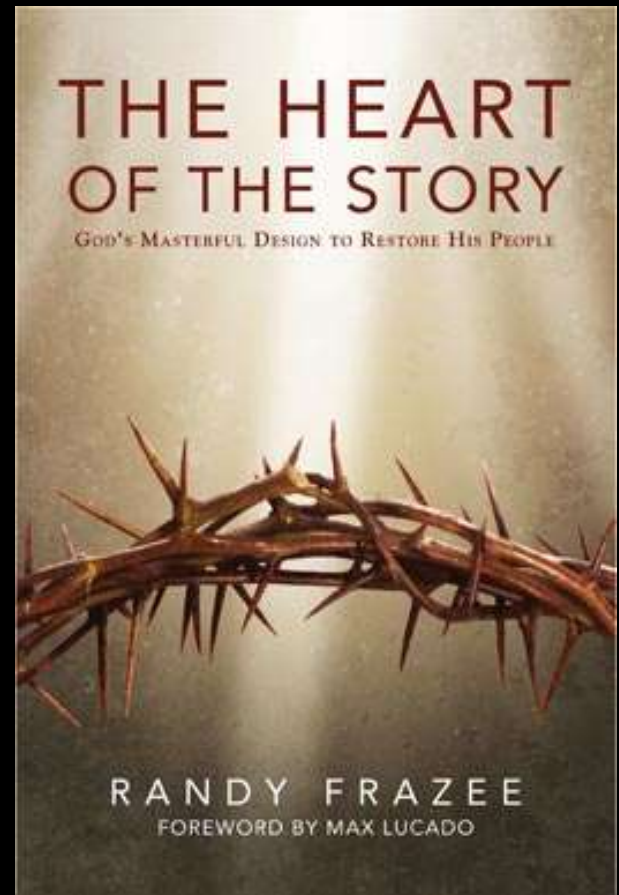


The Heart of the Story

Chapter 2: Birth of a Nation

Chapter 3: I Dreamed a Dream

October 7, 2011



Chapter 2-Birth of a Nation

- Formation of a family
- *“Time for a different approach. Plan B.”* (p. 35)
 - Not sure I agree with this.
- *“Remember, God’s original vision was to come down and live in perfect fellowship with us.”* (p. 35)
- *“I’ll take my toys and go home.”* (p.35)

Revelation (the concept, not the book)

- God reveals himself to humanity on His own terms.
- When something is revealed it becomes uncovered, or brought to light.
- When people speak about a revelation of God, they often feel that they have “uncovered something” about God.
- To many, it is as if God is hiding and they have to find Him.

Revelation (the concept, not the book)

- The Biblical idea of revelation is exactly the opposite.
- It does not focus on humanity's search, but on God's desire to communicate—to be known personally and certainly by His world.
- He searches for us. He takes the initiative.

Revelation (the concept, not the book)

- How does God make himself known to the world he created?
 - Natural Knowledge
 - General Revelation
 - Revealed Knowledge
 - Special Revelation
 - Supernatural Revelation

Revelation (the concept, not the book)

- Natural Knowledge- revealed through God's "fingerprints" in creation.
- Gives humanity some indication of the existence of God and His Law.
- It does not reveal the full identity of God nor does it reveal the Gospel.
- It is never sufficient for salvation.

Revelation (the concept, not the book)

- Revealed Knowledge- God's direct communication of Himself in history and ultimately in the Scriptures.
- How?
 - Directly to Abram, Moses, etc.
 - Indirectly- Pillar of Fire, etc. (theophany)
 - In the person of Jesus
 - Through the inspiration of the Bible

Nation Building



Nation Building

- *“He chose an old childless couple to be the parents of this new nation he envisioned.” (p. 36)*
- *“God makes a dramatic point by picking Abram, age seventy-five and his wife Sari, age sixty-five.” (p. 36)*
- Now to build a nation, right? Not quite!

Nation Building

- *“Maybe God needs our help?” (p. 37)*
- *“OK, so if God doesn’t need their help, then what gives? Thirteen more years went by, and still no child. Abram was now ninety-nine, and Sari eighty-nine. Think about it—this couple was pushing one hundred! How in the world could they have a baby now? It just made no sense.” (p. 38)*

Name Giving

- Abram = “exalted father”
- Abraham = “father of many”
- Sari = “my princess”
- Sarah = “princess”
- Isaac = “he laughs”

- *“When situations look impossible to us, God always gets the last laugh.” (p. 38)*



A vision problem

- *“But we must never forget how limited, and limiting, our viewpoint is. In fact, from a logical, rational, predictable perspective, nothing that God said to Abram made sense. In the limited vision of our Lower Story, God’s ideas seldom do...What may seem confusing and even contradictory to us is all part of God’s seamless Upper Story aims at bringing us back to him.” (p. 39)*

Nation Building...

- *“Spared by his fathers obedience and God’s grace, Isaac grew up and married a gal named Rebekah. Finally God’s nation could get underway, right? Not exactly. They were married twenty years before they had their first child! ...this nation building thing was getting off to a slow start.” (p. 39)*

What about us?

- *“Our Lower Story is often filled with doubt, confusion, trials and temptations. There are times when doing things God’s way feels foolish, naïve, or out of touch with the rest of the world. In the midst of these challenges, we may also sense that God has become distant and silent...”* (p. 40)

What about us?

- *“...Like Sarah, we tend to become impatient and take over when we think God has forgotten his promise to us. We begin to conclude that maybe God need us to help hem get the plan going. While he allows us to participate through our own free will, he never asks us to take into our own hands matters that belong in his.” (p. 40)*

Chapter 3- I Dreamed a Dream

- *“Personal betrayal cuts us to the core...but when a family member betrays you, it’s hard to keep going.”*
(p. 42)



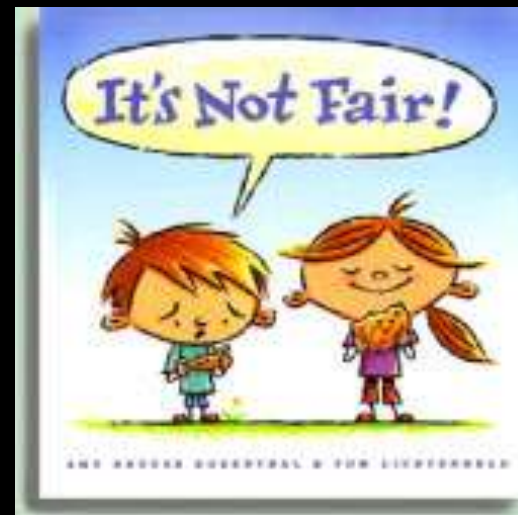
I Dreamed a Dream

- *“Joseph became instrumental in God’s Upper Story in two significant ways: (1) saving the people of this budding nation from terrible famine that threatened to extinguish them almost before they got started, and (2) revealing God’s ability to transform the worst betrayals into sparkling evidences of his own goodness.” (p. 42)*

The alarming effect of sin

- *“When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.”*
(Genesis 37:4)

- IT'S NOT FAIR!
- Matthew 20:1-16



The alarming effect of sin

- Joseph felt the consequences of a fallen world.
 - Betrayed by his brothers
 - Seduced by another
 - Blamed although innocent
 - Forgotten in isolation
- Through it all, God was working to bring about salvation...
 - Salvation for Joseph, his relationship with his family, and the protection of God's people and promise.

Changing perspective

- *“From a Lower Story perspective, Joseph appeared to be abandoned by God. Where was the Lord whom Joseph refused to sin against? Did he change his mind about Joseph? Not your life.” (p. 45)*
- *“From his Lower Story perspective, Joseph’s life was an unpredictable series of roller-coaster events over which he had little control. But in the Upper Story, God had a perfect plan and was in complete control.” (p.p. 45-46)*

Changing perspective

- *“Somewhere in the journey, Joseph caught a glimpse of God’s Upper Story plan and his role in it.” (p. 46)*
- *“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” –Romans 8:28)*

At the intersection of Upper & Lower

- *“No matter how painful some moments seem, your story is not over.”* (p. 47)
- I am not a big fan of “if.”
- It makes it sound conditional to my behavior.



At the intersection of Upper & Lower

- If it is up to me...I am in trouble...
 - But God is the one who pursues me
 - The Holy Spirit has called me to faith
 - The blood of Jesus washes me clean
 - His Word reminds me, Baptism has cleansed me, his supper strengthens me.

At the intersection of Upper & Lower

- *“God’s Upper Story weaves a tale of relentless pursuit. He doesn’t just desire to turn whatever was intended for evil to good in your life. He wants you. To be with you. To have fellowship with you. He refused to allow famine to destroy the nation he was building...”* (p. 48)

At the intersection of Upper & Lower

- *“Life is filled with disappointment, but when it hits, we must rise above it in the strength of God’s goodness, hearing him whisper that he loves us and will never abandon us, no matter what.” (p. 48)*

At the intersection of Upper & Lower

- *“If we look beyond what seems to define our Lower Stories and trust that God is writing something much bigger, than we can trust that the ending will be much more than ‘happily ever after.’ It will be like coming home.” (p.p. 48-49)*