

147 Changing our minds (Part II)

One question that has constantly been nagging at me over these past three years is how the blazes did those tiny few disciples explode into a worldwide movement? And so rapidly!

Yes, there was a massive messianic expectation among the Jews (as you would expect, being under Roman domination), but they were looking for a military, smiting solution, whereas the revolution that occurred was a non-violent, enemy-loving solution.

The Romans and the smiting-hungry Jewish leaders (two sworn enemies, remember) joined forces and directed the full weight of their fear-based domination onto one man. But Jesus, by submitting to their violence, triumphed over them!

Even more amazingly, the Romans and the smiting-hungry Jewish leaders joined forces with the *spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly realms*. But Jesus, by submitting to their violence, triumphed over them. Brilliant, just brilliant!

Now I know why the Good News exploded!

And just look what happened to my namesake. He went around imprisoning and killing Jesus' followers, and yet suddenly, there he was, willing to endure suffering in order to promote Jesus' teachings. How, what, why?!

He changed his mind.

I'm guessing that he would have had way more understanding of the Scriptures¹ than the other disciples – he was zealous in his Bible study. And yet there he is, a short while later, travelling the known world, preaching and teaching Jesus' message of hope and joy and release from the slavery of sin and triumph over the forces of evil.

How, what, why?!

Go back a step. Remember the big picture of God's overall plan.^[145] God's got a world full of people who think he's a smiting-God needing propitiating. God gradually tries to tell them – and they get it to some extent – but those who wrote the Scriptures that were available to Paul did still think of him as a smiting-God.

Paul then encountered enemy-love personified, non-violent victory over the forces of evil, and a true and final exodus – freedom from the slavery of sin.

I feel with Paul, I really do. I can see him getting more and more excited as he reread the Scriptures and saw that there, hidden just beneath the surface, God had placed 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'.

I'm not surprised Paul couldn't quite control his writing skills in order to write in short coherent sentences. It all just came tumbling out. He was just so excited by what he had discovered.

¹ I'm guessing that is why he wrote so much more of the NT than the others – I'd never thought of that before.

And he found it by being willing to start from scratch and put aside what he had always been taught and reinterpret the Scriptures in terms of Jesus' teaching, Jesus' example, Jesus' own use of the Scriptures – the same God-inspired Scriptures, but they needed reinterpreting.

Like Paul, I studied the Scriptures for years (almost 50 years, drat it!), and I thought I knew what was what. Again like Paul, I tried to persuade people to follow my (version of) faith, but I wasn't happy. I somehow knew that being a Christian was about having a relationship with God, but it didn't feel like something I could put my heart and soul into. It does now!

Praise God!

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