

114 Good news, bad news

I have really begun to see the Old Testament in a whole new light [113], and to see how stashed full it is of God's love. So, if this is what Jesus was teaching, it's not surprising that they hung on his every word. Then, when Jesus died and rose again, pennies began to drop all over Jerusalem, and Judea, and to the ends of the earth, as this amazing realisation (good news) came, that Jesus, from this tiny town called Nazareth, was actually the focus of the whole of the Old Testament. That God is restoring and renewing people. How truly amazing and wonderful and life-changing!

That has explained to me something that I've wondered about these past few years: how and why did the gospel spread like wild-fire, such that people were even willing to die for Jesus?

But why (in UK at least) is there so little wild-fire?

Well, in Jesus' day, people were being told by the "church" (the religious leaders) that the Bible (the OT) teaches that they were miserable sinners and that if they didn't "do it right" they would face God's wrath and condemnation.

And guess what? In the 21st century, we "preach the gospel", i.e. we tell people over and over that they are miserable sinners and that unless they "believe in Jesus", they will – not to put too fine a point on it – be condemned by God and go to hell.

Good news?! Gospel?!

Think about it educationally, if nothing else. How do you get a child to grow, develop, reach their full potential, become a fully rounded person? Well, it's important, first and foremost, that they should realise that, in and of themselves, they are useless and hopeless, and that unless they are willing to accept the help that is offered, they are condemning themselves to a fruitless life.

No, we wouldn't do that in education, so why do we think it's Christian good news?! Well, surely it's because that's what the Bible teaches, isn't it? But are you sure? Well, if so, then it's hardly surprising that the fire has gone out!

But *has* the fire has gone out?!

No! It certainly hasn't! Not for me, not for my local church, not for many others that I've been talking to! And, thankfully, we're very much not alone. It feels as if there's a tide arising that sees God as accepting, welcoming, restoring, renewing, redeeming, loving...

But stop! Isn't this all just wishy-washy wishful thinking?! Are we getting away from the true teaching of the Bible? Are we losing the sinfulness of sin? Are we becoming liberal anything-goes people?

No! In fact, I hope and believe that we're becoming MORE biblical. I've certainly *never* spent so much time studying my Bible than I have of late. What I think and hope we've done is started to look at the Bible more as Jesus looked at the Old Testament, and what a glorious view it is too!

More of this ever-expanding panorama anon.

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