

228 The way God works

As I've said before, I like to see patterns in things I'm studying – it helps me get my head around it, understand it and remember it, and recently I've seen a pattern in God's relationship with humankind, and I pictured it like this:^[225]

Totally ideal	Good but flawed	4 BC – AD 30	Good but flawed	Totally ideal
<i>Gen 1</i>	Old covenant (OT)	<i>Jer 31:31ff</i> –>	New covenant (NT)	<i>Rev 21/22</i>

Now, whatever your view of the early chapters of Genesis, however literally or figuratively you choose to read it, I believe its main purpose is to help us understand not the 'how' but the '**why**'. God's creation is definitely good – God doesn't make rubbish – but while Genesis tells us that we got it very wrong, and still do, I can't accept that humans are in any sense fundamentally evil.

Also, any reading of Genesis can hardly avoid seeing that God's system is based on 'trust' or 'faith' – which is true of any relationship – and trust involves working with God, not on our own.

Another pattern I see is that, for God, humankind is a work in progress: from cavemen to warring tribes to (hopefully!) societies cooperating for mutual benefit. That's God's plan anyway, and although there have been many setbacks, that must be something God wants, right? And how important is that for 2023, on a global scale!

As we've rehearsed over many articles, God only ever had one plan – to bring blessing to the whole of humankind – and it started around 2000 BC with Abraham. God is the ultimate entrepreneur, starting with one man, which became one community, which God wanted to be a pattern and example to the rest of the world.

But it only worked because Abraham trusted God.

And thinking about trust, I was very struck in a carol service last night by the preacher pointing out that Jesus *needed* his fellow humans; he was totally dependent on Mary and Joseph – talk about trust! God trusts **us**! We have to work with God on the overall plan to bring blessing to all of humanity. Really? Must we? Isn't it much easier just to think about 'me and my salvation', and the salvation of my family and a few friends. Why do we have to worry about the bigger picture?

Sadly, Christians *thought* they were working God's big-picture-plan in the days of the colonialist expansion of Christianity, when we imposed western patterns of worship on societies and cultures that were totally different from ours. And at the same time we took their resources.

Where is this rambling thought progression taking me?! I think it's to try to see God's big picture, which is difficult for those of us brought up with the kind of Christianity that was really just about me and my salvation, and about me getting away from this messy world to a happy heaven.

I hope some of the above makes sense to someone.

Happy Christmas!

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