

New Testament: Romans - Revelation

Introduction (7)

- Jigsaw – picture on the box
- What's the picture on the box of the Bible?
- Always need to interpret what we read in the light of the whole.
- Remember, no chapters, no verses.
- Wouldn't read a letter from a loved one by picking a paragraph from a bit of it!
- So tonight, we'll remind ourselves of the very big picture, establish the scene on the part we are looking at then have a look at some of the pieces.

Trinity of love (8)

- Created plants to show us his abundant, lavish provision (Consider the lilies...)
- Created the animals to show the more than care (not a sparrow falls...)
- Created the angels to protect, guard and woo us to the King...
- Created us to be recipients and givers of that divine love – to love not only self, but one another and God himself – and to reach out to the vulnerable (animal kingdom) and nurture it and build in the whole world a paradise founded on that love.
- Uniquely created in His image – with the stamp of love
- Not driven by instinct like the animals
- But with the capacity to lovingly choose beyond mere instinct – to overcome survival of the fittest, me first, to a loving others first, self-control, God-like behaviour rooted and empowered by love
- Some angels turned love to themselves rather than outwards towards mankind...
- Humanity followed the pattern of those angels, choosing to look inwards rather than outward, to love self rather than others, to be god rather than be loved by God.
- Thus is established the prince of this world... and death came.

God's response (10)

- He could have destroyed – He demonstrates this through the flood
- He could have ignored man as man had ignored him – could have loved self rather than others. The story of Babel shows that he is attentive and active, mitigating the effects of our evil choices
- Or he could seek to redeem the wayward bride and win her back. The prophecy to Eve and the story of the flood point to this: Salvation through a righteous man lifted high above the earth on something made of wood...

The framework of love

- Love requires relationship
- Relationship is based on choice – must be morally free, no imposed conditioning
- Choice must result in different outcomes – must ultimately be justice
- But consequences of choices must be deferred to avoid conditioning – a season of grace
- Which means it won't always be clear – making right choices will be a matter of faith

The OT (7)

The Blue Peter approach:

- Because faith is at the heart of loving choices, God looks for someone with faith and finds Abraham (Rom 3:20)
- Abraham isn't better than anyone else, he isn't righteous, but he has the seeds of choices that God can use. So God takes his faith and 'counts it as righteousness'
- Out of this man he chooses to build a community with whom He will relate as if the fall had not happened. He will give them a place to live and will bless them with his loving presence, protection and provision – in order that everyone else can see a worked example of what it could be like. In this way all nations, all people will be drawn back into loving relationship.
- But they won't be distinctively different 'holy' Instead of being remade to be like God, they want to be like other nations 'give us a king'.
- Time and again God gives them distinctives – a land of their own, a unique culture, a law that sets them apart, prophets and judges and kings who will point them back to their call and to their God. But time and again they fail to look beyond their own narrow interest and far from being a light to the world, they simply add to the darkness and confusion.
- Eventually it would lead to 10 of the 12 tribes being lost completely – God confirming them in their choice – they chose to be like other nations, now they are so like other nations that they are indistinguishable from them – gone forever.
- The two remaining tribes are absorbed into other empires but some remain distinctive – Daniel & friends – to the extent that 400 years later, other Magi understand the signs and go to seek for the one 'born to be king of the Jews'

Gospels / Acts (3)

Now God will come Himself – as our Last Adam (Php 2). He will reverse the effects of first Adam's choices, breaking open a way back to unhindered relationship with God. He will establish a new community of witness that will distinctively represent the God as they live together in loving unity. More, it will be an empowered community who can put that love into action by defeating the enemy and seeing the life of God break into the hardest of places. Light in the darkness...

Revelation (5)

Ultimately God will confirm individuals and nations in the choices they have made. It will become clear that good choices leads to life and that ungodly choices lead to death. Gradually ambiguity will be removed – first God's hand of mitigation will be withdrawn, evil will have freer rein – increased suffering, disease, plague, disasters, tyranny – the full and immediate consequences of evil choices. Then, even the mitigating effect of God's people will be removed leaving only those who have made irreversible choices for evil and no possible ambiguity about its consequences. Then the reverse. For a thousand years Jesus will rule 'with an iron rod' – no choice but to do what is right – totally focussed on his majesty, power and right. Neither is what God wants nor is either what he purposed in creation. So finally, a new heaven and a new earth, a wedding feast and that most intimate of relationships; the love between the husband and wife in a setting absent from suffering and all the consequences of evil choices – because the participants have demonstrated their desire for this through the free choices made during their previous life. Choices made possible by Jesus and empowered by the Spirit.

Letters (7)

- As well as pointing to this meta narrative, the authors of the letters have one goal in mind: To encourage the church to understand and be effective in its role as a community of witness and a community of transformation.
- It requires a personal knowledge of God's love (1 Cor 13) so that we know what God is like
- That requires us to change our mind from our preconceptions about self, purpose, God and the world (Rom 12)
- It drives us away from the fallen view that my priority is me to a healthy view based on the Father's love for me that gently but persistently pushes me towards loving him and others.
- It eradicates the motivation of fear, releases me from hurt and bitterness and in becoming like him, I bear the family stamp (Gal. 5 fruit).
- Moreover an understanding of what death did to me, what the enemy did through others, engages a healthy anger towards the enemy – strengthening my resolve to be an effective warrior against him.
- It provokes me to intercession, it emboldens me ask and develop the gifts I receive – that through them I might 'destroy the works of the evil one'
- The urgency and importance of the need make me cast aside pettiness, unforgiveness, self-interest in order that we might be in unity, the body of Christ (2 Cor)
- It insists on action – to preach to those who don't know, to give to the poor, to fight for injustice, to give home to the homeless, friendship to the lonely, a voice to the marginalised.
- It requires us to know God and therefore to know his word (Col 3:16, 2 Tim 3:16) It was this lack of knowledge that the enemy first used in Eve – 'did God say?'. And knowing his word, we must protect it from being hijacked or falsified. The meta narrative we have learned, we need to share, to teach, to remind ourselves of.
- In short, we are to be like God; two / three in unity, distinctly loving each other but open and inviting others to come and join us

Book by Book (10)

Type	Book	What	Famous bits
The Church	Corinthians	How should church work? Different gifts, one body - in Love	Role of women, gifts of the Spirit, love... does not insist on its own way
	Galatians	Don't die living like the world!	Fruit of the spirit
	Ephesians	The destination is arriving at the image of God. The destiny is guaranteed for all those who have faith in Christ. Our choices affect the route.	Armour of God, Relationships
	Philippians	Last Adam comes fully as God by right but lays aside those rights to become like first Adam	Have no anxiety, focus on what is excellent, servant king
	Colossians	Last Adam again; the fullness of God in Christ, yet for our sake became nothing...	let the word of Christ dwell in you richly
	James	Ok, so now you get it, now you believe – well let it transform you life. Be a whole person, not a divided one.	doublemindedness, faith without works is dead
	Peter	In the light of what you now know of God's love, live like Him.	In suffering we share in Christ & His victory
	John	God is love. Everything else flows from that. That's the light.	Love one another, confess your sins
	Jude	It's a battle, know your enemy, love your God.	Doxology
Doctrine	Romans	Israel & Jacob as pictures of law & grace. The work of the Cross	More than conquerors, all things work together...
	Hebrews	The new priesthood, Jesus the fulfilment. True faith. We are the new community of witness.	since we are surrounded... men of faith.. God has spoken
Individuals	Timothy	Godly leadership, the work of the Word	All scripture....
	Titus	Leadership matters – do it!	
	Philemon	Loving God means loving others. In the words of Bono 'love one another is not a piece of advice'	Take your penitent slave back, he is your brother
End Times	Thessalonians	Living now in the light of end times practicalities	
	Revelation	John's mailmerge letter to 7 churches explaining how the story ends...	Letters to churches, horsemen, new heaven, the Lamb