

Rimrock Church

"A community being transformed by Jesus Christ."

Experience God ~ Embrace Grace ~ Engage Others



12200 West Highway 44
Rapid City, SD 57702
605-342-5373
rimrockchurch.com
office@rimrockchurch.com

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Introduction

The Bible is an amazing book. This is an understatement when we consider the weight of what this book has meant in human history and in our own lives. The Bible is not an end unto itself. Rather it has a special message and a purpose to reveal the Living God who is both transcendent and personal in accomplishing His purpose in humanity. It reveals the Person of God. The Bible is primarily the story of God; a Personal God revealed as three Persons; Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit as one Holy infinite living being who is creator and sustainer of all existence for His glory. The Bible is God-breathed, inspired revelation of who He is and His story of revelation to mankind. The Bible is also a human book in that it was written and codified by real human beings in actual human history guided by the Spirit of God. The Bible is a divine book that claim's authority as the "Word of the Lord". It claims to be inspired by the very breath of God. The people of Israel and the Church have recognized the authority and inspiration of the Bible as authoritative for life and godliness. This is why the Bible is referred to as the canon. It is the standard for understanding who God is and His revealed purpose for Himself and for us as human beings made in His image.

Theology is the study or knowledge of God which has been approached in different ways. It is a systematic approach that takes certain topics in the Bible to create a highly organized theological system forming doctrines that can be understood in detail and organized for teaching, worship, and instruction on God.

Systematic theology draws from Historical, Biblical, and Practical theology to form coherent doctrines for faith and practice in Christianity. A Historical approach looks at how the Church has interpreted the Bible and understood God's revelation and work in the past to inform our theology today. A practical approach to theology seeks to approach theology not just from an academic or dogmatic view but from a point of practice and devotion in the context of the Christian community. This orthopraxy (right practice) seeks to bring alignment between orthodox kerygma (proclamation) and the Didache (teaching) of Christian worship, practice, and obedience in the local church.

Biblical theology seeks to understand the Bible from the viewpoint of the original author and audience. It seeks to discover what the biblical writers, under divine guidance, believed, described, and taught in the context of their own times. Biblical theology offers the unique opportunity to gain a sense of the grand narrative of Scripture while diving deep into theological themes played out in specific books or across the entire canon.

Each of these approaches has great value in growing our understanding of the Bible and its special revelation of who God is and who we are created to be in Him.

In this sermon series, we will be taking a Biblical-Theological approach to the great story of the Bible. We will be looking at eight themes that play a central role in God's story that is revealed to us in the Bible. The purpose is not to just grow our knowledge but to be transformed in our worship and love for God in a personal relationship, walking with Him in His revealed purpose for our lives.

We believe in God's story for His glory.

Gods Creation for His Glory (April 11th)

The first verse in the Bible lays out the theme of creation that is woven through the entire Bible as a foundational truth about God and helps us understand the reality we exist in. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). This is a clear statement that God is the Creator of the material observable universe. The Bible teaches the literal and direct creation of all things by God. In light of this truth, the Genesis account is focused on instructing the function and purpose of creation, rather than the process (how) of creation. John H. Walton is a scholar of the ancient near east and the study of Genesis 1 in the context of how the original author and audience would have understood this text. He proposes they would have understood this account as a 7-day inauguration of God’s cosmic temple, “setting up its functions for the benefit of humanity, with God dwelling in relationship with His creatures” (The Lost World of Genesis 1, 163). God describes His creation work as good. This goodness culminates in a sabbath day of restful delight. In doing so, God himself takes center place on the throne (Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; Revelation 4) revealing His good purpose for all He had made for His glory and our good.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Psalm 104; Habakkuk 2:14; Romans 1:18-25. What is the significance of understanding God as Creator of all things in light of a specific purpose to reveal His glory and receive worship?
2. Read Genesis 1:26-31, Genesis 2:4-25; Psalm 139. How does this purpose and function of creation being for God’s glory change how we understand ourselves as human beings made in God’s image?
3. Read Psalm 8; John 14:15-20; 15:5-8; 17:1-12; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 1:1-4; Ephesians 1:3-10; 5:22-33. How does God creating (“let us” as Father, Son, Holy Spirit) as One God creating man and woman in His image (the two will become one flesh) reveal his nature and purpose of dwelling in relationship?

The Westminster Confession of Faith states: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

4. What does it mean to glorify? What is the significance of giving glory to God and enjoying Him forever?
5. How does God’s creation reveal His glory? How is worship a normal response to God’s glory? What are some specific ways we worship God?
6. How does the truth of God as Creator of all things for His glory and our good impact the way you live today?

God's Kingdom (April 18th)

The theme of God's Kingdom is central to the story in the Bible. Genesis reveals God is the creator of the cosmos and all things are created with the function and purpose of a temple with God as the center of glory and worship. Because of this truth, He is the rightful ruler (King) and has rightful dominion over all things. He alone can bring order, blessing, and life to all things. God does not force Adam and Eve or any of His creation to receive His blessing and submit to His rule. Rather, He invites willful submission, devotion (love and desire, allegiance, work), and delight (Sabbath worship). God as Creator and King is the rightful lawgiver. Only God determines the ordering of all creation and all human relationships in a right way. Genesis 3 outlines the rebellion of God's creation against Him as rightful King. The Bible story highlights humanity's rebellion against God's Kingdom and how they seek to replace His Kingdom with other governments and powers (idolatry). Because God is King and is perfectly just, He promises to defeat evil with His mighty power and overthrow and defeat all who choose rebellion, sin, and death. Jesus is the fulfillment of this promised overthrow and victory as the rightful Lord and King over all things. His powerful sacrificial victory over rebellion through the cross and resurrection establishes His throne forever to bring blessing to all He has created and bring about His dominion over all things (Philippians 2:6-11).

Read: 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; Matthew 4:17; Acts 1:3,8 ; Acts 28:31; Revelation 11:15-19

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you observe as common themes in all these passages about God's Kingdom? What is the significance of God as the rightful ruler over all things? What is the common characteristic in the rebellion against God as King?
2. Jesus' central message was about the Kingdom of God in the gospels. What do you observe as common ideas around Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God? Why do you think Jesus said the Kingdom of God is near or at hand? How do the parables of Jesus help us to understand God's kingdom?
3. What are the ties between the Old Testament revelation about the Kingdom of God and what Jesus reveals about God's Kingdom?
4. How does the truth of God's Kingdom impact the way you live today? What are the implications for how we think about citizenship, government, and allegiance?

Dallas Willard defines God's Kingdom as God's rule, will, and action. There is a present tension between the now and not yet aspect of God's kingdom. Willard defines God's Kingdom this way:

Kingdom of God: The range of God's effective will, as to where what God wants done is done. It is an everlasting metaphysical reality, the natural home of the soul: God and His reign "from everlasting to everlasting.

Kingdom Living: Living in the character and power of God, living from the resources of the Kingdom. Includes accepting the fact that we don't have to have our way.

For further study: Genesis 3:21-24; Genesis 11:3-9; Exodus 15:1-18; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13
1 Samuel 12; Psalm 24; Psalm 110; Zechariah 14:9; Isaiah 9:1-7; Isaiah 33:22; Isaiah 40:9-17; Isaiah 52:7-10;
Malachi 1:11-14

Jesus and God's Kingdom - Matthew 4:17; Matthew 5:3; Matthew 6:9-10; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 1:15;
John 3:3-5; Luke 12:33; John 18:36-37; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28; Hebrews 12:28-29;
Revelation 11:15-19

Helpful book: Follow Me: Experience the Loving Leadership of Jesus by Jan David Hettinga

God's Covenant and Atonement (April 25th)

The theme of God's covenantal relationship with mankind is foundational to understanding God's story of His glory in the Bible. God chooses to have a relationship with mankind in the framework of covenant. The word *covenant*, in Hebrew - *berith* and the Greek *diathēke*, is translated in various ways depending on the context. In general, in a covenant with God, He establishes a relationship with people through an oath-bound promise. In each of these covenants there are conditions and expectations established for both parties. The goal of all divine-human covenants is summed up in the words, "I will be your God and you will be my people, and I will dwell among you". In each of the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel (Moses), David, and the Church (Jesus) we see a common theme of God's faithfulness to His promise and man's inability to keep his part of the covenant. In each covenant, God provides an atonement or covering, to make a way for man to remain in covenantal relationship with Him. Each of these covenants is ultimately fulfilled and completed in Jesus Christ. This is the revelation of the Heavenly Father's complete and final covenant with mankind given through the substitutional sacrifice of Jesus and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in His people. Jesus' once and for all sacrifice on the cross is the final and complete atonement for rebellion, sin, and death. This established the final covenant between God and mankind by a covenantal relationship through faith by His grace for His glory.

Read: Ezekiel 37:26-28; Luke 22:7-38; 66-71; Hebrews 8

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you see in common with all the covenants God made through the Bible story? How do they build on each other? What are the differences? How is the Davidic/Messianic covenant (2 Samuel 7) a link to the New Covenant in Christ?
2. How does Jesus fulfill the covenants given in the Old Testament? How does Jesus fulfill the role of Priest, Prophet, and King? What are the conditions and expectation of the new covenant?
3. How are the Lord's supper (Luke 22) and baptism (Romans 6) part of the new covenant in Christ? Why is this important?
4. How does the new covenant and Christ's atonement impact your daily life right now? How does it change how you relate to God and have relationship with others?

Atonement definition: reparation, payment, or amends for an offense. The reconciliation of God and mankind through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Relational reconciliation.

Scripture about atonement as part of covenantal relationship: Genesis 3:21; Genesis 8:20-22; Genesis 22; Leviticus 16,23; Hebrews 2,9,10; Romans 3; 2 Corinthians 5; Revelation 5

Why do you think God's covenantal relationship is inseparable from atonement sacrifice? How does atonement make a relationship with God possible?

For further study: (Adam); Genesis 1:27-31; 2:15-25 (Noah); Genesis 6:18; 8:20-9:17(Abraham); Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15:18; 17; 22 (Israel-Moses); Exodus 19-23; Deuteronomy 4-6 (David-Messianic); 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17; 2 Samuel 23:5; 2 Chronicles 7:18; Psalm 89:3; Jeremiah 33:21' Jeremiah 31:33; (Jesus) Ezekiel 37:4-6; Isaiah 42-61; Luke 22:7-38;66-71; Matthew 5:17-20; Romans 5:1-11; Hebrews 8

Helpful book: Precept upon Precept topical study: Covenant-Knowing God's Covenant by Precept Ministries

God's Temple (May 2nd)

God's great stated goal in the covenantal relationship is, "I will be your God and you will be my people, and I will dwell among you" (Ezekiel 37:27). The practical application of this in the story of the Bible is the function of the tabernacle and the temple. The temple is referred to throughout the Old Testament as the "house of the Lord". In the giving of the Mosaic law, the instructions for the tabernacle were intrinsic to the living out of relationship and obedience to God. In the Davidic covenant, the instructions for the building of the temple were intrinsic to the purpose of God to display His worth and glory among the nations.

The temple becomes the center of worship and polity for the people of Israel. The temple is a physical reminder of God's stated covenantal goal of His glory and presence dwelling among His people. The temple is also the center of worship and sacrificial atonement for the people. It is a physical reminder of the covenantal relationship with God established by His provision of grace. The first five books of the Bible lay the foundation of temple creation with God's glory at the center as the Holy of Holies. The remaining books of the Old Testament outline the establishing, building, and maintaining of the temple as the center of worshipping peoples' lives. The destruction of the temple is the ultimate judgment brought upon Israel, but with the promise of a new temple (house) that God would build to fulfill His covenantal goal of His glorious dwelling with His people from of all the nations of the world.

Read: Exodus 33:7-23; 1 Kings 8:10-53; Isaiah 56:1-8; 1 Peter 2:4-10

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of the temple being such a central part of God's story in the Bible? What is the connection between the creation story and the creation of the temple? How does the temple become the central connection between the covenantal relationship with God and the provision of His atonement?
2. How does the temple point to the central role of worship in Israel's life? How does the temple reveal God's heart to be with His people?
3. How does the theme of the temple fit with God's glory as creator king of the kingdom, and covenant maker?
4. How does the Old Testament temple prepare God's people for God's prophetic fulfillment for the Church and new creation?
5. What is the significance of understanding the temple theme in how we worship today and how we understand the church?

For Further study: Exodus 33:7-23; 1 Chronicles 17; 2 Chronicles 6; 1 Kings 5-8; Jeremiah 7; Ezekiel 40-42; Nehemiah 1:8-9; Isaiah 56:1-8; Mark 11; Hebrews 9; 1 Peter 2:4-10

Helpful book: The Temple and Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation by Daniel J. Hays

God's Church: The New Temple (May 9th)

Jesus promised to tear down the old temple and raise up a new temple for God's glory. He was referring to His own body which becomes the definition of God's new temple, the body of Christ. God's stated goal was to always have a worshipping people with God dwelling in their midst (Ezekiel 37). Pentecost becomes the new creation story of the new temple. A gathered worshipping people from all people groups (nations) filled with God's Holy Spirit. The wind and fire represent God's presence and glory just as in the days of the tabernacle. The tongues signify the praise of God in every language and people group. Jesus' once and for all sacrifice on the cross and glorious resurrection is the covenantal promise and atonement provision for the new covenant. The temple is now not defined by a building, organization, or place, but by the gathered worshipping people of God in Christ with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).

The Church is the bride of Christ. The church is the love, passion, and desire of God for relationship and purpose for His glory. The gathered people of God worship together through the practices of the ordinances of the Word, fellowship, communion, and baptism (Acts 2:42). The church functions as a worshipping community being transformed by Jesus Christ as its head, evidenced in the abiding life of obedience to His command to love one another, with the fruit and gifts of the Spirit manifested in people's lives for the good and blessing of others. The church is mandated by Jesus to go make disciples of all people (ethnic groups), baptize them, and teach them all that God has commanded.

Read: Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 5:22-32; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of the church being the prophetic fulfillment of God's goal for the temple?
2. In your own words, after reading the above Bible passages, how would you define the church? How is this related to the ideas of covenantal relationship and atonement? How are practicing the ordinances central to the life of the church?
3. What does it mean to be part of the Church? Why is commitment and participation in the local gathering of the church (not just being part of the universal church) so important according to the New Testament?
4. How does the existence and mission of the church reflect God's purpose and plan for new creation (Ephesians 3:10-21)?
5. How does the truth of God's love and purpose of the church impact your life?

For further reading: Mark 11; Matthew 16:13-20; Acts 2; Acts 15:1-35; Ephesians (the whole book teaches us about God's purpose for the Church) 2:19-22; 3:10; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 13:1-13; 1 Timothy 3:14-16; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Hebrews 12:22-29; Revelation 5; 7:9-17

Helpful book: Fearfully and Wonderfully: the Marvel of Bearing God's Image by Dr. Paul Brand, Philip Yancey

God's Personal Mission: To save and transform human beings into His likeness (May 16th)

God's rescue and salvation work as revealed in the story of the Bible is primarily centered on the righteousness of His people which belong to Him in faith to reveal His glory. This transformation from unrighteous to righteous leads us to worship and find satisfaction in the glory of God (Romans 12:1-2). This transformation of our righteousness begins and is founded in the atonement of Jesus Christ. The people of God are made righteous in Jesus' death and resurrection. In this way, we are found "in Christ". Yet this work of God is only the beginning of the transformation of our lives into a new creation of God's image and likeness in us in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is given so that the righteousness of God might be worked out in the daily lives of those who belong to God. This is called sanctification. God's personal mission is to make his people light and salt in the world in their character and how they live in relationship with others to demonstrate His goodness and blessing. This personal holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit is characterized as fruit in the believer's life. This fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22) is evidence of God's presence and power in His people. This righteousness is evident in the unselfish life that is centered on loving God and loving others. This practical outworking of the Holy Spirit is eternal life and abundant life right now and for all of eternity. This gift of grace is the righteousness of God and is to be evident in the believer's life (Romans 1:17). Because of this gift of grace, the people of God deny themselves and the sinful tendencies of the flesh and live righteous lives in the Holy Spirit that reveals the unconditional love of God for others (Romans 8).

Read: Deuteronomy 6:1-12; Deuteronomy 8:1-5; 1 Peter 1:6-9; 1 Peter 1:13-25; Ephesians 4:20-24; Colossians 3:12-25

Discussion Questions:

1. Are you surprised that God's mission is to change you? How does this fit into His story of Glory?
2. As you read the passages what does God use to bring about a change of character in our lives?
3. What is the role of difficult circumstances, suffering, and wilderness experiences in our lives to bring about God's mission of transformation in our character and being? How is this evidence of God's grace?

For further reading: Exodus 19-20; Deuteronomy 4-6; Deuteronomy 8; Isaiah 1:1-20; Ezekiel 37; Jeremiah 31; Micah 6:8; Malachi 4; Luke 4:18-21; Matthew 5-7; John 14-17; Matthew 28:16-20; Titus 3:1-11; Romans 4-8; Ephesians 4-6; Colossians 3-4; Philippians 2-4; James; 1 and 2 Corinthians; 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Helpful book: Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ by Dallas Willard

God's Global Mission to the Nations (May 23rd)

The central theme in the Bible is God's glory and worth above all else. His purpose and mission to be worshipped and known among the nations are revealed throughout the Bible story. His Name is to be made known as great among the nations. This theme is central to the story of God's glory from Genesis to Revelation. The culminating vision of Israel and the church (24 Elders in Revelation) is to be the worshipping people made up of every tribe, tongue, and language as joyful recipients of God's Kingdom (Revelation 7:9-10). Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father. Jesus said the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to the whole world before He returns to establish His Kingdom forever among all the nations of the earth (Matthew 24:14). Jesus' mandate to the church is that they are to share the gospel and make disciples among all the people (ethnic) groups (Matthew 28). The missional prerogative and apostolic passion to make known the gospel of Jesus and to invite new people groups to be part of His Kingdom is God's mission and passion. For us, this means we are called to be active ambassadors and participants in God's global mission as a foundational purpose for the Church, as the people of God (2 Corinthians 5:19-29).

Read: Psalm 96; Malachi 1:11; Matthew 28:16-20; Revelation 7:9-17

Discussion Questions:

1. How does knowing God's heart for all the nations of the world from Genesis to Revelation change how we read the Bible and understand who God is?
2. How does this grow our understanding of our purpose and our work together as the body of Christ until He returns?
3. How does knowing God's global mission as revealed in His story in the Bible impact how you live and spend the resources God has given you today?

John Piper, in his book Let the Nations Be Glad!, states the Christian faith is ultimately about worship and delighting in God. For this reason, "missions exists because worship does not".

For further study: Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 29; 1 Chronicles 17:16-27; Psalm 96; Isaiah 49; 56:1-8; Zechariah 14:9; Hosea 2:23; Jonah; Luke 10:1-23; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8, Acts 2; Acts 10; Acts 13; Acts 15; Romans 10; Romans 15:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Revelation 7:9-17

Helpful book: Let the Nations be Glad! by John Piper

God's Personal Mission: To save and transform human beings into His likeness (May 16th)

A major theme in the Bible is the Day of the Lord. This is both a day of catastrophe and hope. It is a day of terror for those who reject God's covenant and promise and refuse to receive His atonement and Kingdom. It is a great day of hope for those who believe through faith by grace in Jesus Christ. God's story culminates with this great day of redemption and judgment. The judgment of God will defeat the darkness of evil and sin over all of human history bringing an end to Satan's rule over the earth. There will be no more pain, tears, or death when evil is defeated. This defeat of evil and rebellion against God is the final fulfillment of perfect justice carried out through the cross by the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The redemption of God's people is through the resurrection. Resurrection is the recreation of the material world to reflect God's goodness and purpose in creation so that God may be glorified and mankind can dwell with God in His goodness. This new creation is celebrated with a great wedding feast with the marriage of God with His people, the bride. After this great marriage, God and mankind can dwell in eternal satisfaction in the victory and joy of God's presence in glory, relationship, splendor, goodness, and beauty overall and in all and through all.

Read : Isaiah 24; Matthew 24 :30-31; 1 Thessalonians 5 :4-11; Romans 8 :18-30; Revelation 21:1-8

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the theme of God's new creation fit with the other themes we have looked at so far (creation, kingdom, covenant/atonement, temple, church)?
2. Why is the truth of judgment day so central and important in God's story and our god? Do you see evidence of a longing for justice in our world?
3. How does the hope of new creation change the way we live, die, and have our being in this life?

“Behold, the hidden thing which we were seeking is discovered. For this is the last judgment, which He will set in the earth when He comes from heaven. And it is in Him, too, we already see the concluding expression of the prophecy fulfilled: In His name shall the nations hope. And by this fulfillment, which no one can deny, men are encouraged to believe in that which is most impudently denied. For who could have hoped for that which even those who do not yet believe in Christ now see fulfilled among us, and which is so undeniable that they can but gnash their teeth and pine away? Who, I say, could have hoped that the nations would hope in the name of Christ, when He was arrested, bound, scourged, mocked, crucified when even the disciples themselves had lost the hope which they had begun to have in Him? The hope which was then entertained scarcely by the one thief on the cross, is now cherished by nations everywhere on the earth, who are marked with the sign of the cross on which He died that they may not die eternally”. Augustine

For further study: Genesis 3; Genesis 6; Genesis 18-19; Psalm 2; Isaiah 2; 13:9-11; 24:21-22; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 30:3-4; Joel 1:15,3:12-14; Amos 5:18-22; Daniel 12:1-2; Matthew 7:22-23, Matthew 24; Mark 13:26-27; John 6:40; 2 Timothy 4:8; 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Revelation 20; (*New Creation/Resurrection Hope*) - 1 Peter 1:3-9; Romans 8; 2 Corinthians 15; Revelation 21-22

Helpful book: City of God by Augustine of Hippo

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic Church.
We confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and we look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.