

We Know....

John's gospel is written from the perspective of someone who lived and worked with Christ, had years to reflect on it all and had come to believe, without a shadow of doubt that Jesus was the Messiah and that He was God dwelling with His people. He also understood what God's Kingdom was and who would dwell in it.

Today, we have the Bible which tells us God's story.

The Bible is a story with:

Beginning (Genesis 1 - 11), a long, long

Middle (Genesis 12 - Malachi 4; Matthew - Revelation), and an

End (Matthew 25; Romans 8; Revelation 21 - 22

The story has:

Plot - Creation to Consummation (Re-Creation) or Paradise lost to paradise restored.

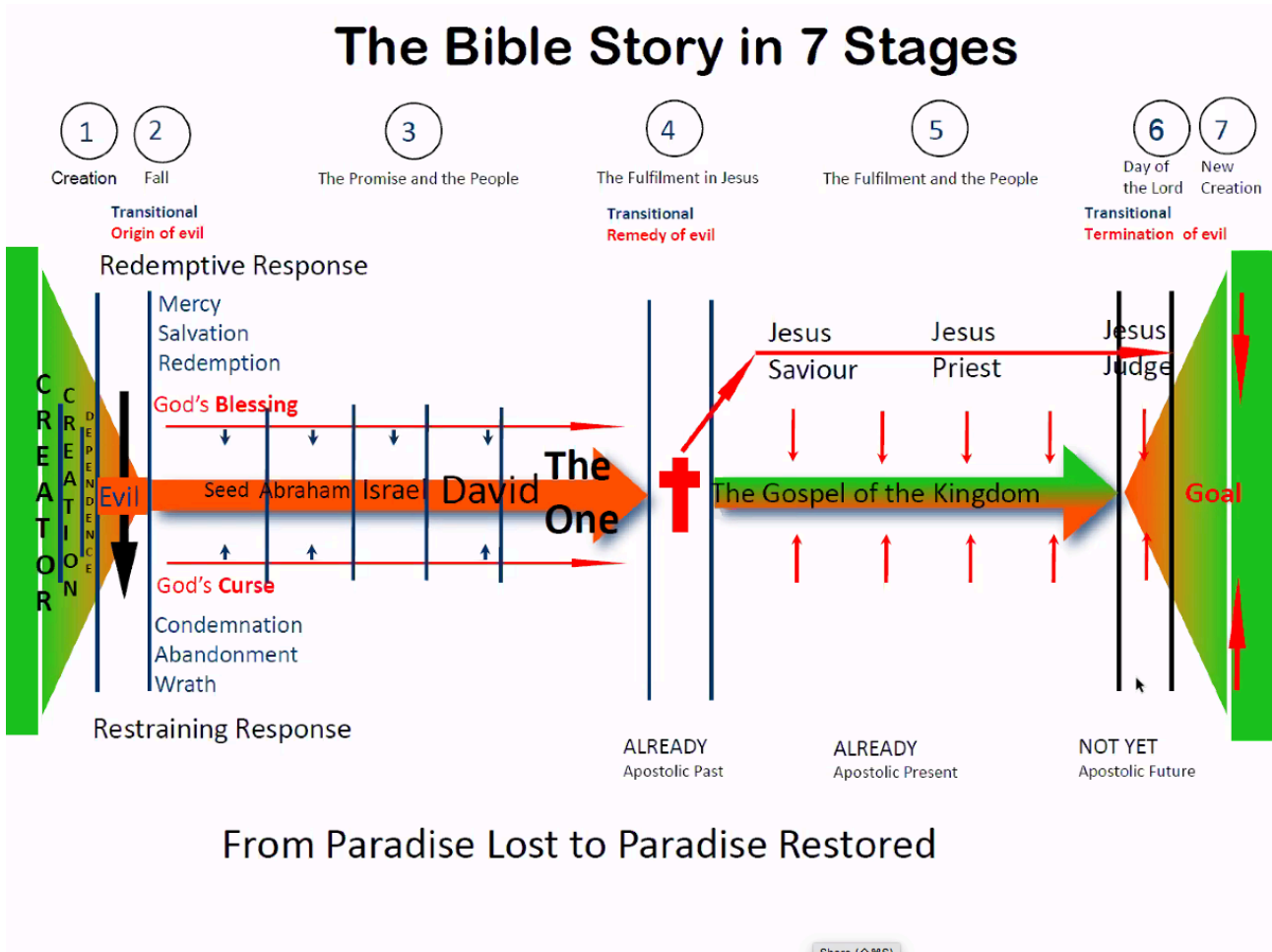
Characters - God - Father, Son and Spirit - and God's people and the world and creation around them

Authors (many) who together tell the story

Plot	Theme
Creating <i>Eikons</i> (Genesis 1 -2)	Oneness
Cracked <i>Eikons</i> (Genesis 3 - 11)	Otherness
Covenant Community (Genesis 12 - Malachi)	Otherness expands
Christ, the Perfect <i>Eikon</i> , Revealer and Redeemer (Matthew - Revelation 20)	One in Christ
Consummation/Re-Creation (Revelation 21 - 22)	Perfectly One

Eikon = likeness of God

(Adapted from The Blue Parakeet. Rethinking How You Read the Bible by Scot McKnight)



Or...

(Courtesy of Daniel Duda)

Each author tells his part of the story within the framework of the overall story, shaping the various elements of the plot, emphasising one element or the other.

When we read any part of the Bible we should read it in its context, not only of the passage within the chapter, within the book but within the context of the whole Bible as Story.

The account of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well at Sychar is very familiar to us, perhaps so familiar that we miss things. So I would like us to try and look at John's account of this event within the context of the Bible as Story and John's contribution to the Story.

But before we get in to the account of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, some background to help us get the context of the event.

- The Samaritans were regarded as a hated, heretical Jewish cult and had been since the days of Nehemiah, 450 years earlier. The Assyrians had removed all the Jewish population and brought in others to repopulate the area. The Samaritans accepted only the five books of Moses, and they had mingled pagan, idolatrous practices with the Law of Moses. They had built a temple on Mt Gerizim as a rival to the one in Jerusalem. The Jews hated them even more than they hated Gentiles.
- There were three routes between Jerusalem and Galilee.
 - Directly north through Samaria Approx 70 miles
 - East and then north via Jericho and the Jordan Valley Approx 120 miles 177.6km
 - West and then north via the coast Approx 100 miles 160.5km
- The well was an historic spot - Jacob's well at the foot of Mt Gerizim, about 1/2mile from Sychar, is the well that Jacob had dug for his flocks and herds. Sychar is where Joseph's tomb is located. The Israelites were commanded to read the Law of Moses every year from the tops of the twin mountains, Mt Gerizim on the east and Mt Ebal on the west. Mt Gerizim was the place where the blessings of the Law were read; Mt Ebal was where the curses of the Law were read to those who disobeyed it.

Some topics to think about for our discussion this week:

The significance of the introduction.

What we can learn about 'Otherness'

What is revealed

What effect this encounter had on The Samaritan, the Samaritans, the disciples, Jesus.

Living this story today

Bearing in mind that John's gospel would most likely have been read out in one sitting the listeners probably saw links that we easily miss due to the way we tend to approach the Bible, can you identify any themes and literary techniques John is developing in the passages we have studied so far, John 1 - 4?

Developing themes from John 1 - 4, e.g. light and darkness; not knowing to knowing; abundance

Contrasts and similarities

And finally, a thought to keep with us.

"I shall pass this way but once; any good that I can do or any kindness I can show to any human being, let me do it now.

Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Attributed to Stephen Grellet, born Etienne de Grellet du Mabilier 1773 - 1885. Quaker Missionary