

The Bible: Our True Story

Prologue– the Eternal Life of the Trinity

Passages: Proverbs 8:22–31
John 1:1–4

Last week, we started to talk about the big story of the Bible—the metanarrative—in which all other stories are found. As I said, there are 7 billion stories on this earth. But the fact is that all 7 billion stories are interconnected (and not simply by 6 degrees of separation). We are connected by the larger story of the universe that has been given to us by God in the Scriptures. It is in this Biblical story that all our own stories are found and make sense.

And so, today, we want to begin exploring the Biblical Story. We want to engage with the first characters and the first events that mark out this universal metanarrative. But tell me, in strictly chronological terms, **where should we begin?** Where does the Biblical story really start??

Let me give you a hint—**It doesn't begin at Genesis 1:1!** Sure, Genesis 1:1 may be the 'official' start to the story of the Bible. Sure, the opening words of the Old Testament (“**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.**”) seem to be giving us the beginning to the story. But the truth is that there's some information that is missing from these opening verses that will only be revealed later on in the Biblical story. Indeed, in the Bible (just like it is in a lot of other stories), the true beginning of the story doesn't come at the beginning! It is revealed much later.

Have you ever heard of a “**flashback**”? On a website designed to help budding authors and screenwriters hone their craft, a flashback is described in this way:

“You can use flashbacks for any number of reasons but its primary purpose is to bridge time, place and action (in order) to reveal a past emotional event or physical conflict that affects the character. Sometimes, (a flashback) gives insight and understanding into a character's behaviour or

solves a past mystery. You can also use a flashback to reveal why an event happened, or how it happened...”

Take the action movie, “The Bourne Identity”, as a good example! For at least the first thirty minutes of the movie, we follow Jason Bourne, a trained assassin, as he takes out key targets. But suddenly, Bourne has a flashback of his former life and how he became a ruthless killer-- He was part of ‘The Program’! It’s only through this flashback that we can begin to piece together a story before the story! Indeed, this flashback makes Bourne question his own identity! **(Watch!)**

Now, it may surprise you that **flashbacks are also found in the Bible!** Indeed, they are the key to understanding the Bible, for through them we are transported back to a time prior to the creation of the world (before Genesis 1)! Suddenly, we are faced with critical information that establishes the true foundation of everything else that follows. Indeed, without this information, we cannot make full sense of the Biblical story (and, indeed, our own stories)!

One of the first of these flashbacks comes halfway through the Bible, in **Proverbs 8:22–31**.

- ²² **“The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old;**
- ²³ **I was formed long ages ago,
at the very beginning, when the world came to be.**
- ²⁴ **When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,
when there were no springs overflowing with water;**
- ²⁵ **before the mountains were settled in place,
before the hills, I was given birth,**
- ²⁶ **before he made the world or its fields
or any of the dust of the earth.**
- ²⁷ **I was there when he set the heavens in place,
when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,**
- ²⁸ **when he established the clouds above
and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,**
- ²⁹ **when he gave the sea its boundary
so the waters would not overstep his command,
and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.**
- ³⁰ **Then I was constantly at his side.**

**I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence,
³¹ rejoicing in his whole world
and delighting in mankind.**

As you can see, this flashback transports us back to a time before (and concurrent with) Genesis 1! According to this new information, it seems that, even before God made the heavens and the earth (as it says in Genesis 1), **He had a companion**—someone feminine by the name of **‘Wisdom’** --who was **“constantly at his side”**, and who was **“rejoicing always in his presence”**.

Another significant flashback comes even later in the Bible, at the opening verses of John’s Gospel in the New Testament! It seems there was somebody else with God back in the time before the world was made.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life...”

This flashback takes us once again back to the time before the creation of the world. But now, God is in the company of Someone called **‘the Word’**! Unlike Wisdom, the Word is masculine. But like Wisdom, it seems that God and the Word have always existed together, eternally intertwined with one another, **sharing and exuding life well-before anything else existed!** They were so intertwined, in fact, that the Word was with God and the Word was God!

When you add these flashbacks together (the feminine **Wisdom** and the masculine **Word**, both hanging out with God in eternity), what do you come up with? Although you may not have seen this before (and although the word is never used in the Scriptures), through these flashbacks, you begin to see **the Trinity!** These flashbacks tell us that, before the world was made, God existed as Three Beings in One and One Being in Three; God is both plural in His inner dynamics, yet one in His intentions and purposes.

In other words, these flashbacks serve to fill in essential aspects of **the identity** and **character** of God (in much the same way that flashbacks helped Jason Bourne to discover his identity!) Through flashbacks, we see a God who, contrary to what most people had imagined, was never alone; never devoid of relational intimacy; never austere or without loving contact. Rather, even before the creation of the world, God was overflowing with community, intimacy and life!

This is how Baxter Kruger puts it: “God is not some faceless, all-powerful abstraction. God is Father, Son and Spirit, existing in a passionate and joyous fellowship...The Trinity is a circle of shared life, and the life shared is full, not empty, abounding and rich and beautiful, not lonely and sad and boring...God is fundamentally a relational being...caught up in the eternal Dance of life!”

Let me show you two more flashbacks that come in the New Testament. The first is found in **John 17**, where Jesus (the Word of God) is praying to God the Father. Suddenly, He has a flashback – He remembers the time before creation! And this is what He says:

⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

In this simple prayer, Jesus harks back to the time before creation when He shared in an eternally intimate relationship with the Father. Jesus has only one word to describe it-- “**Glory**”! It was perfect glory! What does He mean by that? ‘Glory’ describes the sheer beauty of their life together before anything else existed! Although no one else was around, they were complete and fulfilled! The Father, the Son and the Spirit were perfect in their shared love for one another! It was ‘glory’!

So, then, if they were complete in their glory, why did they create the world? We’ll get into this in more detail next week, but the simple answer is this: **They wanted to expand the circle of their ‘glory’ by creating us and bringing us inside!** The Triune God wanted to share their glory with us by creating this world and filling it with a family who would participate fully in their glory.

Their fullest joy would be found in bringing others to life who might join in..participate in... the overflowing abundance of their life, the life that eternally exists inside the Trinity.

So, remember, **Genesis 1 is not the real beginning of the Story!** The real beginning to the Story is found in the Eternal Glory of the **Trinity!**

Now, you might be saying, “Well if this is the case, why didn’t God tell us about His Triune nature much earlier? Why did He wait so long?”

Well, I figure that He did tell us... a long, long time ago. In fact, there are many hints throughout the early chapters of Genesis that God was revealing Himself as Trinity from the start. In Genesis 1, as God begins to create the heavens and the earth, we read that **the Spirit** was hovering over the face of the waters while **the Word** was being spoken by God. Isn’t that already a reference to the Trinity? Later on in that same first chapter, God uses the plural expression, “**Let us make man in our image.**” Is that not also a reference to the Trinity?

But, the trouble is that, even though God had revealed Himself as Trinity from the very beginning, we (like Jason Bourne) **have all had our memories erased!** Someone, somewhere, has influenced our minds to the point that we no longer remember or believe this Eternal truth about God! (Don’t worry– we’ll talk about this in greater detail in two weeks!)

Nevertheless, the point I want to make is this: **Despite the fact that our minds may have long forgotten the mystery of the Trinity, our hearts have not forgotten!** Like Jason Bourne, something drives us to imagine that something more is going on! I mean, hasn’t the heart of humankind always felt that God must be more than some distant Omni-Being; austere and remote? Behind every religion, isn’t there the hope for a God who is both transcendent and immanent; a God who is both Sovereign and relational; a God who can hold the universe together while, at the same time, come close to comfort, heal and guide us? Haven’t we always longed for a God who, in the midst of our disastrous folly,

would come down from heaven to forgive and rescue us, and restore our world?

Although our minds may have forgotten this God, **our hearts have always been searching for the Trinity!** That's why the Biblical flashbacks are so important! They tell us that the true and eternal nature of God is "Father, Son and Spirit"; and that there has never been a time when the Father was not the Father, and the Son was not the Son, and the Spirit was not the Spirit. They tell us that fellowship, camaraderie, togetherness, communion, and joyful unity have always been at the centre of God's being, and always will be!

I said that there was one more 'flashback' that I wanted to share with you. This one is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 3 and 4.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

This time, it's Paul who has a flashback. And what does he see? By the Spirit of God, Paul looks back to a time "**before the creation of the world**", and he sees the Father, Son and Spirit engaged in a conversation. What are they talking about? They are talking about us...the (as yet unformed) human race... that will soon inhabit the (as yet unformed) earth. And even though we have not yet been created, they have a plan for us--they have a desire that we be included in their divine dance of fellowship and love; that we share in the beauty of their holy communion; that we become like them, perfected in the holiness and blamelessness of their corporate image.

As Paul has this 'flashback', it makes him suddenly bursts out with joy and thanksgiving! "**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!**" Paul can't help but rejoice in the fact that the eternal plans of the Triune God are finally coming true! This ancient desire of the Triune God (a desire that was established "**before the creation of the world**") is finally becoming a reality in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, of course, why the death and resurrection of Jesus will be necessary is a point that will come much later in the story. But suffice it to say, as these Biblical 'flashbacks' enable us to look back to the time before creation...before Genesis 1...it becomes abundantly clear that the Trinity had you and me in their collective minds. From eternity, they had predestined (planned) for us to share in their love-- to draw the entire human race into the eternal circle of their shared life so that we might forever know the fullness of their life and love. This is the reason why the world was made. Most importantly, this is the reason why God created you and me..., that we might all share in their Glory!

Friends, the combination of all these flashbacks reveal, what we might call, 'the Prologue' to the Greatest Story Ever Told!

Let's pray.