

Session 5: The Big Story

How do the gospels fit into the grand story of Scripture? How should we understand Jesus' life, teaching, ministry, death and resurrection as a continuation of the biblical story?

This session will help us to understand Jesus' ministry in its wider context, and will explore the central theme of the Kingdom of God.

The Big Story: The four stories and the one story

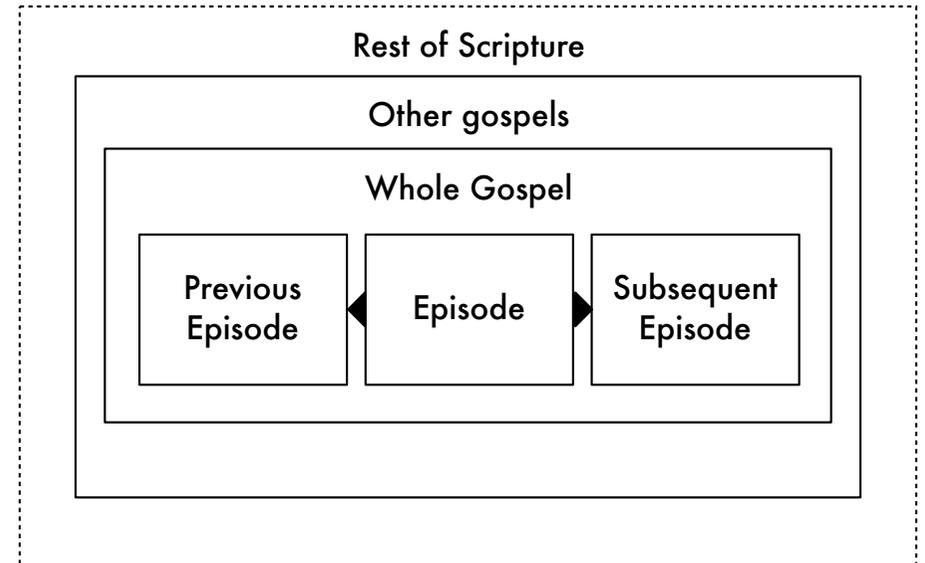
Moving from the Descriptive to the Synthetic

I - The Descriptive Task

'The first thing we must do in order to understand the ethics of the New Testament is to explicate in detail the messages of the individual writings in the canon, without prematurely harmonising them. When we read the texts in this way, we note distinctive themes and patterns of reasoning in the individual witnesses' (Richard Hays - *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*)

II - The Synthetic Task

'If we are pursuing New Testament ethics with theological concerns in view [...] we must move on to ask about the possibility of coherence among the various witnesses. When we ask this question, we move from the descriptive to the synthetic task. Is it possible to describe a unity of ethical perspective within the diversity of the canon?' (Hays)



Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>The Big Story</i>	<i>The Little Stories: Parables</i>	<i>Monotheism: Who is God</i>	<i>Torah: How should we live?</i>
<i>The Kingdom</i>		<i>Election: Who are God's people?</i>	<i>Temple: Where can we meet God?</i>

The Big Story: The four stories and the one story

The story of the Bible in 100 words (well... 107, with some cunning word-count-reducing-hyphenation!)

Matthew

'The OT storyline that I posit for the basis of the NT storyline is this:

The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit, through promise, covenant and redemption, resulting in a worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, unto his glory.

Mark

[...]

The NT transformation of the storyline of the OT that I propose is this:

Jesus's life, trials, death for sinners, and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfilment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God's glory.'

John

(G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, p16)

Creation



Fall



Redemption



Restoration

The Big Story: The Kingdom

The story of the Kingdom

Eden

- God reigns
- Mankind made in God's 'image' (Gen 1:26-27) e.g. Shalmanesar and Assur
- God told man to rule/exercise dominion (rādâ) over the creatures of the earth (Gen 1:26), fill the earth and subdue (kābas) it (Gen 1:28), working/serving ('ābad) and tending/keeping (sāmar) this world (2:15)
- "You will not surely die... when you eat of [the fruit...] you will be like God" (Gen 3:4-5)

The Coming King

- 2 Samuel 7:12-14
- Isaiah 52:7-8
 - Mighty God / Prince of Peace (9:7)
 - Death brings reconciliation?! (53:5)
- Daniel 2:44

Jesus

- 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matthew 3:2)
- QUESTION: What would people have made of this claim?

The Big Story: The Kingdom

What did the religious groups expect? And what would they have thought of Jesus' teaching?

Pharisees

'The Pharisees' kingdom-plan, in line with plenty of earlier Jewish aims and ideals, was to intensify observance of the Jewish law, the Torah. That, they believed would create the conditions for God to act, as he had promised, to judge the pagans who were oppressing Israel, and to liberate his people.' (N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone*, p59-60)

Zealots

They believed that the kingdom of God needed to be advanced by a demonstration of power. If people were serious about the Kingdom, they would be willing to fight and die for it! See Judas Maccabaeus and the revolution of December 25th 164 BC.

Essenes

Believing that others had lost sight of the truth and convinced of their special status, they enacted the exile that God's people were experiencing by separating themselves and living as an exiled people 'demonstrating by [their] wilderness existence the fact that the promises of restoration and redemption are yet to be fulfilled.' Their task was to wait and stay separate in prayer and purity.' (N.T. Wright, *NTPG*, p206-7)

The Big Story: The Kingdom

What did Jesus mean by the Kingdom?

The Kingdom				
Matthew		Mark	Luke	John
Kingdom of God = 5x	Kingdom of Heaven = 32x	14x	32x	2x
Circumlocution? Compare Matt 19:23 and Mark 10:23				Life / Eternal Life?

- 'The sovereign and saving rule of YHWH' (Tom Wright)
- 'The king-dominion of God' (D.A. Carson)
- 'All men live on the plane of this world; but from the time of Christ's coming to the end of the world, the inheritors of the kingdom (and they alone) also live on the plane of the kingdom' (D.A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p16)

