

INTRODUCTION

REALITY

Confusion

I WANT TO TELL YOU the story about how the world began, how the world ends, and everything deeply important that happens in between. It's a tale many already know but few understand, even those who call the Story their own. This story is not a fairy tale, but rather it is the Story all fairy tales are really about.¹ Indeed, almost every tale ever written is an echo of this story embedded deep within our hearts. Yet this story is not a tale at all, since the Story is true.

This is the Story of reality—a story about things that really happened or, in some parts, things that are going to happen. It started a long time ago and will end (probably) long after you and I are gone. It is a story so wonderful in some places—some might even say magical—and so frightening in other places, it is hard to imagine it can be true. But when we think about it carefully, we realize deep inside that it all makes perfect sense.

There is a problem, though, with attempting to tell the Story. The effort will probably be misunderstood.

Once I was sitting on an airplane next to a stockbroker. He asked me what I did for a living, and I told him I was a writer. When he asked what I wrote about, immediately I faced a difficulty. I wanted to tell him that I write and talk about religion, specifically Christian religion, but I didn't want him to make a mistake many people make when they think about those two things.

Most people nowadays would not say the religious stories believers believe are actually false. (It would be impolite to put it that way and might

even be considered intolerant). At the same time, though, they do not think they're really true, either, in any deep sense of the word.

Instead, people are tempted to think of religion as a kind of spiritual fantasy club—true for you, but not necessarily true for me. Find the club you like—the one that meets your personal needs, that gives you rules to live by that are respectable but not too demanding, that warms your heart with a feeling of spirituality. That's the point of religion. Do not, however, confuse religious stories with reality. They don't give you the kind of information about the world that, say, science does. Yes, believing in God is useful to a point, but religion taken too seriously is, in some ways, like believing in Santa Claus—quaint if you're a child but unbecoming of an adult.

I am convinced this is a completely misguided approach to religion, and I did not want the stockbroker (or anyone else, for that matter) thinking this is what I had in mind—that my faith is an exercise in spiritual wishful thinking, the kind of delusion Karl Marx once called the “opiate of the people.” My comments to the stockbroker, then, were informed by a particular way of understanding Christianity, a way even many Christians have not fully grasped.

Here I need to ask you a rhetorical question. It's a question I don't want you to answer (I'll answer it for you), but one I want you to think about as if you did have to answer it. Here is that question: *What is Christianity?*

Some say Christianity is a religious system people follow. Others say it is a guide to living a fulfilling life or maybe a way of finding peace with God or maybe a system of ethical principles to live by. Some might say Christianity is not really a religion at all but rather a relationship with God or a relationship with Jesus. This way of putting it might be confusing to some, but I think I understand what those who say this are getting at.

These answers all have some truth to them as far as they go, I guess. The problem is, I do not think they go far enough. They are all too thin, in a certain sense. Each is a look at Christianity from the inside, so to speak, from the perspective of the Christian living out his or her individual beliefs or personal faith. That is certainly part of it, and I think these answers would have made complete sense to the stockbroker. But there is something missing.

The answer to the question “What is Christianity?” turns out to be

much bigger than any one of those things because it includes something important from the outside as well as the inside. The way Jesus understood religion was not simply as a private, spiritual view or as a subjective source of ethics or even as a personalized relationship with God. Jesus understood religion first from the outside, not from the inside.

Here is what I am getting at. The correct answer to the question "What is Christianity?" is this: *Christianity is a picture of reality.*² It is an account or a description or a depiction of the way things actually are. It is not just a view from the inside (a Christian's personal feelings or religious beliefs or spiritual affections or ethical views or "relationship" with God). It is also a view of the outside. It is a view of the world out there, of how the world really is in itself.

Put another way, Christianity is a worldview. The Christian view is not the only way of viewing the world, of course. It has competition. Every religion and every secular philosophy claims to represent reality in a true and accurate way. Indeed, every person has a view like this of some sort. Everyone has in his or her mind a story about the way the world actually is, even if they haven't thought about it much or worked out all the details.

This story-in-their-mind is what people are referring to when they say they have certain beliefs about things like meaning, value, purpose, and significance. Or they will say, "This is the way I look at things" or "This is what I think the correct view is" or "There ought to be a law about that" or "I don't think the government is taking this in the right direction" or "That was the right thing to do in that situation." Every statement like these is informed by an understanding of the way people believe the world actually is. It is their belief system. If they did not have a basic story in their minds, they would have a difficult time making any of the important decisions people are faced with in life.

In this sense, there is no difference between an atheist and a religious person. None. Each believes particular things to be true about the world. I am not using the word *believe* here like some people use the word *faith*, that is, a *mere* belief with no thought, rationale, or justification behind it. I do think that happens with religious people, and I also think that happens with atheists, but that is not what I'm talking about here.

A person's belief, in my sense of the word, is simply his view of some detail of the world that he holds to be accurate. That's all. And both scientists and saints alike have beliefs of this sort. There's nothing unusual going on here.

Now of course, just because someone believes things about the world does not mean they *know* their beliefs are true. That is something else entirely. But they still *think* their beliefs are true, otherwise they would not believe them. They would believe different things and think those things true instead.

Since everyone—religious person, atheist, scientist, skeptic—believes his beliefs are true, it has always struck me as odd when some have been faulted simply for thinking their views correct. They've even been labeled intolerant or bigoted for doing so. But what is the alternative? The person objecting thinks his own views correct as well, which is why he's objecting. Both parties in the conversation think they're right and the other wrong. Why, then, is only the religious person (usually) branded a bigot for doing so?

So, all of us have beliefs about the world we think are accurate. All of us have a worldview picture—at least a rudimentary one—forming in our minds, even if we are not consciously aware of it. Every religion tells a story of reality. Every philosophy and every individual outlook on life is a take on the way someone thinks the world actually is. There is no escaping it. These stories are meant to bring order to our beliefs, to explain the “pieces” of reality we encounter in life, whether big things or little things, important or inconsequential.

All worldviews are not equal, though. Some have pieces that seem to fit together (internally) better than others, and some have pieces that seem to fit reality (externally) better than others. If they are good stories—that is, if they explain many things, especially the most important things, in a way consistent with our normal encounters with the world—then we have more confidence the stories are accurate, which is just another way of saying the worldview is true, at least those parts that fit well.

CHAPTER 2

Puzzle

EVERY WORLDVIEW HAS FOUR ELEMENTS. They help us understand how the parts of a person's worldview story fit together. These four parts are called creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

Creation tells us how things began, where everything came from (including us), the reason for our origins, and what ultimate reality is like. *Fall* describes the problem (since we all know something has gone wrong with the world). *Redemption* gives us the solution, the way to fix what went wrong. *Restoration* describes what the world would look like once the repair takes place.

Put in personal terms, worldviews help us answer the basic questions each of us struggles with sooner or later in our lives if we pause to think about the really important things: Where did we come from? What is our problem? What is the solution? How will things end for us?

You might have noticed that these four words describing the elements of a worldview have a religious ring to them. There's a reason for that. Though more secular words might be substituted (I'll do that in a bit), I think it's important for you to see that since worldviews represent such a fundamental understanding of all of the important things about the world, a person's worldview is really a part of his religion, even if it doesn't include gods, temples, bibles, rituals, or the like. In this sense, even atheists have a religion, though they probably would not use that word to describe it.

Every worldview means to tell a story like this one, a story of reality.

It means to make sense of the way the world actually is—the world as we find it—not simply the world as we wish it to be.

I want you to see something else about this worldview picture. When you were younger you probably worked on puzzles. Maybe you still do. Puzzles are a good way to think about worldviews since they are made up of lots of individual pieces too. When the pieces are fit together properly, you're able to see the big picture clearly.

Of course, to get the picture precisely right you have to work with all the right pieces. For example, God and Jesus and Moses and the Law and grace and the cross and faith (and a whole bunch of other things) are all important pieces of the Christian puzzle. You can immediately see, I hope, that if you are missing pieces (if there are important parts you don't know about) or if you have pieces of other worldview puzzles mixed in by accident, you will not get an accurate sense of things. That can be a problem.

But here's the bigger difficulty. Dump a puzzle box at your feet and you'll see what the Christian puzzle looks like for most believers. It's a pile of pieces. They've never put the pieces of their puzzle together in an orderly way allowing them to see the big picture. As a result, they do not know if they are missing important pieces. They also do not know if there are pieces of other puzzles—bits of other worldviews—mixed in by accident that don't fit into their picture. Or they might get confused when other worldviews take some of the Christian pieces and try to fit them into their own worldview pictures.

Pieces from one puzzle usually cannot be mixed with pieces of another because they are made for different pictures. You can't take, for example, the unique value of human beings (a central piece of the biblical worldview and the foundation for human rights) and force fit it into the Hindu worldview. It will not work. There is no place for it to fit. They are different puzzles with different pieces.

In the same way, reincarnation makes sense in Hinduism but not in Christianity. Again, there is no place in the biblical view for that puzzle piece to fit. It's like trying to put a carburetor on a computer.

Both problems (missing pieces and wrong pieces) make it difficult for Christians (or anyone else, for that matter) to put the puzzle of Christianity

together correctly. Even with all the right pieces, few Christians have ever assembled their puzzle in an accurate way to make sense of the whole thing. As a result, lots of well-meaning, but untutored (and, therefore, gullible) Christians do not see reality clearly and have gotten into trouble.

So how do we figure out the way the pieces fit together properly? If you are a puzzle person, you know there's a trick. Though some consider it cheating, it's okay here. You look at the cover. Seeing the whole thing at once helps you know where the individual parts fit in. If you do not know what the big picture looks like beforehand, it will be much harder to assemble it from the parts.

So far, I have been saying Christianity is first and foremost a picture of reality, a view of the way the world is—a worldview. I've suggested a way of understanding what a worldview is like. It's like a picture puzzle you piece together. You need to have all the right pieces with no foreign pieces mixed in, and you need to put those pieces together properly to see the big picture clearly. I have also been using another way of understanding worldview. A worldview is like a story, and nowadays I think this is the best way to put it.

When you think about it, every story, if it is a good one, has four parts. It has a beginning that sets the stage, telling you who the main characters are and how the story gets rolling. Then something goes wrong. There is conflict that makes the story interesting. The main part of most stories tells how that conflict gets corrected, how the wrong gets fixed. That solution brings a final resolution—writers call it the *denouement*—where the parts of the plot resolve themselves in a satisfying ending (“They lived happily ever after”). Maybe you’ve noticed that the basic parts of a good story actually match the basic parts of a worldview: beginning (creation), conflict (fall), conflict resolution (redemption), and ending (restoration).

The Christian Story is like many other great stories in that it deals with the great issues all people struggle with and the great questions everyone asks. It's a story about peace shattered by rebellion, about love and betrayal, about self-sacrifice, and about redemption. All of our deepest aspirations, all

of our longings, all of our hopes and even our struggles—all of the conflicts in all of history are all tied to this story:

Put another way, Christianity is the Story of how the world began, why the world is the way it is, what role we play in the drama, and how all the plotlines of the Story are resolved in the end.

CHAPTER 3

True Story

NOW I WANT TO REVIEW a point I have already been making that is so important for you to understand, I want to explain it again from a different direction so you do not miss it.

The Christian Story starts out a long, long time ago, long before Jesus. How long ago is a matter of debate, but that does not concern us here. One thing that does concern us is this: The Christian Story is different from other stories in a significant way. This story does not start with the words, "Once upon a time." Why? Because this story is not meant to be understood as a fairy tale or a myth.

When my eldest daughter was young, she read *The Chronicles of Narnia*. After finishing the first book she asked me, "Papa, is the story about the wardrobe and Peter and Susan and Lucy and Edmund and the lion a true story?"

"No, it's not," I told her. "Some stories are true, and some stories are not true. The story about Narnia is fiction." (I did tell her, though, that some fictional stories like Narnia are actually *about* true stories, even though the stories themselves are not true.) The Christian Story, I was careful to point out, is not like the Narnia story. It isn't make-believe. It is a true story.

Now, when I say this story is a true story, I'm using the word *true* in its ordinary sense. I don't mean "true *for me*." I mean "true *to reality*." I mean the things the Story describes actually exist and the events in the Story really happened (or, in some places, are yet to happen).

This is the same as saying, as I did earlier, that Christianity is a picture

of reality. This is the Story of the way the world really is. That's the kind of story I'm telling. It's history, not fiction. This was the point I was trying to make with the stockbroker. I didn't want him to think the Story was my personal spiritual fantasy, my religious fairy tale, or my make-believe-to-make-me-feel-happy kind of story.

This point is important for another reason. One of our deepest questions about our world is "What went wrong?" We know the world is broken, but we wonder how that happened, and we want to fix it. Those two issues are related. Answer the first and you might be able to answer the second.

That's why a myth or a fairy tale simply will not do for the Christian Story. Make-believe accounts do not actually explain anything. They only illustrate problems in clever, imaginative ways. When a boy asks his father how he got the scar on his face, if his father begins with the words "once upon a time," the boy immediately knows his father is not giving him an answer to his question. Only a true-life experience can leave a true-life scar.

The world is wounded, this we know. Answering the question of how it got to be wounded requires more than a myth. It requires an accurate account of reality. This point about reality applies to every detail of the story I am telling. The narrative is history, and if it is not, it explains nothing.

So, I mean to be telling you the true Story of reality. Nowadays, however, there are many people who think this entire discussion is irrelevant because they think such a story cannot be told. They have heard that no story like this—no big story, no all-encompassing story—can ever be true (or at least *known* to be true, which amounts to the same thing). And some are tempted to believe it.

The reason, they say, is because it's hard to be confident we can know anything at all about the world "out there"—that is, about the way the world is *in itself* as opposed to our own personal *beliefs* about it. For them, everything is belief and nothing is knowledge. This is a view you'll encounter, ironically, at universities—places of higher education where you learn there is nothing you can actually know.

Does this view strike you as unusual? It strikes me that way. In fact, it strikes me as obviously false. Here's why. Put simply, there are lots of things we know, and we know that we know them. Reality has a way of getting our attention and teaching us about itself. This is amazingly simple to demonstrate.

A few years ago I was with my family in Washington, D.C., a wildly complex city laid out like a square wheel with broken spokes making an angular maze that is a nightmare to navigate. However, my family and I arrived at our various destinations and returned back safely to our hotel every evening, rarely getting off track. How did we do that in a world with no knowledge? We found our way using a remarkable little invention called a map.

Did you ever think about what takes place when you use a map? Maps represent a belief about what a piece of the world is like (Washington, D.C., in my case). There is a simple way to test to see if that belief is correct. We find our current location on the map, plot a course, then move out. If our beliefs are true (if the map is accurate), we arrive where we intended to go. If our beliefs are not accurate, we'll learn that soon enough.

Notice that perfection is not required in this enterprise. Sometimes we get it wrong, but even then we know we're wrong because of new, accurate information that shows us our error.

This little exercise repeats itself thousands of times a day, every day of our lives in the countless details we encounter as we navigate our world. Our beliefs about reality are like that map. We constantly test them to see if they match up with the world. When they do, we know our beliefs are true.

Every time we use a map or take a medicine or drive a freeway or move from bedroom to bathroom in the middle of the night, we prove that at least parts of the story of reality can be known. If not—if we couldn't know certain important things that are actually true about the world—we'd be dead in a day.

Of course, using a map to get to the D.C. zoo is not the same as figuring out the meaning of the universe. But it ought to put to rest the concern that truth is out of our reach. And if we can know many of the little things

(and we can), I don't see why we shouldn't be able to figure out some of the big things.

You can immediately see, though, why people who think there is no truth would never take the Christian Story seriously—at least, not as the kind of story it claims to be. If there really is no truth that matters (and that's the kind we've been talking about), then one story is as good as the next, and there are lots of other options that are easier and more appealing (in some ways) than the Christian Story.

So, the concern that there simply cannot be a true Story about reality is overrated. But there's a variation of this mistake I should warn you about.

It's simply not going to do any good dismissing our account of the world as "your truth" in favor of your own story called "my truth." Since believing something can't make it true (otherwise there'd be no difference between believe and make-believe), it makes no sense calling any belief a "truth" as if they were the same thing.

Confused talking leads to confused thinking. Some beliefs are true. Others are not. The difference matters. If a story is not accurate to reality, it's not any kind of truth at all, so it can never be *my* truth or *your* truth, even though we may believe it. It can only be our delusion, or our mistake, or our error, or whatever else you may want to call it. But it could never be our "truth." I hope that's clear.

This your-truth-my-truth move is just a less direct way of asserting there is no Story, only a bunch of individual stories with none any more reliable than the other, and we've already seen that this approach is not going to work.

If our Story is really true in the deep sense, then it ought to be obvious that other religion stories, taken as complete pictures of the world, are simply mistaken. This does not mean, of course, they are wrong at every point. That would be a foolish mistake for me to make. There are many individual things a religion might teach that are completely sound, as far as they go. I mean, rather, that if the Story is true, all other stories *taken as a whole* cannot be true as well. To say otherwise would also be a foolish mistake.

A man once told me I was probably one of those bigoted people who thought 90% of the world was wrong about their religion. I agreed with the 90% part, but I told him it had more to do with math than with bigotry.

Think about this. Some religions teach Jesus is the Son of God and others deny it. Fair enough. But is it not clear that somebody is right and somebody is wrong on that score? There is simply no getting around it.

The great monotheistic faiths understand God as a distinct, individual person, whereas some Eastern religions see God as the impersonal sum of everything all put together. Is it not clear that, if there is a God, both of these notions cannot be true about him at the same time? Clearly, massive numbers of people are mistaken on one side of this issue or the other.¹

When anyone dies, they *might* go to heaven, or they *might* go to hell, or they *might* be reincarnated, or they *might* disappear into nothing at all. But even a child can see they cannot do them all at the same time. Multitudes—the majority even—must be mistaken. Again, that's not bigotry. It's simple math.

And notice, I am not wasting our time by splitting hairs about inconsequentialities. No, I am speaking of the heart of things, the foundations, the deep structures, the most basic claims about reality that religions make.

So then, though it's the rage these days to say all religions are basically the same, it turns out not to be the case at all. What ought to strike us, rather, is how unlike each other they really are. When it comes to the most important things, each religion's picture of reality is quite different from the others' (that's what makes them *different* religions, after all). And those differences simply cannot be smoothed over by invoking, for example, naïve stories about blind men and elephants that do not really get to the heart of the matter.²

CHAPTER 4

Two Obstacles

CHRISTIANS HAVE A PROBLEM when they fail to understand their own Story. They are not able to answer the two objections most frequently raised about their beliefs. These two obstacles are so daunting for non-believers, they simply cannot take the Christian Story as anything more than an implausible tale, like yarns about unicorns, leprechauns, or North Pole elves. Here are the obstacles.

It is clear to most people that the world is not the way it ought to be. Something has gone terribly wrong, and everybody knows it. That's the first part of the first obstacle. The second part is this. If there were a God, and if he really were good, and if he really were powerful, then the world would be a different kind of place than the one we find.

A God who is both strong and good would prevent the mess we're in or, at least, would shield us so nothing harmful, difficult, or unpleasant would happen to us. This, I think, is a completely understandable impulse coming from a skeptic. If there really were a God, he would fix things or, more likely, would never let them get so bad in the first place.

Less understandable to me is that even Christians stumble over this same obstacle. They have been led to believe that if God were really a good God, and if they were truly good Christians, then they would be shielded from the hardships others endure, or (they may have been told) when hardships do come, Jesus would be their bridge over troubled waters, keeping them from harm. Instead, when they find themselves sinking in a flood of woes, they are caught by surprise. Then they wonder whether God was ever there to begin with.

Both confusions (the skeptic's and the Christian's) are based on a misunderstanding. As we will see, evil is not the problem for Christianity that people think it is because it is not foreign to the Story. It is central to it. It fits right in. In a certain sense, the entire Story is precisely about how the world went bad and how it gets fixed.

There is another misunderstanding I want to point out, something that seems never to occur to anyone regarding this first obstacle. First, note that the obstacle itself can be divided into two parts. The discovery that things are not right (first part) causes people to wonder if there really is a God (second part). The first part tells us about a problem. The second part tells us what people think they might properly *infer* from the problem. When the trains are running on schedule, it's likely because the person at the switchboard is doing his job. But when things consistently go awry, it's reasonable to ask if anyone is minding the controls at all.

What isn't obvious is that nothing is really solved by getting rid of God, though that is the standard move at this point. I say this because removing God from the equation, though understandable, does nothing to eliminate the problem that caused someone to doubt God's existence in the first place. God is gone, but the original problem remains. The world is still as broken. Atheism settles nothing on this matter.

What now is the atheist to do? Nothing has really changed. Things still are not the way they're supposed to be, so the atheist continues to be plagued with the same problem he started with. But given a Godless, physical universe, the idea that things are not as they should be makes little sense. How can something go wrong when there was no right way for it to be in the first place?

So first I am saying there is an obstacle raised by skeptics and Christians alike that is based largely on a misunderstanding about the problem of evil that I hope the unfolding Story will help resolve. And next I am saying that atheism—what at first seems like a reasonable response to the obstacle—ends up creating a serious problem of its own. When people do not understand how the Story deals with evil, they are going to stumble when they consider that issue.

They're going to stumble on another point as well. It is the second obstacle. That problem is tied to the question "If there is a heaven, how do I get there?"

To many, the Christian Story seems so narrow in light of today's sensibilities that it's almost suffocating. Only one way to heaven? That is nearly impossible for most people to take seriously. It's not only incredible; it borders on bigotry. As one bumper sticker states, "God is too big to fit into one religion," and those who think differently think too highly of themselves and their own beliefs. Does God really care about the details? After all, isn't he more interested in how a person behaves than in what he believes?

It might be helpful to note at this point that even though Christians are faulted for being small-minded and provincial in their view of a "tribal God who only cares for his own little group" (as one person put it), the "intolerant" narrow way was not an idea invented by them. The notion itself goes back to the ancient Hebrew prophets. It was, arguably, their chief concern for 1,500 years of the Story, captured notably in the first commandment God gave to his people.

In the Common Era, Christians promote the narrow view that Jesus is the only way precisely because Jesus himself was the author of it. He made the claim repeatedly, many times in many ways. Every disciple on record who was personally trained by Jesus to carry on after him delivered the same message: There is a narrow way to eternal life that few find, but a wide way to destruction that many follow. Indeed, *Christian* was not the label the followers of Jesus initially used of themselves. Rather, they called their group *the Way*, in light of Jesus' own claim.¹

Of course, some will quickly note that just because Jesus taught it does not automatically make it true, and they would have a point. But it does seem to make the narrow view more difficult to dismiss. Jesus of Nazareth is a person most people are inclined to take seriously—which is why they freely quote him when it suits their purpose.

But why would Jesus, of all people, say such a thing? Wasn't Jesus' main message about equality, fairness, social justice, loving our neighbors—*inclusion*, in a word, not *exclusion*?

It is fashionable these days to presume such things about Jesus, but those were not the reasons he came—at least not the reasons *he* gave. Jesus cared about those issues, no question, which is why we find them scattered here and there within his teaching, but they were not the heart of it, not according to him.

No, there is a reason why Jesus made this controversial claim about himself, and it had nothing to do with arrogance, bigotry, or small-minded exclusion—a kind of cruel trick played on unsuspecting people to guarantee their damnation. Rather, it had to do with the drama itself and is, ironically, tied directly to the first obstacle—what went wrong with the world.

As it turns out, the brokenness of the world and the unique role of Jesus are connected. The second solves the first. That's a main point of the Story. It's one thing I hope you will see, that the two most controversial aspects of Christianity turn out to make complete sense once you understand the Story's big picture.

CHAPTER 5

Story Line

WHEN YOU LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE, you don't start at the beginning of the dictionary. You start with common objects and frequently used phrases. You start with the basics and then build upon them.

People wanting to learn about God sometimes start at the beginning of the Bible and read through to the end, expecting they will be able to separate the main things from the secondary things. They think this will make everything clear, but that method almost never works. A better approach is to start with the basic, foundational concepts and build on them. First, get the Story's basic outline in your mind and then go from there.

So let me give you the backbone—the plot line—of the Christian Story. It tells the most important things that happen in the order they take place and consists of five words: God, man, Jesus, cross, resurrection (here I mean the final resurrection at the very end of the Story). That's the big picture. It is both the storyline and the timeline, the beginning (God) to the end (resurrection).

Do you see the logical order of these five elements? Our story starts with God. He created everything from nothing, including the most valuable thing in all creation: man. But something went terribly wrong and human beings got themselves into a lot of trouble. So God initiated a rescue plan. He entered the world he created by becoming a human being, just like us—the man named Jesus. To rescue us from our problem, Jesus did something utterly unique that culminated on a cross. How people respond to what he did will determine what will happen to them at the final event of history, the resurrection.

Notice, you have all the parts of a good story: beginning, conflict, conflict resolution, ending. You also have all the pieces of a complete worldview: creation, fall, redemption, restoration.

The whole story takes hundreds and hundreds of pages to tell. It's probably the longest story ever written. But I'd like to tell you the basics of the Story quickly. In a sense, I want to show you the puzzle's cover—the big picture of the Christian worldview—so you never get lost in the details again.

I have said the Christian Story has been frequently misunderstood. But the basics are not that hard. You just have to start at the right place. You have to start at the beginning, with the foundation.

So now I want to tell you that Story. I want to give you the big picture of Christianity. I want to tell you the Story of Reality.

