**The Big Story of the Bible**

Text: Luke 24:27

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Scriptures: Genesis 3:1-15; Luke 24:13-27

Songs Chosen: [SttL] 111, 213, 407, PH412, 117

**Series:** Heidelberg Catechism (LD6)

**Theme:** The Bible is a single unfolding story about Jesus Christ

**Proposition:** We need to be able to summarise the main story of the Bible in order to effectively proclaim Christ

**Introduction**

The Bible can be an inaccessible book for many. Where is the best place to start reading and what does it all mean? It’s not a small book, and it contains a lot of information. How do all the individual events, characters and revelations fit together? Which parts are most important for someone who knows little or nothing about the Christian faith?

Notice that in response to the question in HCLD6Q19 about how we come to know Jesus Christ is the mediator (true God and truly human) who was “given to us to set us completely free and to make us right with God”, The answer is given: “*The holy gospel tells me. God himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise; later, he proclaimed it by the holy patriarchsand prophets and portrayed it by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; finally, he fulfilled it through his own dear Son*”

The Heidelberg Catechism here refers to what we could call “The Big Story of the Bible”. It is important for us all to know this story well.

There is a benefit in being able to summarise the main narrative of the Bible in a few minutes. What we’re going to consider this evening is how to construct a short overview of the Bible to convey to someone who knows little or nothing about Scripture.

Firstly, we need to begin with..

1. **Understanding the Bible**

American Author Stephen Covey has famously said that “*The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing*”. In order to link all the different events, characters and teachings of Scripture into the main purpose of this written revelation from God, we must know what the ‘main thing’ is in the Bible.

The Word of God point us to this in various places e.g. Heb 1:1-3 **“***Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*”.

The whole Bible is asingle interwoven narrative which points to Jesus Christ, the Image of the invisible God in perfect man, the Saviour of the world. Gospel writer Luke records Jesus teaching the Word of God to Cleopas and his companion: **“***And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*” (Luke 24:27). We are not told which texts Jesus exegetes/explains to the men on that road to Emmaus when he said that: “*everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled*" (Luke 24:44). Notice that Jesus refers to ‘Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms’.These are the three Hebrew divisions of the Old Testament. They designated the entire revealed Scripture at that time. Jesus is saying that **every part** of God’s Word speaks of Him. He then “*opened their minds to understand the Scriptures*” (Luke 24:45)

Today, we have more of God’s written, special, revelation than was available to those two men who were walking to Emmaus. We have another 27 books of the Bible; the New Testament. Part of our task as willing followers of Jesus Christ, who desire “to make and equip disciples of Jesus, our Saviour, who joyfully serve and glorify God”, is to tell the story of the Bible so that, by God’s enabling grace, the minds of other people may be opened to understand the Scriptures.

It’s helpful to structure the unfolding work of God through history in four stages: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.

**The first stage of God’s unfolding story, Creation, only occupies 2 chapters in the book of Genesis, although it is referred to in many later Scriptures (e.g. Ex:8-11; Matt 19:4; Acts 17:26; Rom 5:12-20; 1 Cor 11:8; Heb 11:3). God designed this world so that human beings could flourish, living in the joy, peace and presence of their loving Maker, worshipping Him by loving him and one another forever.**

**The second stage of God’s unfolding story only occupies one chapter in the book of Genesis (3), but the effect of the ‘Fall’ permeates the whole Bible up to Revelation chapter 20. Just as** Adam and Eve rejected God's rule over them, so we too have likewise done so through our attitudes and actions. We have declared ourselves to be God's enemies. This rebellion results in physical and spiritual death for us all apart from Christ.

**The third stage of God’s unfolding story is Redemption:** God’s unfolding plan of rescuing lost people from the consequences of their rebellion through a Saviour is the main ‘storyline’ of the Bible

**Complete Restoration of the whole world is the goal toward which God’s story is still moving.** The complete renewal of all things will take place in two ways:

a) Christ will return to judge sin and evil, and

b) He will usher in complete universal righteousness and peace forever.

God will purge this world of evil once and for all. The end of the Big Story of the Bible is yet to occur. This is what will take place: there will be *“...a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth ...(will pass) away, and the sea ..(will be) no more. And … the holy city, the new Jerusalem... will come down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*” (from Rev 21:1)

We need firstly to understand how the Bible fits together around the central story which God is telling and working out. We then need to put the pieces of Scripture together in order to tell that story to others in summary form. ...which brings us to our 2nd point:

1. **Putting the pieces together**

One of the challenges which preachers have when putting a sermon together is what to include and what to exclude...after all we only have about 20 minutes ☺. There’s a similar challenge for all of us in putting together a brief summary of the Big Story of the Bible. We often only have a relatively short period of time to convey the narrative. What then should we include/exclude? There is so much Scripture to choose from! There are so many events we could relate. In considering this the HCLD6QA19 is a helpful guide which references the following Scriptures:

**Firstly**: in referencing Genesis 3:15 where God says to Satan after the fall of Adam and Eve: “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspringand her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel*." This is known as the ‘protoevangelium’—the first gospel.

This verse introduces two elements previously unknown in the Garden of Eden, key consequences that are the basis of Christianity:

* The curse on mankind because of Adam’s sin and
* God’s provision for a Saviour from sin who would take the curse upon Himself.

**Secondly**: The gospel was proclaimed ‘by the holy patriarchs’ – to Abraham – Gen 22:18 ***“****in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice*”. The gospel was also proclaimed through Jacob – Gen 49:10 “*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples*”.

**Thirdly** the gospel was proclaimed ‘by the holy prophets’ e.g. Isaiah 53:2-7 “*For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrowsand acquainted withgrief;and as one from whom men hide their faceshe was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all*”

Jeremiah 23:5-6 “*Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.”*

Micah 7:18-20 “*Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all oursins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.”*

Here’s a summary of the proclamation of the prophets about Christ: “*To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name*." (Acts 10:43)

**Fourthly** portrayal (foreshadowing) in sacrifices and ceremonies of the law – e.g. Heb 10:3-4 “*In these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*”; Col 2.17 *These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*

**Fifthly** finally fulfilled through Jesus, God’s own dear son - Rom 10:4 “*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”;* Gal 4:4-5 “*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”*

We’ve understood the main story line of the Bible: Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration. We’ve found the Heidelberg Catechism a helpful guide as to what we should include/exclude in a short summary of the Bible’s Big Story. Now let’s tell the story about Jesus from Scripture.

1. **Telling the story about Jesus**

Before we begin, it’s important to realise that there is no single ‘right way’ of summarising the Big Story of the Bible. There are many different ways of doing this and the approach will vary depending on the leading of the Holy Spirit and those to whom you are speaking. Here is an example of a short presentation.

In the beginning God created this universe – making this huge something which is all around us (and of which we ourselves are a part) out of nothing. God created galaxies, stars, planets, fish, birds and land animals. He made it very good. His greatest work of all was to create the first human beings: Adam and Eve in His image.

Our original common ancestors enjoyed a close relationship with their Creator. God gave them responsibility to care for the beautiful environment in which He had placed them. He instructed them to reproduce and have children and thereby to populate the earth.

God had also created angels in the beginning and one of these, Satan, rebelled against God and took on the form of a serpent. He tempted Eve to disobey God by eating fruit from a tree which God had told her to eat. Adam followed her by also eating this forbidden fruit and thereby also rebelling against God. The Bible calls this disobedience against God sin.

Sin results in spiritual death – a break in the relationship between the sinner and God. Sin also results in physical death – the fate of all human beings since Adam and Eve rebelled against God. This ‘fall’ of mankind has resulted in all humans being conceived not morally good, as Adam and Eve were first created, but with an evil inclination to disobey God’s authority.

Just after Adam and Eve sinned, God made the first gospel (good news) promise in the Bible, saying to Satan: “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspringand her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel*." (Gen 3:15) A descendant of the woman was going to be born who would be wounded by Satan, but He would triumph over the Devil. This promise points to the person and work of Jesus Christ who would come to solve the problem of sin for a people God has chosen to be His own.

Adam and Eve’s sin had consequences for their own family. One of their sons, Cain, murdered his brother. Several generations later, the world was so full of violence and rebellion against God that only one man was morally upright. His name was Noah. God instructed Noah to build a very large boat to rescue himself, his wife and their three sons and their wives from the great flood which He would send in judgement on the whole earth. God’s deliverance of Noah and His family from the flood points forward to His rescue of many people through faith in Jesus Christ.

One of Noah’s descendants, Abraham, was called by God to move from his home to a land that God would show Him. God promised that He would make a great nation from Abraham’s descendants and that through this nation, all the other people groups of the world would be blessed.

Abraham had a son called Isaac, who had a son called Jacob whose eleventh child, Joseph became a ruler of Egypt under Pharaoh. 400 years later, the descendants of Abraham had grown into a large people group who were enslaved by the Egyptian pharaoh at that time. God then raised up a prophet called Moses to lead the people out of Egypt and to bring them back to the land promised to Abraham.

God gave Moses the 10 commandments which was the basis of his agreement with them to be their God and for them to be His people. In addition to His moral law, God also gave them ceremonial laws which were to teach them the need for sin to be dealt with through the shedding of the blood of a spotless sacrifice.

God’s deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt points forward to His rescue of many people from the bondage of their rebellion against God through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who would take away sin.

Despite His goodness and unmerited favour towards the Israelites, they repeatedly turned away from Him down through the generations. The Old Testament records this repeated disobedience of Israel as the people often failed to trust in God. God therefore sent many prophets to remind them of what He had promised and to warn them of the consequences of their rebellion. These prophets also foretold the coming of the Deliverer (Messiah – ‘Anointed One’) who would finally deal with the problem of sin (rebellion against God) and its’ inevitable consequence, death.

For example, Isaiah predicted that Jesus Christ would suffer and die for the sins of other people, thereby bringing them healing. The prophet Jeremiah predicted that a good and morally perfect King in the line of David would reign wisely. The prophet Micah spoke of God’s great love and compassion for His people and his willingness to pardon their rebellion against Him. The prophets spoke of Jesus Christ promising that all who believe in Him receive forgiveness of sins through His name (Acts 10:43)

At just the right time, about 2,000 years ago, God sent His own Son Jesus to be born of a woman in fulfilment of the words He had spoken to Satan thousands of years before. Jesus always lived willingly under God’s authority, being tempted to sin as we all are, but never rebelling against His Heavenly Father. He began His public ministry at the age of about 30, demonstrating His divine power through many supernatural miracles. He healed many sick people and explained that the reason He had come to earth was to ‘seek and to save the lost’ (Luke 19:10) – people who were separated from God.

In Jerusalem, Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples called Judas Iscariot. He was then unjustly condemned to death by crucifixion by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. When Jesus died there was a great earthquake and the curtain in the temple which separated the inner sanctuary from the outer areas was supernaturally torn from top to bottom. The body of Jesus was laid in a tomb and on the third day after his death He was raised to new life by God and appeared to many people before ascending bodily into the clouds. Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all the promises of God, the OT sacrificial system, tabernacle and temple. He is the Great High Priest of God, the King of Kings and the Saviour of the World.

He is coming back to this earth at which time He will judge all people, those living at that time and all who have died.

Those who have trusted in Him, believing that He took their place and received the judgement of God on their behalf against their sin will gain entry into the new earth which God will make and populate with all His people in a perpetual paradise where there will be no pain, suffering, decay or death.

Those who have not trusted in Jesus will be separated from God forever. They will be utterly miserable, knowing that Jesus truly is the King who reigns forever, but that they are forever shut out of the glorious paradise over which He lovingly rules.

Jesus came to this earth to “*to set us completely free and to make us right with God*” (words of HCLD6QA18). Will you believe in Him? Coming to Him and admitting your rebellion against God, your breaking of His good law, and trusting in Him to rescue you and bring you safely to a perfect home with Him which will last forever?

The Bible is God’s Big story – will you make it yours?

AMEN