

CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY: "A MASTER NARRATIVE"

Seek First: How the Kingdom of God Changes Everything, by Jeremy Treat

A MASTER NARRATIVE

- "The way we understand human life depends on this question: What is the real story of which my life story is a part?" (p. 29 - Lesslie Newbigin).

IN SEARCH OF A MASTER NARRATIVE

- "A master narrative is the story that frames your life and the lens through which you see the world" (p. 31).
- "...master narratives are usually assumed rather than explicitly acknowledged. The stories we live by are less about what we consciously believe and more about what we take for granted" (p. 31).
- Examples: The American Dream; Follow your heart; Find yourself; Live your best life now.

COMPETING NARRATIVES

- "Here is the frightening part: it is possible to have Christian beliefs yet still live by another narrative....We can identify as a Christian and go to church on Sundays. Yet in our day-to-day lives we may still be living by a secular narrative that is about building your own kingdoms" (pp. 32-33).
- "I believe many Christians today have been hijacked by a cultural narrative, and even worse, have learned how to baptize it with Christian lingo. In response, we need more than right beliefs with a bit of morality mixed in. We need a more compelling narrative, and that's exactly what Jesus gives us in the story of the kingdom of God" (p. 33).

THE GRANDEST STORY OF ALL

- "Scripture is not a mismatch of stories about morality; it is one grand story of God's royal grace. And Jesus tells the story of the Bible as a kingdom story. 'The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has at hand' (Mark 1:15). This is the language of plot and resolution" (p. 34).
- "When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, he was not simply discussing a doctrine; it was evoking an entire story. It's the story of God making his broken creation into a beautiful kingdom" (p. 34).
- "The story of the kingdom of God is that master narrative for the people of God" (p. 34).

Big Questions of Life	The Kingdom Story
What are we here?	The kingdom project
What's wrong?	Rebellion against the King
What's the remedy?	Promise of the Kingdom (Israel) Coming of the Kingdom (Christ)
How will it end?	The eternal kingdom

1. The Kingdom Project

- "God created the earth out of nothing, and his plan was for it to be a glorious kingdom where all that he made would flourish under his loving reign" (p. 35).
- "Genesis 1-2 presents us not with a final product, but with an unfinished project. Adam and Eve were called to Edenize the world" (p. 36).

- “Salvation is aimed at recovering Eden *and* the Edenic vision of God’s reign over all the earth. The kingdom is about God’s reign over every nook and cranny of this planet” (p. 37).

2. Rebellion against the King

- “The temptation in Eden was not about eating fruit; it was about exercising autonomy. Why be ruled by God when you can rule yourself? And with a bite, the trajectory of human history was forever changed” (p. 38).
- “Sin is not only *rebellion* against God, it is a *replacement* of God....An idol is anything you worship or live for in the place of God. It’s whatever sits on the throne of your heart, ruling your life and directing your desires, dreams, and decisions” (p. 38)
- “Sin is our attempt to dethrone God and enthrone ourselves. While humanity was made to live for God’s kingdom and glorify his name, sin is our attempt to build our own kingdom and make a name for ourselves. Sin is *autonomy*, a word, which when broken into its component parts, means ‘self-rule.’ Sin is the attempt to dethrone God and replace him with the sovereign self, where individual desire reigns, personal choice is our authority, and freedom is defined by independence” (p. 39).

3a. The Promise of the Kingdom in Christ

- “By an act of undeserved favor, God set out to reverse the curse of humanity’s sin and restore the blessings of his reign. He would not give up on his kingdom project. In Genesis 3:15...a ray of hope shines forth.... a seed planted in Eden that would grow throughout the rest of the biblical story: the promise of a serpent-crushing king who would rescue God’s people and renew God’s creation” (p. 40).
- “Genesis 3:15 shows the way, revealing that the promise of victory would include the price of suffering. A pattern emerges in the story of Scripture from this point onward: victory comes through suffering, exaltation through humiliation, and ultimately, the kingdom through the cross. The light that will one day shine on the cross of Christ casts a shadow all the way back to this great promise. The ruin of humanity’s sin will be overcome by the reign of humanity’s Savior” (p. 40).

3b. The Coming of the Kingdom through Christ

- “When Jesus arrived on the scene, he not only proclaimed the kingdom, he embodied it. Christ is a picture of Christ’s kingdom in person. Jesus’s perfect life, however, it’s not enough to bring the kingdom of God. An example to follow is insufficient to save us from slavery to sin. We need a savior: the king who lives a righteous life and has the power to redeem us from our unrighteous lives” (p. 43).
- “This is what Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection. The cross is Christ’s throne from which he reigns with self-giving love. The essence of sin is our attempt to take God’s place on the throne. The essence of salvation is God taking our place on the cross. When Jesus rose from the grave, it was a public declaration that nothing could stop God’s reign from advancing on earth, not even death” (p. 43).

4. The Eternal Kingdom

- “The kingdom has already come in Christ but will not yet be fully realized until Christ returns. In between the already and not yet of the kingdom of God, Jesus calls his people to his mission. The church is the signpost and foretaste of the kingdom of God, advancing God’s kingdom purposes, and giving the world a sneak preview of the future” (p. 44).
- “The final chapter of the biblical story is not a disembodied heaven with harp-playing souls floating on clouds. The goal is heaven and earth coming together – a new creation. This is why the Bible ends with a picture of Jesus on the throne, proclaiming, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’ (Rev. 21:5). Eternity is Christ reigning over and through redeemed people from every tribe and people in language and nation in a world renewed by grace” (p. 44).