

The “Theme” of the Bible

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges you have had with the Bible is understanding what it’s all about, and correctly/accurately seeing each book, paragraph, and statement in light of that overall purpose. This is the basis for the idea that **context is king**. The Bible tells what the overall purpose is, and you must understand the Bible in the light of that context.

The Bible has a *theme* or *purpose* that is “over” everything, unifying and tying everything in the Bible together. Without understanding this over-arching, unifying theme, the Bible will just seem to be a collection of different stories and letters. Or, you may see something else as the main theme of the Bible, resulting in a wrong interpretation and application of different passages.

1. God’s Purpose in History

- 1) The motivation behind everything God does is His **glory**.
 - In one sense, God’s “glory” is the **sum** of His attributes as fully as they have been revealed.
 - In another sense, God’s “glory” is the **esteem** that rational beings (humans and angels) have for God because of who He is and what He has done— when we “see” God for who He is, as He has been revealed in the Bible

“Esteem” – regard, respect, admiration, value, worth, appreciation

Romans 11:36 “For **from** Him and **through** Him and **to** Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

1 Corinthians 15:28 “When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all”

Colossians 1:16 “all things have been created through Him and for Him”

- 2) Everything exists and happens for God’s glory, and God works that purpose out in **history**. In the Bible God has revealed His plan of glorifying Himself. What does the Bible reveal about how God will accomplish His plan of receiving maximum glory from human beings?
- 3) God will ultimately glorify Himself in human history in **the Kingdom of God—God will lovingly rule and dwell with His people on earth forever**. This is the unifying center, the ultimate purpose/goal of God’s activity. This is the goal of human history. This is what ties everything in the Bible together. A two-fold relationship is involved in God’s ultimate purpose—

- “I will be their God and they will be my people”

This relationship began with the creation of man as the image of God (Gen 1:26–27). Eventually, this relationship was expressed in **covenants**. See Gen 17:7 (Abraham); Lev 11:45 (Mosaic); Jer 24:7; Zech 8:8; 13:9 (New)

- “I will dwell among them”

This relationship began when God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen 3:8). God did this in what theologians call a *Christophany*, an appearance of Christ in human form before the incarnation. After the Fall God’s “dwelling” with men was probably in sporadic Christophanies. There was no permanent, visible dwelling of God after the Fall until the Glory Cloud and the eventual construction of God’s “house” (the Tabernacle).

Study these passages for more on this theme—Gen 3:8; 17:7–8; Exod 6:7; 19:5–6; 20:24; 25:8; 29:45; Lev 11:45; 26:12, 45; Num 5:3; 35:34; Deut 12:5, 11; 29:13; 2 Chr 7:12; Ps 46:7, 11; Isa 51:16; Jer 7:23; 11:4; **13:11**; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 34:30–31; 36:28; **37:23–28**; 43:9; Hos 2:23; Zech 2:5, 10–11; **8:3, 8**; 13:9; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:7

- 4) The greatest display of God’s glory on earth in human history will be during the **millennium**—the Kingdom of God—when God will enter into a rule of loving sovereignty and fellowship with His people and dwell with them forever (Ezek 37:23–28; Zech 8:3, 8). This is what all of human history is leading to and working toward.
- 5) When the Kingdom of God is established, God will receive the maximum glory possible on the historical plane. God’s glory is not fully visible now. It will be, beginning with **Christ’s** appearance. How will God’s glory be made fully visible among men in human history?
 - In relation to the **earth**, the curse will be removed *before* the new heavens and the new earth are formed (cf. Rom 8:18-25)
 - In relation to the **animal** world, all the animals will live in harmony with each other (Isa 11:6-9)
 - All **mankind** will live in subjection to the King of glory (**Phil 2:10-11**)
 - As Christ’s bride, the **church** will share in the glory of Christ’s redemption (Rev 19:7-9)
 - **Satan** will be absent during this time (Rev 20:1-3) and Christ’s glory will not be hidden
 - Open **sin** will be supernaturally judged (Zech 14:17–19)

So, you need to always keep this theme in the back of your mind when studying the Bible. Always remember that...

- (1) Everything exists and happens for God’s glory.
- (2) God *will* receive maximum glory from human beings in human history.
- (3) When Christ comes and establishes His Kingdom on earth, God will lovingly rule and dwell with His people on earth forever.

2. The Purpose of the Bible—Reveal God and His Purposes

- 1) The Bible reveals how God’s purpose in history is “unfolded” and accomplished. It *interprets* history from God’s perspective and tells us *where* it is heading.
 - The Bible interprets history from **God’s** perspective.
 - The Bible covers all of history, from beginning to end.
 - The Bible ties all aspects of history together and makes sense of them all.
 - The Bible shows that history has an ultimate goal or purpose.
- 2) The information God revealed to men was not constant and continual. The Bible reveals God’s plan **progressively**; that is, God revealed truth in **portions** rather than all **at once**.
 - Don’t think of revelation as constant and continual, like a **waterfall**. Think of God’s revelation like **rainstorms**—it came once in awhile, sometimes giving a lot of “rain,” sometimes a little (He gave it “in many portions and in many ways,” Heb 1:1).
- 3) Each revelation that God gave could be thought of as an *installment* or *deposit* (cf. Jude 3).
 - Each *deposit of truth* God gave to men began a new *stage* in how He would deal with them.
 - With each deposit of truth the **relationship** between God and men changed and men also received new **responsibilities**.
- 4) It is extremely important for you, the reader and thus interpreter of God’s written Word, to be aware that God’s revelation is *progressive*, it **follows** and **builds** upon previous deposits of truth. This is an important principle to keep in mind, especially since we have the privilege of a complete Bible. Why?
 - Because when you’re reading, say, Leviticus, you have to interpret it *from the standpoint of the biblical author who wrote it*, not from *your* standpoint.
 - So you can know what *does* and *does not* apply to our lives now
 - Seeing how God’s revelation builds upon the previous revelation helps you understand the progress, purpose, meaning, and application better.
 - Seeing how God related to men in the past gives us a greater appreciation for what we have now and how it was made possible.

