Foundations**

The divine \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture means we can see themes develop through the story.

“Because God is the ultimate author of Scripture, we must believe that themes will develop in ‘organic’ or natural ways ....”<sup>6</sup> Jason DeRouchie.

Biblical authors \_\_\_\_\_ on each other and contribute to significant themes.

### **Keys to Using Biblical Themes**

#### **1. Identify and follow \_\_\_\_\_ themes.**

Some themes include kingdom, promise/covenant, presence, sin and forgiveness, creation, law, holiness, judgment, and the glory of God.

\_\_\_\_\_: God’s reign over the world.

Key passages: Genesis 1:26-28 Man’s rule over the Earth in creation, 1 Samuel-2 Chronicles The establishment of Israel’s monarchy (especially the portions about David), The royal themes in the Wisdom Literature (especially the Psalms).

Both Adam and Israel \_\_\_\_\_ in their reigns but look forward to a greater kingdom.

\_\_\_\_\_ or Covenant: God makes significant promises to His people.

To \_\_\_\_\_—Genesis 3:15

The seed of the woman will \_\_\_\_\_ the serpent’s head defeating sin.

To \_\_\_\_\_—Genesis 12:1-7 (restated 15:1-6, 17-21; 17:1-8, 15-21; 18:18-19; 24:7; 26:1-5; 28:3-4; 32:12; 35:9-10; 46:1-4; 48:3-4; 50:24); Exodus 1:7; 3:7-8; Numbers 1 & 26; Deuteronomy 34:4-12; Joshua 21:43-45; 1 Kings 4:20

God will make Abraham and his descendants a great \_\_\_\_\_ of numerous descendants, give them the promised land, and make them a blessing to the nations.

To \_\_\_\_\_—2 Samuel 7:9-17, 1 Kings 2:1-4; 11:9-13; Psalm 2; Psalm 110; Ezekiel 34:23-24

God will make a descendant of David to rule \_\_\_\_\_ as God’s Son.

New \_\_\_\_\_—Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:22-37:14

God will make a new covenant in which he empowers and \_\_\_\_\_ his people with his Spirit and a new heart.

\_\_\_\_\_ of God: God with his people.

Key passages: Eden (Genesis 1-2), Tabernacle (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers), Temple (1 Kings, Ezra-Nehemiah, Prophets), even Exile (2 Kings, Prophets)

\_\_\_\_\_ imagery is a significant subset of this theme.

Adam and Eve enjoy the presence of God in Eden but are \_\_\_\_\_ from his presence after the Fall.

Israel experiences the presence of God in the \_\_\_\_\_ and tabernacle, but they are banished from his presence in the exile.

Even the \_\_\_\_\_ do not enable man to know the presence of God consistently.

## 2. Show how Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the theme.

**Kingdom:** Matthew 4:17; 28:18 (and almost everything in between)

Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ and establishes the Kingdom.

**Promise:** Matthew 1:1; Luke 22:20/1 Corinthians 11:25; Acts 2:22-36; 2 Corinthians 1:20

Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ all of God's promises especially those to Abraham and David and the new covenant.

Though Israel became numerous and occupied the land, they never became a \_\_\_\_\_ to the nations.

**Presence:** John 1:14-18; 14:15-17; Matthew 1:21-23/28:20; 12:6; Revelation 21:22-27

Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ (tabernacles) with us and gives the Holy Spirit to live in us.

Jesus will one day give us \_\_\_\_\_ access to the presence of God.

**Summary: The major themes of the Bible \_\_\_\_\_ on Jesus.**

## Example: Balaam in Numbers 22-24

### 1. Identify the significant theme

Balaam's story references the \_\_\_\_\_ made to Abraham to make Israel a great nation of numerous descendants and give them the land.

Balak wants to stop the people from coming into the \_\_\_\_\_ (Numbers 22:6).

Balaam states that God blessed the people and made them as numerous as the \_\_\_\_\_  
(Numbers 23:8-10).

\_\_\_\_\_ can stop God's promises including Balak and Balaam.

2. Show how Jesus fulfills the theme.

God's promise to Abraham is bigger than \_\_\_\_\_ the Moabites and inhabiting the promised land.

God's ultimate fulfilment of the promise is Jesus as the \_\_\_\_\_ to all nations, providing salvation for all peoples in an eternal promised land.

Nothing can stop God's promise to bring about \_\_\_\_\_ for his people.

### **Homework/Reflection Questions**

1. What was the most significant thing you learned from this session?
2. What is something you still have questions about or still do not quite understand?
3. How does identifying the place and levels of a story differ from how you typically think about Old Testament narratives?
4. What biblical theme that we covered were you most familiar with and with which were you least familiar?
5. Read Numbers 13:25-14:10 (The spies' report from the promised land and the people's response).
  - a. Use the storyline method to identify the place and levels of the story that could provide a pathway to Christ.
  - b. Identify any significant themes in the passage you could use to point to or prepare for Jesus.

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- <sup>1</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (2012), 91.
- <sup>2</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed. (2014), 20.
- <sup>3</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 2nd ed. (1993), 80.
- <sup>4</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (2014), 39.
- <sup>5</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 2nd ed. (1993), 80.
- <sup>6</sup> Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (2017), 352.