

Kingdom Kernels: The Storyline of History—Finishing the Last Lap

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Too often we ask the wrong question: “**What is God’s will for my life?**” That question is very self-centered. It’s about you and your life.

The right question is “What is God’s will?” Period. And then “How can my life best serve that?” To glorify God’s name, you must understand what God is doing in our generation—what *He* is about.

To figure that out you need to know what God is doing in history: the storyline that began in Genesis 1 and will finish in Revelation 22. Then you can find your place in the historical plot.

For example, King David uniquely served God’s purpose in His own generation (Acts 13:36) precisely because he was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). He sought to contribute his efforts toward the Father’s storyline. The Abrahamic promise (inherit land and become a blessing to the nations) took a huge leap forward when God found a man who would have His heart and serve His purposes. According to 2 Sam. 7:1, there was **no place left** for the Israelites to conquer.

Our Father’s heart is the storyline of history. He speeds up the plot when He finds protagonists who have *His* heart.

God is calling up a new generation that will not just be in the plot but that will *finish* the plot, hasten the story to its climax. He is calling out a generation that will one day say, “There is **no place left** for the kingdom of God to expand” (e.g. Rm. 15:23).

Knowing the storyline is knowing God’s will.

Once you know the storyline, you can take up your place in it, not as a side character but as a protagonist driven forward by the power of the Author.

The grand storyline began in Creation (Genesis 1) and ends at the Consummation (the return of Jesus — Revelation 22). It is the story of a great race. Each generation runs a lap in this relay race. But there will be a final generation that runs the last lap—a generation that witnesses the King taking His reward for His history-long efforts.

There will be a last lap generation.

Why not us?

God is setting us up to finish the story, if we choose to accept the role.

Don’t forget the storyline: Remember!

In the last letter he wrote, Peter called disciples not to forget their part in the storyline (2 Pt. 1:13-15). Peter had been living for the day of his Lord’s return, running his lap in the race. As his death drew near, he exhorted the church to not slacken the pace but rather to speed up the storyline—to hasten that day.

*Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and **hastening the coming of the day of God!** (2 Pt. 3:11-12, emphasis added)*

In the last chapter of his life, Peter once more reminded them of the grand purpose—the storyline:

*This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them **I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,** ²that you should remember the*



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predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. (2 Pt. 3:1-2, emphasis added)

Their hearts were sincere, but it was easy for them to forget the plot and lose their purposeful role. Sincerity is no substitute for purposefulness in the storyline of history. Are you purposefully taking up your part in the great race?

Peter reminded them of the storyline given by the commandment of Jesus:

And this good news of the King's reign will be heralded throughout the whole world as a sacrificial witness to every people group [ethne], and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:14; author's translation)

Do you know the storyline?

The Purpose of History

This fundamental storyline runs throughout the Bible weaving its way through each of the 66 books. Yet it is so easy to forget the

storyline, and many scoff at such a thought:

Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. (2 Pt. 3:3-4)

This reality describes our generation, not just Peter's.

What is the storyline of history?

- **CREATION:** In Genesis 1-2, **God created mankind** for one purpose—to become a Bride (companion) for His Son to dwell with Him forever in loving adoration.
- **FALL:** In Genesis 3, through sin, **mankind fell away** from God's design—no longer in relationship with the Creator.
- **SCATTERING:** In Genesis 11, languages were confused and **mankind was dispersed** to the ends of the earth—out of touch

with the redemption of God.

- **PROMISE:** Starting in Genesis 12, **God promised to call the peoples of the earth back** to Himself through the blood-price of a Redeemer proclaimed by the good news-sharing efforts of the people of God (the descendants of Abraham).
- **REDEMPTION:** In the Gospels, **Jesus provided the price to pay the debt of sin to buy back** the people of God—people from every *ethne* (people group).
- **COMMISSION:** At the end of His life, **Jesus launched the people of God to finish the mission** of God—the great storyline—and promises His power to do so.
- **DISCIPLE-MAKING:** From the Book of Acts until today, the people of God have been blessed for one great mandate: **go into all the world and proclaim this redemption**—making disciples of every *ethne*—to be the complete Bride of Christ.

• **CONSUMMATION:** At the Consummation, **Jesus will return to take up His Bride**—when she is complete and ready.

Everything from Genesis 3 to Revelation 22 is about calling back Jesus' Bride from among the nations. Until the Bride is complete, the mission of the church is not finished.

This is the storyline Peter referred to in his last chapter.

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (2 Pt. 3:8-10, emphasis added)

God is patient. He will not send His Son back until the storyline is finished. God is not slow, for He does not wish any people group (*ethne*) to perish. He wants all of the dispersed nations of Genesis 11 to be a part of the bride of Christ in great number.

It is these *ethne* that Jesus referred to in Matthew 24:14. It is these *ethne* that he referred to in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20 “make disciples of all *ethne*”). It is these *ethne* that are pictured in Revelation 7:9.

The climax of the storyline of history is a complete Bride presented to the Son with a great wedding banquet to celebrate.

In Peter's last chapter, he referred to the gathering of this Bride and references Paul's writings also:

*Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him **without spot or blemish**, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters....(2 Pt. 3:14-16, emphasis added)*

Paul referred to the same storyline using the same words:

*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so **that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish**.... This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:25-27, 32, emphasis added)*

Paul referred to the same plan in Ephesians 1:

*⁹ God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. ¹⁰ **And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ**—...everything in heaven and on earth. (Eph. 1:9-10, NLT, emphasis added)*

God's plan from Creation to Consummation has been to regather people from every language and culture to return to the authority of Christ as His Bride forever.

But right now, that Bride is incomplete. She is still missing an arm, an eye and a foot. Her dress

is still blemished and wrinkled. While the Bridegroom stands at the altar ready to wrap His Bride in His arms, the Bride seems to be in little hurry to get herself prepared for the Wedding Day.

But the posture of the Bride is changing. This is one of the great distinctives of our generation, and it points us to the uniqueness of our lap. Over the last two decades the global church has increased the pace to engage the remaining 8000+ unreached people groups in the world—the parts of the world still not represented by the Bride in great numbers.

This was a good first step, *but engagement was never the goal*. Since over 2 billion people in the world still have no access to the gospel, our efforts to engage them must change. We are about *reaching* them, not just *engaging* them.

Jesus told us to pray for the kingdom to come fully on earth as in heaven (Mt. 6:9-10). When the gospel engages an unreached place, the kingdom of God must break loose. Jesus always envisioned disciples making disciples to make disciples and churches planting churches which can plant churches. This is what happened in the Book of Acts. It was the DNA of early discipleship that each disciple should be both a follower of Jesus and a fisher of men. (Mk 1:17)

Jesus is not satisfied with a small or incomplete Bride. He wants a Bride that no one can count from each of the *ethne*. The only way to do so is through the kingdom multiplying in every one of them. Momentum is building for movements of God to become common again. In the last 20 years the number of these movements around the world

BECOME A PROTAGONIST IN THE STORY – NOT A SIDE CHARACTER.

has grown from fewer than 10 to around 600. God is accelerating the timeline of history!

Yet there are still thousands of unreached people groups and places that have no multiplying church among them. With Peter, we must join God in speeding up the plot line toward its finale.

Hasten the day

¹¹ *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,* ¹² ***waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God!...*** (2 Pt. 3:11-12, *emphasis added*)

“Waiting for” means to be in suspense about something. What are you in suspense about? Are you eagerly anticipating the finale of this grand plot? God has given us an amazing privilege of joining him in the race of history to accelerate the pace of the Church towards the finish line. The finish line is in sight and by the power of the Spirit we can run the final lap.

One of the greatest finishes—last laps—in swimming history came in the 2008 Beijing Olympics in the men’s 4x100m freestyle relay. Michael Phelps and the other three Americans were the underdogs. By the final lap, they were almost a full body length behind the leader. Three quarters through that last leg, unheralded Jason Lezak began to push harder than he ever had in his life. He sped up his pace beyond

all expectations. In the last second he reached out to touch the wall to win. As the crowd went crazy, the announcer kept saying, “I can’t believe it! It’s not possible!” Someone that the crowd had never heard of swam the most amazing final lap in modern history.

Replays of that race reveal two groups hastening this extraordinary finish:

1. Lezak’s three teammates standing at the finish line urging him to increase his pace
2. Jason Lezak increasing his exertion beyond what appeared possible

A great cloud of witnesses who have run the race before us (Hb. 12:1) spur us on onward. What better way to honor their efforts than to finish what they began?

There will be a generation that speeds up its pace through a final faith-filled, sacrificial effort by the power of the Spirit to exceed all expectations.

And, then, when the Bridegroom is ready, He will return.

Make haste!

Before Peter signed off, he gave one last great call for the believers to make no delay in taking up their part:

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort [lit. “make haste”] to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.... (2 Pt. 3:14, NIV)

Do you long to see revival come to you, your church or your organization? The answer is to make haste to be the type of people that are doing your part in the storyline of history. When you serve the storyline of history, the Father is thrilled to pour out His Spirit for that effort.

God is calling us to take up our part in this great race. Unfortunately for much of the Church this is simply frolicking in the pool completely oblivious to the race going on around them.

Instead of frolicking (living for your own storyline) you must jump into the pool and swim the final lap with sacrificial efforts. Become a protagonist in the story—not a side character.

Choose to focus on reaching every unreached people and place, but do so through Acts-like movements of multiplying disciples, churches and leaders. Only then can we truly saturate whole areas with the eternal gospel of our coming King.

Ask “What is God’s will?” and “How can my life best serve that purpose in this generation?”

Jesus promises His powerful presence to all who join in that effort....(Mt. 28:20).

Some generation will finish the final lap. Why not us? 