

Have you ever tried to put together a puzzle but you didn't know what the final picture looked like? The larger the puzzle, the harder it is to do. It takes time. You start with the obvious pieces – the edges, pieces that have similar colours – and you work your way to finishing the overall puzzle. But completing the puzzle takes a lot longer when you don't know the overall picture and where pieces might fit.

For some people, they give up after a while. The puzzle may feel too complicated. Some puzzles have pieces that fit in various places correctly, but without the overall picture, it's hard to tell if that's the right spot.

The same is true with the Bible. Some people have grown up learning about the individual stories of the Bible – Adam & Eve, Noah, David & the giant, Daniel & the lions' den, Jesus calming the storm, Paul's transformation on the Damascus road. The stories seem interesting but unrelated to one another.

So when the Bible is full of stories that seem interesting and we're not sure how they relate to one another, we may start with individual pieces but putting them together in the wrong way. For example, it is good to get help with anger, depression, or finances, but if we start by coming to the Bible like it is Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth, we will make the Bible primarily about us.

Still others use the stories of the Bible to have heroes to follow. Be brave like Daniel! Slay the giants in your life like David! And suddenly the Bible is about morals – dos and don'ts. But then we discover our heroes are just as flawed as we are, and their mistakes and sins loom larger than life.

But what would happen if we approached the Bible on its own terms – a single book made up of many individual books, telling one larger story? And what might the implications be for us?

First, let's consider what happens when we approach the Bible on its own terms. In Luke's gospel account, we are told the story of what happened to two disciples who learned the big picture of the Bible story. (READ Luke 24:13-35)

Three things happen when we approach the Bible on its own terms.

### **Know the Bible Story (vv. 19-24)**

On the Sunday of the resurrection, as Cleopas and his friend are travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus, taking the 7 mile walk (probably returning from the celebration of Passover), Jesus joins the two men. But they do not recognize him (v. 16). As they chat about recent events, the two are surprised that Jesus the stranger doesn't seem to be aware of the latest 24 hour news cycle. So they fill him in. This great prophet, Jesus, was doing great deeds – miracles, casting out demons, teaching with authority. They were hoping that Jesus would restore Israel, throwing off the power of Rome, and making Israel great

again. But Jesus was crucified, laid in a tomb, and then was gone. In fact, some women had a vision that he was alive. When they went to the tomb, he wasn't there.

Now before we wonder how these disciples could be so clueless, there are many things we need to recognize. First, they didn't have the full Bible story. But they knew the history of Israel, the expectation that God would make his people great by his deliverance, that there would come a Prophet as Moses had foretold, a great Prophet with God's words in his mouth (see Deut. 18:18). They were even celebrating and remembering God's great deliverance where he had brought Israel out of Egypt and freed them from slavery by his mighty miracles (the Passover). But they didn't understand that when this Prophet would come, he would die as the Passover Lamb to free his people from the slavery of sin and bring them to the Promised Land. They didn't understand that this Passover Lamb would rise again and defeat the power of the Law, sin, and death.

In other words, if you only know parts of the Bible story and don't piece them all together, the Bible can become a muddled mess. Why does the Bible spend so much time reflecting on the Exodus story where God brought Israel out of Egypt, through the waters and wilderness, and into the Promised Land? And how does that relate to me? What about all those laws they were given in the Old Testament? Why do we follow some and not others? Are we just selective in what we want to obey, or is there a bigger reason why we can eat bacon and wear cotton/poly blends? So we need to know and understand the story of the Bible.

### **See the Glory of Christ (vv. 25-27)**

But knowing the story of the Bible doesn't mean that we will interpret the story correctly. It's a big story, and some people put a lot of emphasis on different parts. Some people put the emphasis on Israel, just as these two disciples did. Others put the emphasis on the Church. But what did Jesus put the emphasis on? (READ vv. 25-27).

There, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus teaches them how the entire Old Testament was a Messianic book. From the beginning – the books of Moses – to the end – the Prophets – Jesus showed them how the story wasn't first and foremost a story about the restoration of Israel, but about how God would send his deliverer. The promised serpent crusher that Eve had been promised had come. The promise to Abraham being a great nation was being fulfilled. The expected Prophet Moses spoke about had arrived. The Passover Lamb had come. The Tabernacle of God was now in their midst. The Goal of the Law had been realized. The sinless Priest who offers the perfect sacrifice had finished his work. The Suffering Servant described by Isaiah was here. The Son of David, the great King of kings had come.

The Bible is a book about God's great rescue plan, and all throughout there are shadows, whispers, and hints of how it will happen. And Jesus makes it plain here that we ought to read the Bible with Jesus lenses. We ought to be reading the story with the expectation that Jesus is whispered in every page. There are good reasons there are long lists of

names in genealogies. The laws of God detailed in the Old Testament are there for a purpose.

Too often, we approach the Bible as though the 66 books are individual books, and the stories have been strung together like a bunch of pearls on a necklace – all beautiful and glorious, but unrelated to one another. Jesus teaches us here that the entire story of the Bible is culminating in a revelation of who he is! For this reason, Paul can say that all things are summed up in Christ (Eph. 1:10). From beginning to end, the Bible is the story of God’s deliverance of God’s people by God’s Son into God’s place. So we want to see how great this story and our God is in revealing Jesus over and over to us.

### **Delight in the Living God (vv. 28-35)**

As the disciples arrive in Emmaus, they plead with Jesus to stay and have a meal. When Jesus blesses and breaks the bread. And in a moment, the lights turn on. They understand. They see Jesus!

And as they see the glory of Jesus, they say, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” And here is the effect of seeing Jesus: joy in our hearts. Delight in a God who is not dead, but alive. Wonder at how God has taken 66 books and woven them together through 40 human authors to communicate one story. And the more we understand the original story, the more clearly we see that the shadows are reflecting back from Christ into the Old Testament. We hear more clearly that the whispers of the Old Testament are the loud shouts of the New Testament. And so our hearts should burn as we learn the story of the Bible because we see how God has woven together a complex tapestry, beautifully displayed on the surface, but even more wonderfully designed than we could imagine.

So understanding the Bible story will help us to see the glory of Christ and delight in our living God. But there are other implications for us as well.

First, knowing the Bible story will help us to delight in the gospel of our salvation. This is Paul’s point in the book of Galatians. There are those who have come and put the Bible story together differently in Galatia, and this created confusion among Christians. Paul goes back, traces the story of God’s promise to Abraham (Gal. 3:6-9), the later signs of the covenant, the fulfillment of the Law in the Gospel (3:10-28), the gift of Sonship (4:1-7), giving of the Spirit (chapter 5), all so that the Galatians would not turn to another gospel (1:6) – a gospel with many demands but no power – so that they would know the power of the Spirit in their lives. Because the Galatians were being taught parts of the Bible story in a mixed up order, Paul says that their souls are in danger! So he spends an entire letter straightening out the story of the Bible so that they would have peace, mercy, and grace (6:16-18).

Second, knowing the Bible story will strengthen faith and obedience. In Hebrews 11, the writer spends an entire chapter recounting the people of faith throughout the Old Testament. He holds up example after example of people who finished well, who resisted

temptation, and who battled forward. And when he comes to chapter 12, he tells us that these heroes are a cheering crowd along the side of our marathon of life, calling to us as we run to keep enduring and not give up, to stay light and nimble and not weighed down by sin. And why can we do that? Because just as they looked to Christ, so we also ought to look to him. And the reason we can look to him is that he has written our story and is perfecting our story. In other words, as we know the story of the Bible, we see ourselves more clearly and we see Christ more clearly, writing our story, perfecting our story, and bringing us all the way home. So we can run in this life with endurance, even when we're out of breath and feel like we want to give up.

And finally, knowing the Bible story will strengthen our witness. If we return back to Emmaus, the two disciples had their eyes opened and had to return to Jerusalem to share this good news. Things now made sense! The dots were connected! The picture was clear! This was also true for Paul – when he came into Athens in Acts 17, he saw statues to various gods. They were so inclusive as a society that they even had a statue to an unknown god. So what does Paul do? He goes from creation, to the fall of humanity, to God's rescue plan in Jesus, and traces the story of the Bible for them to give a compelling reason why they should believe. And we need this help in our day. People accuse Christians of picking and choosing what they believe from the Old Testament. There is good reasons for why some Old Testament laws endure and some have come to completion. God was not random. And God is not a killjoy. His laws are in a context, and they were to point to life in Christ. And through this sermon series, we will strengthen our witness for Christ.

As the pieces of the puzzle come together, what we discover is that the Bible paints a glorious picture – from beginning to end – of Jesus. And as we know him, the puzzle of the Bible becomes less of a puzzle and more a beautiful picture of our Saviour. Every story whispering his name. Every shadow a reflection of something better to come. And we will find that the story of everything is a story that has a place for you and me as we know, see, and delight.