

139 God's Trojan horse ploy

Three ladies are all interested in analysing human behaviour, one in America, one in Bolivia and one in China. Each has heard that the others are experts in the field and want to compare ideas, but the American only speaks English, the Bolivian Spanish and the Chinese lady Chinese.

To make matters worse, they can only communicate (let's suppose) by sending emails, i.e. only written messages – plus of course they each have to use translators.

So that's three different people from entirely different cultures, A, B and C, using three different languages, through translators, and they are trying to communicate about life-important matters involving thoughts, feelings and ways of expressing oneself, using only written words.

Yeh, right! Like that's going to work?!

Compare that with how God is going to communicate life-important matters to people of different cultures, different languages and in different times in history (over four thousand years+), also given the vast increase in the span of human knowledge.

As I've rehearsed in my thoughts here before, God spoke to one bloke, Abram, in his time and culture, and said (to the effect that), "I want you to know what I'm *really* like – not at all what you think I'm like! And through you I want you to spread the message of love around the globe."

Over the next 1600 years, God talked to different people, and got them to write down words that would help people know what God is *really* like (the Old Testament).

Then, after another 400 years came God's masterstroke. You can find out what God is *really* like by meeting the actual person – God, standing right there in front of you, doing things, saying things and showing you what God is *really* like.

Great! Problem solved ... well, sort of.

Only a relatively small number of people were able to meet God (Jesus) face to face, so God got a few people to write down (yet more) words to tell us what Jesus (God) was like, what he said, what he did and how he related to people.

Great! Problem solved ... well, sort of.

Those words (to add to those in the OT) were written down, but in languages that we don't speak, in a culture that we don't understand. Yes, the Bible is helpful, very helpful – indeed, we'd be lost without it – but it has to be (interpreted and then) translated and interpreted.

But try putting four Bible translations side by side from Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses and two very different mainstream Christian traditions and see how they compare! ("Ah yes, but 'they' translated the Bible on the basis of wrong theology!", whoever 'they' happens to be.)

One surprising thought: Even before the New Testament was written down, the knowledge of what God is *really* like spread rapidly and effectively? How could it?! Does 2 Cor 3:2,3 help?

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

So God's plan for communicating this vital message of what God is *really* like is to use people like you and me – as a sort of Trojan horse. God wants to dwell inside us, and we then go out amongst people and, by the way we live and the kind of love-filled people we are, we will be communicating what God is *really* like. Really?! Help!

So we desperately need to build up our relationship with the Father, so that the image we bear is at least a *little bit* like what God is really like!

But we still need know what God is trying to say through the Bible, but maybe asking “How did **Jesus** know what God was trying to say through the **Old Testament**?” will help.

We study it, of course, and we ask other people (using commentaries, maybe) what they think God was trying to say. But my thinking (and is this what Jesus thought?) is that we must get to know the *person* behind the Bible. Jesus knew that Person – his heavenly Father – so when he read the Old Testament, he was able to discern which bits showed the true nature of the Father, and which bits were either cultural distortions or misunderstandings of the authors.

So to check out *the word of God* (the Bible) we need to set it alongside what we know of *the Word of God (Jesus)*. So we need to get to know the Person, better and better and better.

Finally, here's an illustration of checking our Scripture interpretation against the Person we know, and this is actually what triggered today's outpouring. I was reading Col. 3:6 about the wrath of God (a topic I find difficult), so I looked at the commentary notes in my NIV Study Bible and it hit me like a sledgehammer (negatively, I mean). Here are the commentator's words put into the mouth of Jesus. See if you think it sound like the Jesus you know...

*And Jesus said to them, “My loving heavenly Father is **unalterably opposed to sin and will invariably make sure that it is justly punished.**”*

OK, I have more questions than answers, but if we (a) study our Bible for all it's worth and (b) work towards knowing God better, then (c) by being who we truly are (a sinner loved desperately by God), we will communicate to those around us that God loves them desperately; God doesn't want to punish them but to steer them away from self-centred lives (a.k.a. sin) into Jesus-centred lives (joy and peace and love and justice and compassion and...)

May God grant you real joy in your relationships, both with God and with others, and may we, together, shine like stars in the universe!

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