

The Bible The Bible In Drama

Introduction

When asked, “How do you study the Scriptures?” my response is first to get the broad idea of the book, it’s major purpose, then focus on the sections of it. I also point out that there are a multitude of avenues to pursue a study, and suggesting some of them I will follow up with illustrations. Over the next few months I will suggest some of the methods.



Some years ago I had the privilege of ministering on the theme of the Scriptures as a drama. Mr. G. Scroggie wrote a book (The Drama of The Bible) on this avenue of study, and I am greatly indebted to it. When we think of a play such as Shakespeare’s, “The Merchant of Venice” it will be accepted that it has a stage, major participants, a plot and several acts.

The Setting and Participants

- a) Every drama has a stage. That is presented to us in the words, “The earth” (Gen. 1:1)
- b) Every drama has participants. In Genesis we are acquainted with the two major contestants, for this is a war. “God” (Gen. 1:1) and the “Serpent” (Gen. 3:1), who is called “the Devil and Satan” (Rev. 12:9).
- c) Every drama has secondary participants. They are introduced as Adam (Gen. 1:26-28) and a “woman” (Gen. 2:21-22), after the fall called “Eve” (Gen. 3:20).
- d) Every drama has a plot and counter reactions.
 - i) God had placed Adam and his wife in Eden. It was a glorious situation where there was harmony between man and his Creator God. However, into this perfection came the Serpent who deceived Eve, and then Adam, who was not deceived, disobeyed God and the fellowship was broken (Gen. 3:1-6; 8-11). Into this sphere came discord with Adam blaming God, saying: “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me” (Gen. 3:12). The woman blamed the serpent (Gen. 3:13) and God banished them from the paradise they had lived in (Gen. 3:23-24).
 - ii) There is then followed an ongoing conflict between God and Satan. God cleared his name by showing that, contrary to Satan’s intimation (Gen. 3:1), God did love and would give, even to the gift of His Son (Jn. 3:16) and ultimately Satan would be defeated. Satan is a warrior and will not give up the spoils of victory easily, and so makes man aware of what all he can have without God. The lesson being, you do not need God to have purpose and pleasure in life. Having turned from God man sought meaning in life by the multiplicity of wives (Gen. 4:19); keepers of livestock (Gen. 4:20); enjoyed the fine arts of music and poetry (Gen. 4:21, 23-24) and artisans (Gen. 4:22). God had pledged Satan that of assured defeat (Gen. 3:15) it became a continuous activity of Satan to prevent his defeat by the seed of the woman. When read in this light, then the Bible is a script of plots, sabotage, devotion, belittlement, and ones emotions rise and fall with the triumphs and defeats.
 - iii) It is a story which has lasted throughout the centuries and still continuing. Ultimately it will only cease when Satan is forever cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10), and God is all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

The Acts and Their Scenes

1) The Acts

Every drama has several acts and within each act is a number of different scenes. In reviewing the scriptures it is observed that there are five great acts:

Act 1	Act 2	Act 3	Act 4	Acts 5
Genesis 1:1-1:26	Genesis 11:27 - Malachi 4:6	The time between the Testaments	Matthew 1:1 - Revelation 4:1	Revelation 4:2-22:21

Survey of Each Act

1) Act one has four major scenes

- a) Scene 1 - The creation of the world, for man and the creation of man (Gen. 1:1-2:14)
- b) Scene 2 - The fall of man and his expulsion from the garden (Gen. 2:15-3:24)
- c) Scene 3 - The new beginning outside Eden, followed by the moral deterioration of man and the flood (Gen. 4:1-8:14)
- d) Scene 4 - Another new beginning, another moral deterioration and Babel (Gen. 8:15-11:9)

2) Act two has nine scenes

- a) Scene 1 - The immediate ancestry of Abram, his leaving Ur of the Chaldees, which is Babylon (Gen. 11:31-32)
- b) Scene 2 - The development of Abram's Family to a nation in Egypt (Gen. 12:1- Ex. 1:7)
 - i) Abraham's spirituality in learning to trust God in the varied circumstances of life (Gen. 12:1-25:8)
 - ii) Due to the famine Jacob and his family leave Beer-sheba (Gen. 46:5) to go into and arrival in the land of Goshen (Gen. 16:1- 46:28). The presentation of Jacob to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:1-10)
 - iii) The death of Jacob, the mourning and his burial (Gen. 47:27-50:13)
 - iv) The death of Joseph (Gen. 50:15- Ex. 1:6)
- c) Scene 3 - The last years of Israel's slavery in Egypt and genocide (Ex. 1:7-11:10)
- d) Scene 4 - Their glorious exodus (Ex. 12:1-12:51)
- e) Scene 5 - Wilderness journeys (Ex. 13:1-Josh. 3:5)
- f) Scene 6 - Their entrance into the land (Josh. 3:6-5:12)
- g) Scene 7 - Their experiences in the land (Josh. 5:13-2 Kgs. 24:9; 1 Chron. 1:1-2 Chron. 36:16)
- h) Scene 8 - Their expulsion from the land (2 Kgs. 24:10; 2 Chron. 36:17-21)
- i) Scene 9 - Back into the land and awaiting the coming King (2 Chron. 36:22-23)

3) Act three has two scenes

- a) Act three has two groups of people, but perhaps unwittingly being worked by God toward a wonderful goal, the coming of the Lord into the world purpose, and ultimately the spread of the Gospel. The providential activity of God changes focus from that of act three. It dealt with how Israel was prepared by the giving of the scriptures for guidance in life, approaching God and the qualifications for the identifying of the Messiah, to how they were prepared geographically and religiously for the spread of the gospel. Second, it deals with how the Gentile world was prepared for the coming of Messiah. Incidentally, when we speak of the world being prepared for the coming of Messiah and the spread of the gospel message, we must also think of how the Lord was prepared for coming into this world (Heb. 10:5).
 - i) Scene 1 - How the Jewish world was prepared for the coming of Messiah and the spread of the gospel.

The Jewish world and its preparation	
Positively	Negatively

The Jewish world and its preparation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dispersions • The Building of Synagogues • The Translation of the Scriptures • Their faith in One God • Their religious consciousness • Their fervency for the Scriptures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of legalistic formality • Because of pessimistic skepticism • Because of spiritual mysticism • The sacrificial system could never: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Take away sins ▸ Deal with a sinful nature ▸ Permit man to come to God ▸ Give new life to the offender ▸ Justify ▸ Give the guilty conscience peace • The weakness of humanity to keep the law
<p><u>Conclusion:</u></p> <p>It was a religion which left:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unanswered questions • Unfulfilled prophecies • Pointless ceremonies • Unachieved purposes 	

ii) Scene 2 - The Gentile world and the ways in which God used it.

The Gentile world		
Nation	Positive	Negative, that which it could not provide for humanity
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher learning • Brilliance of Architecture • Medical advances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inward peace • Sins forgiven • Fellowship with God • Satisfaction
Babylon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luxury • The greatest of the fine arts and the music • The beautiful hanging gardens • The excellency of the structure of Babylon • The skilled workmanship in the glazed tiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inward peace • Sins forgiven • Fellowship with God • Satisfaction • A Cleared conscience
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The magnificence of its culture • Its philosophers and poets • The development of the human body • A universal language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inward peace • Sins forgiven • Fellowship with God • Satisfaction • A Cleared conscience

The Gentile world		
Nation	Positive	Negative, that which it could not provide for humanity
Rome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal freedom to travel • Universal Peace • The excitement of the arena • Universal power • The prestige of being a Roman • A universal road system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inward peace • Sins forgiven • Fellowship with God • Satisfaction • A Cleared conscience
Nothing the greatest powers in the world could offer could save or satisfy.		

- b) Humanity stood helpless.
- i) He had needs no one on earth could satisfy:
 1. The need for a Prophet to reveal God
 2. The need for a Priest to represent man to God
 3. The need for a righteous King to rule in the fear of God
 4. The need for a Daysman between man and God
- c) It was a sad world for it was marked by several distinct groups of people:
- i) The careless ungodly whose lives, and ultimately society, was marked by moral declension. This was manifested in violence, sexual perversity, conniving, backstabbing, injustice, and treachery from the emperors to the commoner. Life was of little value with the attitude, “Live for the present”, live for that which is aesthetically pleasing to the eye.
 - ii) Those who were aware of a “higher being” but lived in spiritual confusion, for which God was the true and living God. There were the gods of the Moabites, Hittites, Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Medo-Persians, and Romans, etc.
 - iii) There were some who lived by a higher moral code and yearned for decency and justice. They recognized something was dreadfully wrong with humanity, and it was not environmental upbringing, something deeper in each individual needed to be changed. They did not know what it was and not knowing God they tried to change, or curtail their own emotions and inward powers by self-discipline, the pursuit of secret knowledge, and hermit type living.
 - iv) There were those who, knowing the scriptures yet seeing the degradation of Israel, spiritually longed for the coming King and His Kingdom. These were both Jews and Gentiles. Simeon and Anna are examples of such Jews and the wise men were examples of the Gentiles. I also believe that there were among working people those who longed for the Messiah as did the shepherds. Surely we would not think that God revealed this wonderful truth of the coming of the Lord and given the first “outside” viewing of the Lord to blasphemers and godless persons.
 - v) It was a time of fluctuating emotions as hopes rose and fell, and for four centuries not a prophet came from God. Had He abandoned His people? Were His thoughts for them dashed because of their sins, for throughout these many years God was silent? They could not see the activity of God for He was still working while untold thousands lived like the animals, no true God consciousness and spiritually dead like the idols they worshipped. Humanity lived in a world of spiritual night, leading to eternal darkness.

4) Act four has 7 scenes

- a) Scene 1 - The promised King comes into this world (Matt. 1:1-2:23; Lk. 1:5-2:39)
- b) Scene 2 - The life of Christ and His rejection, death, resurrection, and ascension (Matt. 3:1-Acts 1:9)
- c) Scene 3 - The coming of the Holy Spirit and the gospel being preached to the Jews in the homeland, who despite all the evidence, many still rejected it (Acts 2:1-13, 46-47)
- d) Scene 4 - The Jews having rejected the message, the door is opened to the Gentiles, and as undeserving people they enter (Acts 13:48; 14:27-15:3, 7)
- e) Scene 5 - The mystery of the church (Rev. 1:9-3:22). Incorporated into this is the letters to the churches from Romans through to 2 Thessalonians. The church is a mystery, a group of people from Pentecost to the Rapture (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3, 9; Col. 1:26)
- f) Scene 6 - The coming of the Lord to the air (1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-17)
- g) Scene 7 - Daniel's 70th week and the great tribulation and the coming of the Lord in Judgment (this overlaps into Act 5) (2 Thess. 1:8-9; 2:8; Heb. 9:28; Jude 1:14-15)

5) Act five has 4 scenes. Revelation 4:1-22:21

- a) Scene 1 - The Throne is set and the Book is taken (Rev. 4:1-5:14)
- b) Scene 2 - The judgments begin (Rev. 6:1-20:15). Within this duration there is "mini scenes":
 - i) Mini Scene 1 is in two parts:
 1. The opening of the seal judgments (Rev. 6:2-17; 8:1)
 2. The 144,000 before the Throne (Rev. 7:1-17)
 - ii) Mini Scene 2 is in 4 parts:
 1. The two altars and the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:2-11:18)
 2. The mighty angel with the rainbow about his head and the little book and the measuring of the temple (Rev. 10:1-11:2)
 3. The two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-12),
 4. The 2nd woe (Rev. 11:13-14)
 - iii) Mini Scene 3 has 14 Parts:
 1. The seven great personages (Rev. 12:1-13:18)
 2. The 144,000 on Mount Sion (Rev. 14:1-5)
 3. The proclamation of the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14:6-7)
 4. The judgment on Babylon and warning for the earth dwellers (Rev. 14:8-20)
 5. The sign in Heaven, the praise of the saints, and the angels given the vials of judgment (Rev. 15:1-8)
 6. The pouring out of the vials (Rev. 16:1-21)
 7. The end of the world's religions (Rev. 17:1-18)
 8. The end of the world's commerce (Rev. 18:1-24) and the rejoicing in heaven (Rev. 19:1-10)
 9. The Marriage Supper of The Lamb (Rev. 19:7-10)
 10. The coming of the Lord and the end of the world's militaries (Rev 19:11-21)
 11. The binding of Satan for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3) and the contrast of those who were faithful to the Lord (Rev. 20:4-6)
 12. Satan released and earth's last insurrection (Rev. 20:7-9) with Satan's ending (Rev. 20:10)
 13. The Great White Throne Judgement (Rev. 20:11-15)
 14. The end of this universe (Rev. 20:11; 21:1)
- c) Scene 4 - The restoration of all things (Rev. 21-22)
 - i) The eternal state (Rev. 21:2-8)
 - ii) The Millennium (Rev. 21:9-22:5)
 - iii) Final comments (Rev. 22:6-21)

May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.

John 16:13

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