

**The Forgotten Gospel:  
The Deeper Story of God's Relentless Love**

Genesis 1:1-2:4 & John 1:1-5

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**Prayer**

Father, we thank you that you make beautiful things out of dust. We thank you that you are making beautiful things with us. Lord God, we pray that you would speak your Word into us and make us beautiful like yourself. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Clip from Comedian Daniel Tosh

Daniel: I wore a "What Would Jesus Do?" bracelet in a movie theater once to see if it would work. A cell phone went off with one of those obnoxious rings, where it's a song, and he didn't want to answer it because the good part was coming. And then he answers the phone in the theater. I had my hands around his neck and then I saw my bracelet staring back at me: "What Would Jesus Do?" So I lit him on fire and sent him to Hell.

Do you ever think, *"Maybe there's something wrong with the way we're telling the story, that we like to call the Gospel?"*

I grew up loving God the Father, because I had a father that loved God and loved me. So, it made sense to me that God is Love and Jesus is the Word He speaks—the Word of Love that shapes us in our Father's image.

I loved Jesus... and was happy to tell anyone about Jesus until one night at youth group our youth pastor showed the film, *A Thief in the Night*—which was supposedly a depiction of the prophesied return of Jesus. After watching in horror I remember praying something like: "What happened to you Jesus?"

It was clear to me, in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, that either Jesus—who is supposedly "*The same yesterday today and forever...*" changed, going from the very embodiment of sacrificial Love, to the Most unforgiving ruthless, kick-ass messiah this world has ever seen...

OR there is something seriously wrong with the way we're telling the story.

I call myself an Evangelical because it means "Good news giver"

And as a young pastor I was involved in a lot of wonderful evangelism projects... But sometimes, knocking on doors, I think we sounded kind of like this:

[Image of Jesus knocking on a door...a conversation ensues....]

“Let me in”

“Why?”

“So I can save you.”

“From What?”

“From what I’m going to do to you if you don’t let me in.”

Actually it was worse than that . . . because we weren’t Jesus, but we seemed to think we were Jesus saving people from Jesus—which means “God is Salvation”... So, in effect, what we’d say, would sound more like this:

“Let us in”

“Why?”

“We have ‘knowledge of good and evil.’ And if you take our knowledge of good and evil, you can use that knowledge to make a choice—a judgment, if you will—and save yourself from God’s Judgment who is Jesus who’s coming back to kick your ass...

Good News, We are here to save you from Jesus, the savior.

Good News, God Loves you unconditionally . . . unless you don’t believe He loves you unconditionally, in which case he will torment you endlessly.

Good News, we’ll save you from God—that’s the Gospel: Good news.

I remember thinking something like . . .

Either “Good News” means “Pretty Bad News”

OR

### **Something’s really wrong with the way we’re telling the story.**

As a young pastor, I was taught to “preach to a decision,” and I also was taught to “preach from Scripture.” But as I began to preach through Scripture, I kept encountering a problem:

The text usually didn’t preach *to* a decision, the text *was* a decision.

AND all I could honestly do was preach it—that means proclaim it, as if the Word was a decision, and that decision, was like a seed.

A seed carries the future in its own bosom—you just plant it in broken dirty ground or a broken dirty heart and it makes new life happen.

At least in the New Testament, definitely John, it was pretty clear that

- Our decisions don’t save us from the Judgment of God,
- But the Judgment of God saves us from our decisions.

It became clear that something was really wrong with the way we were telling the story. But I just kept preaching and preaching because it was my job. I preached through the parables, John, Ephesians, Genesis, I Peter and the Acts of the Apostles, various texts from all over the Bible, and then finally The Revelation.

I took a year to get through the Revelation, and I couldn't find the Jesus from the *Thief in the Night* movie or the *Left Behind* series—I mean, I could see how, they could casually read it, twist it, and say the things they said. But if you're serious about the authority of Scripture, you won't twist it, but it will twist you.

The Revelation changed the way I viewed time and eternity, *chronos* and *kairos*, the number seven, evil, and the consuming fire of God.

Ironically it matched

- What I was reading from physicists,
- What I read in the mystics like Julian of Norwich,
- The Theology of guys like Karl Barth
- What I encountered, usually around three in the morning as Susan and I prayed for a friend who was raised in a coven. And then we watched how Jesus destroyed the works of the evil one, before our very eyes.

Jesus was Jesus, and Jesus doesn't change, but our perspective of Jesus does change:

What we think is weak is strong; the last is first.

The Lion is a Lamb and the Lamb is the Lion.

Love is absolutely kind, and at the same time, a consuming fire.

AND God's Judgment is Grace.

thought it was my duty to explain away Bible verses that seemed to reduce our responsibility and inspire too much faith in Grace, BUT when I got to Revelation 21:5, I lost my ability to explain it away:

*And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this (down), for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! (it is finished) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.*

- Revelation 21:5

So, in the sermon I said, "Well, God must make everything, that's anything, new." You know, that's not a threat, but a promise, and it sounds like pretty good news to me.

I began to realize that there are scores of verses like that—not threats, but promises—like, *"As in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive"* (1 Cor. 15:22). And with all my exegetical and hermeneutical tools I couldn't explain those verses away . . . and I began to wonder,

"Why would we want to explain these verses away?"

I call them the *Bible Verses Banned By Bible Believing Believers*.

Well after the Revelation, we preached through Matthew, partly because I knew Jesus said some pretty intense things about “Hell,” and I figured those verses might reveal that God doesn’t actually make all things new.

We spent three years in Matthew and learned all about:

- The law and how Jesus fully fills the law,
- The narrow way and how Jesus is the Way and the Judgment.
- *Hades, Gehenna*, the fire that fills the temple
- And How “*It is finished*,” and all power belongs to Jesus.

But I couldn’t find one verse that nullified the  
*Bible Verses Banned By Bible Believing Believers.*

Well by now our church had grown from less than a hundred folks to a few thousand, we had built a six million dollar facility, people were concerned about being respectable and paying mortgage . . . and someone complained to my denomination.

They investigated and said, “Stop saying ‘that stuff’”  
And I said, “What stuff?” They said, “You know, ‘the stuff’”  
And I did: They meant, the *Bible Verses Banned By Bible Believing Believers.*  
But they couldn’t say, “Stop preaching *the Bible Verses Banned By Bible Believing Believers.*”

So they did say, “Something is wrong with the way you’re telling the story . . . It doesn’t sound Evangelical.”

Being a coward, I thought, “Fine, I’ll preach on Genesis . . . I preached it once years ago, and people liked it—I was a geology major, and so we talked about reconciling dinosaurs and “days” and junk like that. I thought, “They liked it then, so I’ll preach it again now...” BUT when I went back to Genesis, everything was new . . . and I discovered what was wrong with the way we were telling the story.

And that’s what I’d like to share tonight.  
I was publicly tried and defrocked for these things,  
But it wasn’t because I’m brave.  
It turns out that it really wasn’t my choice.  
It turns out that *I’m* not telling the story.

Gen. 1:1 -2:4, which George just recited a few minutes ago, is a remarkable story, actually THE STORY:

God speaks, and the universe happens—His Story, history.

For the last few hundred years scientists have said, “That’s fiction.”  
Yet recently they’ve said,  
“This is weird but it’s like everything came from nothing—a big bang.”

“And this is weird. Time is relative somehow to light. “

(Scripture says God is Light.)

“And this is weird, but the meaning in an observer’s head collapses the quantum state of subatomic particles making matter.”

(In Greek, “Meaning” is *logos*, and God speaks *logos* to make matter.) Like *logos* matters more than matter.

“And this is weird, but all reality is like vibrations of meaning on superstrings in like ten dimensions—like the manifestations of words.”

“This is weird but all reality is like a story being told.”

So maybe Genesis One isn’t fiction, which means the first thing wrong with the way we’re telling the story is:

### **Something’s wrong with the way we’ve been telling the story:**

#### **1. We’re not telling the Story.**

**God is!**

Over six days God speaks creation into existence and on the Seventh Day everything—everything!—everything is Good and “*It is finished.*”

On day six God speaks “*Let us make man in our image after our own likeness*”

- And then He calls everything good—but are you good?
- Are you finished in the image of God?
- Jesus is the perfected image of God—are you just like Jesus?

Well God spoke and how could it not happen?

SEE: THAT’S A PROBLEM.

John 1 says it this way:

*“In the beginning was the Word (the logos), and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.”*

—John 1:1-3

So do you think you have made something without him?

Like your good deeds? OR How about your bad deeds, that is sin?

See you didn’t make your good deeds without Him.

And if He doesn’t sin, then sin is not something that is made.

1 Cor. 13 puts it this way:

*“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” .*

*.. “ALL THINGS”!*

So, if you bear, believe, hope or endure a thing, it’s actually Love bearing, believing, hoping and enduring a thing in you.

God is Love, and it appears that Love does everything.

So, if you do anything but Love, like sin...

You must be doing nothing that is done.

What Karl Barth called the “impossible possibility.”

Listen, I'm just pointing out that God said, "*Let us make man in our image...*"

Not, "*kind of* in our image..."

Or, "*some* men in our image and some a gross distortion of our image..."

I'm saying God spoke a Word . . . but just look at us sinners!

It would appear that that Word He spoke has returned void.

I'm saying God told a story, but it appears to be fiction.

AND THAT'S A PROBLEM.

So most religious folks say, "Well God told the story.

But now we have to tell the story."

They say, "God told the story and it happened,

But then we messed it all up."

"Genesis 1 happened long ago and everything was good," they say,

"But then in Genesis 2 and 3 we messed it up."

They say, "Everything was Good in that Garden long ago."

The problem is that God Himself says something is not good in that garden.

He says, "*It's not good that the Adam is alone.*"

THINK ABOUT THAT: Adam is with God, who is Love, and is the Good, but Adam is alone, because he doesn't know love or trust the Word of Love—who is Good, even in flesh.

God says, "*Don't eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*"

But how would Adam know that the Word of God is good?

Surely that's not good.

Think about it: A talking evil snake and two naked people that don't have faith that the Word of God is good . . . is *not* good . . . and they are obviously not finished in the image of God who is the Good.

And yet, at the end of Chapter 1, which is the end of day six, God saw that "*everything is very good.*"

On the Seventh Day God says, "*It is finished.*"

So the fall of Adam, which means "humanity,"

must happen on the sixth day of creation.

And until an Adam is finished, and very good,

it must not be the Seventh Day.

Which means the world is not 15 billion years old, or 10,000 years old.

The world is less than seven days old.

And surely that's a story, stranger than fiction.

Well anyway, I re-preached Genesis ten years ago, but I read a book by a Jewish physicist from MIT about twelve years ago.

In *The Science of God*, Gerald Schroder points out that time is relative. That's no longer considered a theory, but a measurable fact. And therefore the age of the universe is entirely dependent on where you—the observer—are standing.

*"In the beginning,"* God is the observer, and there is no place to stand.

So Schroeder asks this brilliant, but obvious, question: "If the universe is about 15 billion years old from the standpoint of the earth, how old is it from the standpoint of the creation?"

At Creation there are no standpoints on which to stand—no space or time. So, Schroeder calculates from the standpoint of the background radiation: the moment, in the beginning, in which matter forms and light is first emitted into the void.

He calculates that if the universe is about 15 billion years old from the standpoint of the earth, then it is a little less than seven days old from the standpoint of the Big Bang, which means the world is literally, actually, concretely and most truthfully about six days old.

Recently, I met with a physics professor from the University of Colorado. He kept saying to me, "Peter, Schroeder got it right. He's right!"

Well whether or not Schroeder got it right, it's what the Bible said all along. In John 5:17, Jesus, who is the Truth, said, *"My Father is working (still) until now, and I am (the Word) working."*

That means, that since the beginning of time, the Creator had not stopped working, until at least that moment when Jesus spoke those words. But on the seventh day, He rests from all his labor, because everything is good and *"It is finished."*

So if the world is not finished and not entirely good, and you are not finished and entirely good, then it must still be the sixth day . . .

And you must still be . . . *being* created in God's image.

And God must still be . . . telling the story of your creation.

Which means the thing that's wrong with the way we tell the story is:

**Something's wrong with the way we've been telling the story:**

- 1. We're not telling the Story.**
- 2. We are part of the story being told.**

And so your situation is exactly like this:

Trailer for the movie *Stranger Than Fiction*. [While the character Harold Crick

goes about his everyday life, he hears a female narrator telling his story.]

*Karen Eiffel is writing her new novel*

Narrator: "This is the story about a man named Harold Crick. Harold lived a life of solitude. He would walk home alone; he would eat alone."

*Harold Crick is her main character*

Narrator: "When others' minds would fantasize about their upcoming day . . ."

Harold, speaking to his toothbrush: "Hello?"

*Little does she know . . .*

Narrator: "Harold just counted brush strokes."

Harold: "OK, who just said, 'Harold just counted brush strokes'?"

*Harold really exists*

Harold, to a male coworker: "Dave, I'm being followed."

Dave: "How are you being followed? You're not moving."

Harold: "It's by a woman's voice. She's narrating."

Dave: "Oh."

Narrator: "Harold couldn't concentrate on his work."

Harold to the Narrator: "I can't think while you're talking!"

Psychologist: "You have a voice speaking to you?"

Harold: "*About me*, accurately, and with a better vocabulary."

Narrator: "Harold found himself exasperated. . . ."

Harold: "Shut up!"

Narrator: " . . . cursing the heavens in futility."

Harold: "No, I'm not, I'm cursing *you*, you stupid voice, so *shut up* and leave me alone!"



Professor Jules Hilbert: "So you're the young gentleman who called me about the narrator. The thing we need to determine conclusively is whether you're in a comedy or a tragedy. Have you met anyone recently who might loathe the very core of you?"

Harold: "Shut up!"

Narrator: "... cursing the heavens in futility."

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Professor Jules Hilbert: "So you're the young gentleman who called me about the narrator. The thing we need to determine conclusively is whether you're in a comedy or a tragedy. Have you met anyone recently who might loathe the very core of you?"

Harold: "I'm an IRS agent."

Tax client shouting: "Get bent, tax man!"

Harold: "Everyone hates me." [A group boos at Harold.]

Professor Hilbert: "Well, that sounds like a comedy."

That's the movie *Stranger than Fiction*.

Harold Crick is the main character.

He goes about his life, like one of the walking dead.

He goes about his life seemingly in control, until one day he hears a narrator narrating his story.

Until then, Harold's life really hadn't been a story, but a set of facts, but now, the narrator begins to give meaning to all the facts, turning them into a story.

Harold sees a psychologist, but the psychologist doesn't know what to do, so she sends Harold to a literary professor and together they try to discern what kind of story it is that Harold is in—they want to know the plot.

If you know something is a story, then you know that everything that happens in the story has meaning or the author wouldn't have put it in the story.

The logic, which connects events in a story, giving each event its meaning, is called the plot. Once you know the plot it changes the meaning of every event in the story.

When I read *The Lord of the Rings* in jr. high, I came to a page on which Gandolph The Wizard tried to stop a Balrog demon at the bridge of Khazaddum. But instead, the Balrog caught Gandolph's foot with his fiery whip and pulled them both down into the Abyss.

I was tempted to throw the book down in disgust and despair, but I didn't, I kept reading, because someone told me that the author was good and so the plot was good. I had a mustard seed of faith, in the author and his plot, and so I kept reading.

When I saw the movie at the theater, and we watched as Gandolph fell with the Balrog down into Hell, no one left the room or even cried out in agony or despair. Why? Because we knew the story, and had perfect faith in the plot.

So, instead of cowering in fear, we leaned forward in faith, hope and love for JRR Tolkien and Gandolph The Grey—who would now become Gandolph The White.

We didn't cower in fear; we leaned forward in faith because we trusted the plot. Faith means trust.

Well Harold Crick begins to lean forward.  
Instead of constantly analyzing his life, he begins to live his life.  
The narrator narrates him from counting notes, to making music.  
The narrator narrates him from auditing books, to living a love story.

But at one point he hears this:

<p>Narrator: "Little did he know that events had been set into motion which would lead to his immanent death." Harold: What? Why? Hello? Come on!!</p>
--

I think we're all a bit like Harold: We know that the end is coming. We suspect that our life may be more than a random set of experiences, but that all the experiences may have some meaning... that, in fact, our life is part of a story that's being told... because obviously we didn't begin the story and it looks like we don't determine the end...

We all try to write our own story, but we don't pick the beginning or end and it's a hell of a job, trying to control the plot...

So if someone else is writing our story, we'd like to know:

- ✓ Who's writing the story?
- ✓ What kind of story is it?
- ✓ Are we the protagonist, the antagonist . . .  
or maybe just an extra?
- ✓ What's the plot?
- ✓ And can we pick a different story . . .  
or write ourselves out of this story?

We don't have a literary expert, but we do have a fascinating piece of literature: Genesis 1:1-2:4.

In Genesis one, God speaks a Word and reality happens—days one through five—He speaks and reality happens. On the sixth day (The sixth day is the first day to carry a definite article. Like, We know about this day).

On the sixth day God says:

Genesis 1:26-27

*"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

...Verse 31

*And God saw everything (everything!) that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

Genesis 2:1-4

*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day (singular) that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.*

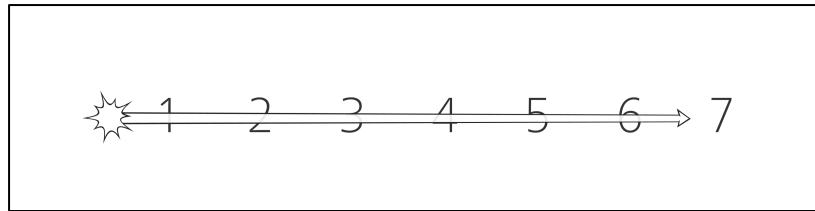
So The Bible refers to the seven days or six days as one day...

And in chapter 1, verse 4, it referred to half a day (or daylight) as one day.

It's obvious that these aren't our normal sort of days.

And since God is still creating, the six days must encompass at least all of time up until now, as we've been discussing... And yet from the standpoint of the Big Bang, those six days are six literal twenty-four hour periods of time.

So you see, if we pay attention to physicists like Gerald Schroeder, and take the Bible seriously, then the history of all time, beginning until now, looks something like this:



You see Genesis One is the History of all time.

According to scientists, and the Bible, there is a beginning to time.

And according to the Bible, there is an end to time . . . at least chronological time.

In Revelation 10:6, at the seventh seal, seventh thunder, and just before the seventh trumpet, an angel, that looks like Jesus, stands on the land and sea and swears that “*time* (that is, *chronos*) *will be no more.*”

Chronological time, is the time we experience in this world. It's linear time. It's the time we experience in this age or eon—that is *aion* in Greek.

But the Bible talks about another age, in which time is experienced differently. That age is God's age. God is light and at the speed of light all time is perfectly present in an endless now . . . or a now, that is the end.

*Aionios* is a Greek adjective that basically means “of the age.” And it's used to speak of God's age beyond our ages. It does not mean endless chronological time, for *chronos* comes to an end.

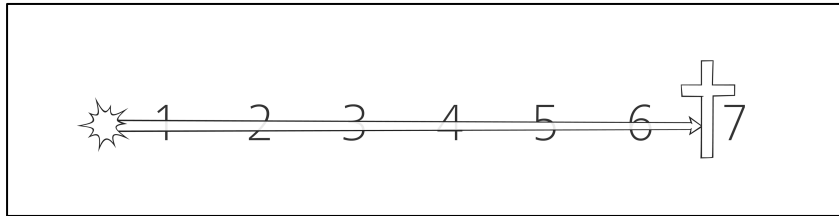
And what is the end? Jesus told us “I am the end,” the *telos*, in Greek, the perfection. So, if you arrive some place that's not Jesus, you haven't come to the End.

Saint Paul referred to Christ as the “*end of the ages*” the “*end of the eons.*”

You may also remember that Jesus was crucified on a tree in a garden, on the sixth day of creation, the sixth day of the week, at the sixth hour of the day and from that cross, he cried *tetelestai* (from *telos*) “*it is finished.*”

What's finished?

Well Jesus is the Word of God through whom all things are created. . . sounds like, creation is finished, and you are finished.



The Bible talks like Jesus death and resurrection is the end of time as we know it and the beginning of eternal life—*aionios* life, the life of the Seventh Day, which is God’s promised rest, the Sabbath.

You may also remember that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, the first day of the next week—like the end is also the beginning. Jesus is the Beginning and the End.

It’s also important to note that Sunday is the eighth day from the first day, which for the Jews symbolized something like an endless 7<sup>th</sup> day—the *shemini atzeret*, (which Julie Ferwerda writes about in her book *Raising Hell*).

Perhaps there is no end to the Seventh Day because the Seventh Day is filled with the End, and according to Scripture, the End is the Beginning. Jesus is the Beginning and End, and the same yesterday today and for all the *aions*, the “evers,” according to the book of Hebrews.

Zechariah prophesied that, “*There shall be One (unique) day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night...*”—a different kind of day. Genesis says nothing about morning and evening on the Seventh Day—and God calls it “Holy.” That means unique or different—it’s eternal.

Paul says that in the end, “*God will be all in all*” (1 Cor. 15).

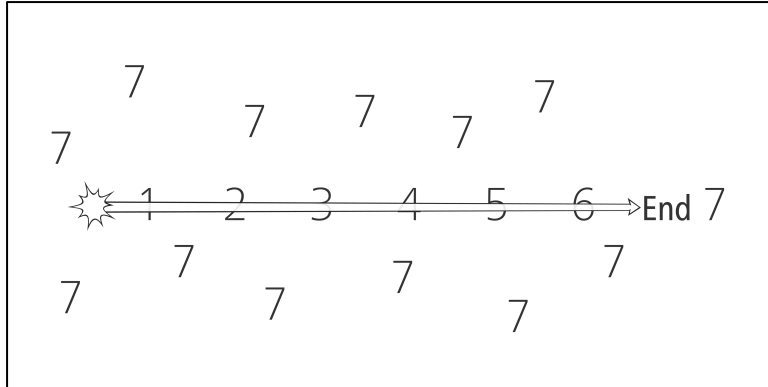
Everything will be filled with God, and God is “*I AM that I AM.*”

He’s not trapped in time. He created time.

See? God will be all in all, and in that day, I don’t think we’ll be slaves to time, but time will be our servant, our slave—our servant.

It’s almost impossible to imagine... and yet we all try to imagine—constantly on TV and in movies: *Back to the Future 1,2 and 3.*

That’s almost impossible to imagine, but for now I just want to point out that the Seventh Day is not trapped on the timeline.

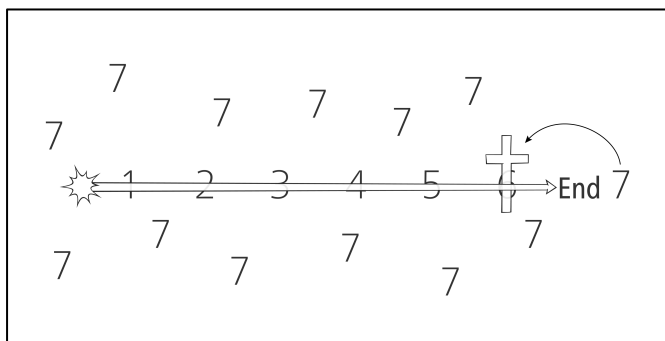


It's more like the Seventh Day surrounds the timeline.  
 Almost like, *"In God we live and move and have our being."*  
 Almost like, *"The Kingdom of Heaven (really) is at hand."*  
 Almost like, *"We are now, seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."*

Jesus death and resurrection is the door to the Seventh Day.  
 It's the revelation of the Word of God, which is the will of God,  
 which is the Judgment of God.

On the cross, *"It is finished."*  
 Creation is finished.  
 Humanity is made in the image of God.  
 It's the end of time, the beginning of eternity,  
 the edge of the eternally new creation.

So the Apocalypse happened 2000 years ago as we measure time.



And the Apocalypse is *now*, when you believe.  
 The cross is the boundary between time and eternity.  
 The cross is *the end of time* invading *our time* with *eternity*.

We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.  
 A believer is someone that does it now.

So a believer doesn't fear the End.

A believer has already surrendered to the End, who is the Beginning.

A believer doesn't fear the Judgment of God.

A believer delights in the Judgment of God.

And a believer doesn't only wait for eternal life.

A believer already *has* eternal life, in them, right now.

In Col. 1:15 Paul writes that Jesus is "*the image of the invisible God...*"

(and you'll remember God said He would make us in His image.)

Paul writes, "*He is the image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation.*"

v. 18 "*He is the beginning, firstborn from the dead.*"

Did you get that?

- It means that no one was fully created in the image of God, *until* Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.
- And it means that all of us are trapped by death until we die with Christ and rise with Christ; until we die to death and surrender to eternal life.

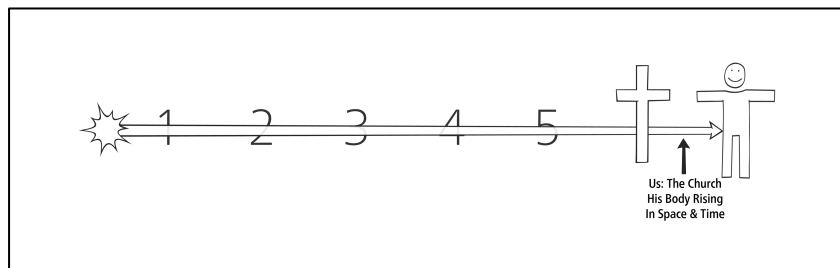
In all his writings, Paul talks as if this world of space and time were a womb from which we all will be born, AND Christ is the firstborn.

He's the head... and we are His body.

And this is "*the plan for the fullness of time,*" according to Paul...

That God will "*unite (anakephalaio is the verb—It means bring together under one head) all things in Christ Jesus.*"

I've seen birth happen four times now and where the head goes the body follows.



Even now, Jesus, the head, breathes the breath (that means "eternal spirit").

Even now He breathes the breath of the new creation and sends that spirit to His body through His blood—the spirit is life and the life is in the blood.

Jesus is the *Eschatos* Adam, the finished man, the image of God,

And we are included in His life for we literally are His Body.

We are His Body and Bride, *for* even though we took His life,

He gave His life on a tree in a garden.

Jesus means "God is Salvation."

Well I know I've just said more than we can comprehend.  
But I hope we can at least catch a glimpse and dare to believe that  
God said, *"Let us make man in our own image,"* and He is going to do it,  
because in reality, He has already done it . . . and *"everything is good."*

So back to Harold Crick and our question:

- ✓ Who's writing the story?
- ✓ What kind of story is it?
- ✓ Are we the protagonist, the antagonist . . .  
or maybe just an extra?
- ✓ What's the plot?
- ✓ And can we pick a different story . . .  
or write ourselves out of this story?

Well, if we're living in the sixth day; we're living in a creation story.  
I AM that I AM, Yahweh, "The Ground of all Being" is the Author.  
And the Author has written Himself into His story with His Word.

*"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and Word was  
God... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."*

I AM is the protagonist and "I AM not," the void, the abyss, is the antagonist.  
Light is the protagonist and dark is the antagonist.  
Life is the protagonist death is the protagonist.  
Truth is the protagonist and a lie is the antagonist.  
The Way is the protagonist and lostness is the antagonist.  
Reality is the protagonist and illusion is the antagonist.  
Good is the protagonist and evil is our enemy, and sin is choosing evil—  
that which in reality is NOT.

And there are no "extras,"—extras that don't matter to the plot,  
for "I Am" speaks His Word from the throne saying, *"Behold, I make all things  
new."*

So, everything, that's anything, will be made new...  
Death will be filled with the Life, lies will be filled with the Truth,  
Lost-ness will be filled with the Way. Darkness will be filled with Light,  
"I AM not" will be filled with "I AM," that means all sin will be filled Grace.

See? Maybe, salvation is simply being at peace with your own creation?



Salvation is faith in Grace. If you are created by God, from nothing, then everything is Grace. So, *unless* you have Faith in Grace, you will hate all creation . . . and especially hate, yourself—your true self. For you are created by Grace— even your faith.

Well, we live in a creation story, and it's a good story.

*Euangellion*, from which we get the word evangelical, means Good News.

Jesus said, "God alone is Good."

So the Good speaks His Good Word and Good things happen.

- Perhaps we have to encounter the "not good" in order to choose the good in freedom.
- Perhaps we have to encounter "I AM not" in order to choose "I AM" in freedom.
- Perhaps we have to encounter "not love" in order to choose Love in freedom.

For a time that may look like a tragedy or comedy or even a documentary, but it's all part of a Love Story that is the Gospel of our creation.

Scripture reveals that God is Love, which means reality is a Love Story.

In a Love story, the lover creates a choice in his or her beloved.

The beloved chooses to Love because he or she has been loved.

But the beloved is not proud of their choice to love, because they didn't create the choice to love; it was created in them, by the one who first loved.

They're not proud, they're grateful....

And they live to the praise of the glory of the one who first loved.

So we're living in a Love Story: God is Love, and we are the Beloved.

He is the Father, and we are His Children.

He is the Groom, and we are His Bride.

He is the Spirit, and we are His Body.

We're living in a Love story that is a Good story...

And think about it—all stories are creation stories.

The Author creates a world with His imagination . . . and then uses that world to create something in you.

That something is faith in His Plot, His Logic, His Meaning, His Word.

That's why no one ran out of the theatre when Gandolph and the Balrog fell into the pit of Hell—they already had faith in JRR Tolkien and His plot.

So, what's the plot to the story that is reality?

Well we already have a summary of the whole story in Genesis One:

God speaks His Word in to the void, and His Word does not return void, but accomplishes that for which it was sent—which is to make man in the *image of God* and *everything Good*. . . That's the Plot.

It occurred to me one day, that every one of the *Bible Verses Banned By Bible Believing Believers* was a Summary of the Plot:

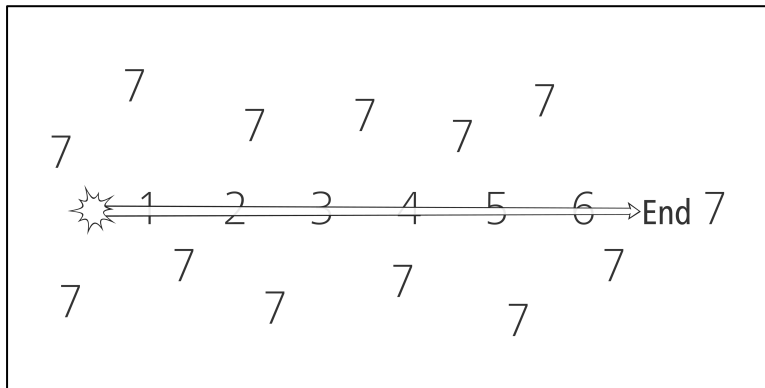
- *“Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth... I have sworn... to me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear allegiance.”*  
—Isaiah 45:22-23
- *“God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all.”*  
—Romans 11:32
- *“As in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive.”*  
—1 Corinthians 15:22
- *“This is the plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him.”*  
—Ephesians 1:10
- To *“reconcile to himself all things making peace by the blood of his cross.”*  
—Colossians 1:20
- *“And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever! ...Amen.’”*  
—Revelation 5:13

They’re all a summary of the Plot

. . . and I wondered, “Do we hate the Plot?”

In *Stranger than Fiction*, once Harold hears of his impending death, he tries to hide from the plot and become somebody else. But if the story is reality, where would you hide and who else could you become? You could only become a false someone, a false self, like Paul writes about in Ephesians chapter four. A false self is a self that you have constructed based on the lie that you are your own creator, judge, savior and redeemer. A false self . . . is a proud ego.

Harold tries to hide from the plot, but where could he hide from the plot?  
Even if he made his bed in *Sheol*, the Plot would find him.



In Scripture, people hide from the judgment of God in *Hades* or *Sheol*. *Hades/Sheol* is in the depths of the earth, and it’s in space and time, but in the end the earth will be filled with the glory of God and time will be no more.

Well Harold tries to save his life from the Plot. He hides in his apartment, like the dead hide in the depths of this earth, but this earth is *condemned*, that means it's *damned*. The place we hide, is God damned by the Plot:

Clip from *Stranger Than Fiction*

Harold's friend: "Don't do anything tomorrow: Don't answer the phone. Don't brush your teeth."

Harold: "What about work?"

Harold's friend: "Call them you're not coming."

Harold: "Don't go to work?"

Harold's friend: "Don't do anything that may move the plot forward. Let's see if the plot finds you."

[Harold is sitting in his apartment watching TV when the claw of an excavator crashes into his apartment. He shrinks back in fear as the claw continues to reach into the apartment, seemingly chasing after him.]

Harold (speaking to a construction worker): "My name's on the god-damned buzzer!" My name is Harold Crick apartment 2B 1893 McCarthy?

[The construction worker checks his notes]

Construction worker: Did you say "1893?" Oh . . . whoops.

Harold (talking to his friend): I'm not exactly sure it was plot. I was hoping you'd just say it was a really bad coincidence.

Harold's friend: Meeting an insurance agent the day your policy runs out is coincidence. Getting a letter from the Emperor saying that he's visiting is plot. Having your apartment get hit by a wrecking ball is something else! Harold, you don't control your fate.

Harold: I know.

Harold can't control his fate, but he can agree with his fate—that is the plot. It turns out that Harold finds the author and begs her not to kill him by finishing the story. But an assistant overhears the conversation and allows Harold to read the rest of the story, which lacks a period, which explains why Harold has not yet died.

Harold reads his story and discovers that he loses his life in order to save a little boy. Harold finds the story so good, so beautiful, so loving and so right, that he begs the author to finish the story, for he knows that he couldn't write a better story than the one that's written. In other words he chooses to lose his life for the Plot. He chooses to die with the Plot...

The Author, then says, “Well a man who dies willingly... isn’t that the sort of man you’d like to keep alive?” So, Harold chooses to die with the Plot, but the author raises the Plot and rewrites the story and that’s the Plot. Harold chooses to lose his life for the sake of Love and then he finds it—his Life, his true life. By the end of the movie, Harold has been made in the image of Love. And now he is a Harold of Love—A preacher of Good News: The Plot.

Well, God never re-wrote the plot. It was the plan from the foundation of the world—You will die with Christ and rise with Christ, the image of God.

I know this may all seem incredibly complicated.  
Yet, in another way, it’s incredibly simple:

God is Love, and He is making us in His Image.  
He makes us in His image with His Word, who is the Plot.  
We all write ourselves out of the story.  
But at the cross, He writes us back into His Story, and that’s the Plot.

I hope you realize that every time you sin (that is choose to not love),  
...you *crucify* the Plot.  
And every time you love . . . that *is* the Plot, rising from the dead in you—  
bearing, believing, hoping and enduring all things in you.

I hope you all realize that Jesus is the Plot.

He is the beginning and the end.  
He is the meaning of every event in the story.  
He is the Author’s Logic, which connects all the facts and makes a story.  
He is the manifestation of the Author’s judgment at every point in space and time.  
He is the Judgment of God, The Decision of God, The Will and Word of God.

The name “Jesus” (ye-ho-shua, *yeshua*) means “*Yahweh* is my Helper,”  
Or “*Yahweh* is Salvation—God is Salvation...”  
He is the Word of God, the Truth

But in the Garden, satan, who is the manifestation of the lie, deceived the woman (who is us), saying: “You cannot trust that the Word of God is Good . . .  
But if you take knowledge of the Good, you can use the Good, to make yourself in the image of God.”

You know, if you don’t trust that the plot to a story in a book is good, you can cut up the book, rearrange the words and construct a different plot.

We didn’t trust that the plot to the story of our own creation was Good,  
So, we cut him up and took knowledge of the Good;

We cut Him up and took the life of the Good...  
On a tree, in a garden, on Mt. Calvary.

We hated the Plot, hijacked the Plot, and made ourselves the plot, seemingly unaware that our very existence depends on Author and . . . His Plot.

We didn't trust "God is Salvation." And believed "We are Salvation."  
And so wrote ourselves out the story and into nowhere and nothing, where men weep and gnash their teeth. We created false selves that don't delight in the truth, but are actually burned by the Truth.

And this is the Truth: "God is Salvation."

So, where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more.

- Where we took the Knowledge of the Good, God gave knowledge of the Good.
- Where we took the Life of the Good, God gave the life of the Good.
- Where we did our worst, God revealed His best.

We crucified the Plot, and the Plot rose from the dead, and that's the Plot.  
We wrote ourselves out of the story and God wrote us back into the story and that's *the* story—the Gospel.

God is making us in His image with His Word, and even if we crucify the Word, the Word will rise from the dead, conquer our hearts and make us the image of God . . . *because* nothing is more beautiful or powerful than the Word of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Plot is not "I am salvation," but "I AM is salvation"  
The Plot is not "*we* are salvation" or "the *church* is salvation" or  
"your supposedly *free will* is salvation."  
The Plot is "God is Salvation," *Yeshua*, Jesus—God's choice.

So, we're not saved from God, by our decision.  
We're saved from our decision, by God: "God is Salvation."

We're not saved from God's judgment, by our judgment.  
We're saved from our judgment, by God's Judgment—who is Jesus.

We're not tested so that God can see what we will do.  
We're tested so that we can see what God has done from the foundation of the world.

God doesn't judge us to find out if we're righteous.  
God makes us righteous with His Judgment.

The Cross is not what God needs in order to love us.

The Cross is what we need in order to love God.

God's Grace, does not depend upon our faith.  
Our faith, depends on the revelation of God's Grace—the Gospel.

So you see?

**Something's wrong with the way we've been telling the story:**

- #1. We're not telling the story.**
- #2. We are a part of the story being told.**
- #3. It's a Love Story and we are the be-loved.**
- #4. We crucified the Plot and made ourselves the Plot.**
- #5. We wrote ourselves out of the story—HisStory.**
- #6. He wrote us back into the story, and that's the Story: The Gospel.**
- #7. Tell that story.**

It may seem complicated but it's really quite simple:

One particular day many years ago, when my daughter Elizabeth was just six years old, she was having a particularly bad day, because she was being particularly ornery and downright mean.

Finally I said, "OK everybody let's go out to dinner." On the way to the restaurant, Elizabeth was picking fights and calling her sister and brothers all sorts of names.

When we got to the restaurant, I said, "OK everyone out of the van and into the restaurant, except Elizabeth." I made her come sit in the front seat next to me. I stared her down, and she stared me down.

Then I said, "Elizabeth what's gotten into you. This isn't like you. What's gotten into you?" I didn't expect an answer, but she glared at me and said, "Well I know, but I'm not telling you!" I prodded and poked. Spankings wouldn't do any good in this situation. She was determined to lock her heart deep in darkness, away from me.

Finally, I made her come sit on my lap, and I just hugged her for a long time. You could tell the hug burned—she hated it and loved it. And then she cracked.

Through sobs and tears, she said, "Do you remember when you came to my kindergarten class? Do you remember Kelly?" I did. She was a little girl that just glommed onto me.

Elizabeth cried, "Well, Kelly said that you said when you came to my class...she said you said to her...that you really didn't love me. You loved her."

Then she just exploded with sobs and tears.

What had gotten into her???? A lie, from Hell.

In her sorrow, shame and fear, she had resolved to write her own story. She constructed a false self, an independent, bitter, frightened, insecure and utterly lonely self and in that place she was trapped, weeping and gnashing her teeth... six years old and tempted by hell.

My Love, was judgment upon that Hell; it burned her pride and set her free—six- year-olds don't have enough time to construct much of a false self, so the process was relatively easy. By the time your fifty-five it may be more complex...

Well I looked at Elizabeth and I said, "Listen to me: if you don't behave in the restaurant, I will no longer love you.... I'll set you on fire and send you to Hell."

*Actually*, I didn't say that. But if I didn't really love her, and I only cared about her behavior in the restaurant, I could've said that, and it might have kept her quite in the restaurant—she would, *"honor me with her lips* (in the words of Isaiah) *but her heart would be far from me."*

Sometimes, we pastors really only care about your behavior in the restaurant, whether or not you come to church and give to the building campaign.

We care about behavior, but God the Father wants your heart.

*Actually, I didn't say that to Elizabeth,*

I held just held her a while, then I said, "Honey does Kelly have a Daddy?" She said, "Yes, but he just moved away from Kelly and her Mommy."

So I held Elizabeth's face, looked deep into her big brown eyes and said, "Listen to me. I will always love you. That does not change. Don't ever doubt my love, and if you do doubt my love, come tell me so I can remind you and you can remember. It hurts me when you doubt my love for you."

Do you understand?

It literally hurts God, when you doubt His Love for you, and He wants you to remember—He gives everything that your heart would hear and remember: "I AM your father, who loves you."

He speaks His Word so that you would know: He is Love.

He speaks His Word, to create you in the image of Love.

He speaks His Word, to tell you who you truly are.

To preach the Gospel, is to proclaim that Word: "God is salvation". Your Father is salvation.

In the movie *Blood Diamond*, rebels raid a village in Sierra Leon and capture a little boy named Dia. They put him to work in the diamond mines and train him

as a rebel soldier. But first they brainwash him, telling him that he has no father and making him do terrible things.

Well, his father, Solomon loves Dia, searches long for Dia, and finally finds Dia, but Dia has forgotten the plot to his own story.

Clip from *Blood Diamond*

[Dia, with a hardened gaze points a gun at his father, Solomon.]

Solomon: *Dia. What are you doing? Dia, look at me. What are you doing?*

*You are Dia Vandy, from our tribe* (Solomon names the tribe)

*You are a good boy who loves soccer and school.*

*Your mother loves you so much.*

*She waits for you at home making plantains and stew with your sister...*

[Solomon slowly approaches his son and looking him in the eye.]

*The cows wait for you and our wild dog who loves no one but you.*

[Tears pour down Solomon's face and Dia starts crying as well but still points the gun at his father's face.]

*I know they made you do bad things but you are not a bad boy.*

*I am your father who loves you, and you will come home with me and be my son...again*

[Tears stream down Dia's face as he hears his father's voice and finally puts down the gun. The father touches his son's head and then pulls him close to himself. Dia slightly resists and then resting, leans into his father's chest.]

We hold a gun to our Father's head.

We even pull the trigger (Peter points to the cross), and He speaks His Word:

"I am your Father, who loves you. And you will come home and be my son (be my daughter). I know they made you do bad things but you are not a bad boy (girl). *'You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.'*"

He tells us His Story, and His Story becomes our story; it always *was* our story. And so He makes us in His image with His very self.

We are the Body of Christ.



## **Communion**

And so on the night the world betrayed Him, the Word of God, in flesh took the bread and broke it and said, “This is my body which is for you. Take and eat and do it in remembrance of me.” And He took the cup saying, “This is the blood of the covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sins.” All twelve were sitting at the table and He said, “Drink of it all of you. Do it in remembrance of me.”

This is the plot to your story.  
Come to the table, ingest the Plot and live the story.  
You are the Body of the Plot.

And in case you ever wonder “What Would Jesus Do?”—WWJD  
This is What Jesus Does Do—all the time.

## **Benediction**

[Cartoon with God pulling the world out of an oven. God says, “Something tells me this thing’s only half-baked.”]

You live in a world that’s only half-baked.

Look around at the people in this room:  
They’re only half-baked.

Next time you look in the mirror, just remember:  
You’re only half-baked.

But God is a good baker, and He will finish what He started:  
You will get baked, by God, who is Love.

The deepest story is not your failure, but God’s success.  
“God is Salvation,” in a Word: Jesus

To Him be all Glory Honor and Praise for ever and ever, Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.*