The Story of Christmas is the Story of the Bible

Whether it is a novel, a Netflix series, a movie, a documentary or even a children’s book most all people enjoy a good story. And writers know that every good story must include certain elements in order to capture and hold people’s attention. My next five sermons will be organized in the five main components of a story, which include:

Characters, Setting, Plot, Conflict, and Resolution. God, in His infinite wisdom, is the best storyteller. This week I will start by introducing the setting and the characters. Let me remind you that even though I have the special privilege of presenting the story, God is the writer and I’m more like a teacher who gets to read out loud from the pages of the best book ever written. With that said, let’s open the book to the beginning.

“1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

3 Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.”

Genesis 1:1-5 NLT

This is where the story begins. At least this is where God chooses to begin the story for us. He doesn’t tell us what came before, but obviously He was before this. Also, as Daryl pointed out a few weeks ago, the exact time that God created Lucifer and angels isn’t clearly spelled out in the Bible. Satan and the fallen angels are clearly characters in His story, but He didn’t deem it necessary to tell us exactly when they came into existence. As gotquestions.org says:

“Trying to determine when God created the angels is somewhat tricky because anything God did "before the foundation of the world" puts the event outside of time itself. Time and space are characteristics of our world, not God’s. He is not limited by hours, days, and years as we are. In fact, the Bible tells us that "with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8).

We do know that God created the angels before He created the physical universe. The book of Job describes the angels worshiping God as He was creating the world: "Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone - while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7).

If we consider the function of angels, we might conclude that God created the angels just prior to the creation of mankind because one of their duties is to be "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). We also know they existed prior to the garden of Eden, because Satan, who was formerly the angel Lucifer, was already present in the garden in his fallen state. However, because another function of angels is to worship God around His throne (Revelation 5:11-14), they may have been in existence millions of years—as we reckon time—before God created the world, worshiping Him and serving Him.

So, although the Bible does not specifically say when God created the angels, it was sometime before the world was created. Whether this was a day before, or billions of years before—again, as we reckon time—we cannot be sure.”

This is why some believe the heavens and the earth existed for some amount of time in a “formless and empty state.” In other words the heavens and the earth were a blank slate ready to be purposed according to God’s plan. Some people believe that God created the heavens and the earth and light in the same literal 24 hour day, but it seems more likely that God created the heavens and the earth and then later began the process of establishing His intended purposes for the earth and everything else He would create.

Before moving on from this text, I want to emphasize that the scriptures say “the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.”

God is spirit which means, among other things, that He can be in more than one place at a time. This is why the Bible can say that God reigns from His throne in Heaven and also say that His Spirit is with us and in us.

In the first few verses of the Bible we begin to see the setting of the story and we are introduced to two of the main characters, God our Creator and God’s Spirit who sustains our world. But there is another person who isn’t plainly introduced as being there until later in the story. That person in Jesus. And I know it is kind of like jumping ahead in the book, but in order to introduce all the characters, I’m going to read ahead a little bit…The apostle John tells us:

“In the beginning the Word already existed.

 The Word was with God,

 and the Word was God.

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

3 God created everything through him,

 and nothing was created except through him.

4 The Word gave life to everything that was created,

 and his life brought light to everyone.

5 The light shines in the darkness,

 and the darkness can never extinguish it.”

John 1:1-5 NLT

Jesus is the Word. Or in the Greek the “Logos.” If you look up Logos in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary you will find:

“: the divine wisdom manifest in the creation, government, and redemption of the world and often identified with the second person of the Trinity”

This is where the story of the Bible and Christmas begins. In the first five verses of Genesis we are introduced to God the Father, God the Son, the Holy Spirit and a Cosmos that is ready to be fashioned into an ordered place for fruitful living. This is no small thing. Even with all of our existing technology and ability to discover distant planets and stars, we have yet to find another place that was created in a way that we can live fruitful and ordered lives.

That brings us to our part in the story. Every good writer, in order to keep the reader engaged, has to find a way for the reader to relate to the story. After God creates and establishes the earth and everything in it, He brings us in to His story.

26 Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.”

Notice here that God says “us” when He refers to Himself. We have here further evidence of God being a plurality. He is one God existing in three distinct personalities. He goes on to say of humans.

“They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

27 So God created human beings in his own image.

 In the image of God he created them;

 male and female he created them.

28 Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

Genesis 1:26-28 NLT

God didn’t have to create us. He doesn’t need anything or anyone to exist. He is and He always has been. This truth is described theologically as God’s “Aseity.” Which the dictionary defines as:

: the quality or state of being self-derived or self-originated

specifically : the absolute self-sufficiency, independence, and autonomy of God.

Even though God is self-derived, self-sufficient, independent and autonomous, He decided it would bring Him joy, pleasure and glory to create us in His own image. And in fact, the Bible says God did find pleasure in what He created when it says:

“31 Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!”

Genesis 1:31 NLT

The stage has been set. The characters have been introduced and the story has a beginning. God wanted us in His story. God wanted you and me in the best novel of all time. We are part of His plan. We have purpose and it is a very good purpose.

His purpose was to create His temple, which is all the heavens and all the earth, and then create a people, in His likeness, to live with Him, relate to Him and worship Him in the way He designed.

But, like any good book, the plot will thicken, the conflict will come and a resolution will have to be discovered. Thankfully we serve a God who knew the end before the beginning. He is the writer who made the outline before the introduction was written. This is why our God can be trusted. Because He is the Creator, Designer and Author of the whole story.

Hold on to that this Christmas season. The world God designed was created for His pleasure and for our ordered and fruitful living. He set the stage and gave us the script and the directors cues we need to have relationship with Him, with our world, and with the rest of the people He made. But, as I said earlier, the plot thickens, mankind’s freedom to improv will lead to conflict. In fact, if you and I are honest we all have an idea of how we personally have went off script or ignored the wise direction of our Creator. I did it myself last night, when I chose to lose my temper and in so doing, I demonstrated my divisive sin nature to my wife and kids. That isn’t the way I was designed to live and thankfully because of Jesus, I was able to seek forgiveness and work to find reconciliation with God and my family.

This is why our desperate search for resolution will become a big part of the story and the primary reason why Christmas is so important.

The stage is set. The characters have been introduced. Our story has a beginning. It begins with God’s design for us to live for Him and with Him in a glorifying and harmonious relationship. But as we will discover something or someone ruined that harmony and Christmas will show itself to be the reason that joy and peace could be restored for now and all time. As the prophet Isaiah said:

For a child is born to us,

 a son is given to us.

The government will rest on his shoulders.

 And he will be called:

Wonderful Counselor,[d] Mighty God,

 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His government and its peace

 will never end.

He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David

 for all eternity.

The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies

 will make this happen!

Isaiah 9:6-7 NLT