

297 The Good News: Rebellion to Restoration

Today, I want to try to put into words (my usual 500) the truly amazing Good News that I've found this past six years. I'll mainly be drawing on Derek Flood's (to me) mind-and-heart-expanding Healing the Gospel.

This is not a tract for those who haven't yet met Jesus; it's me expressing why I'm so happy, and why I no longer feel any need to apologise for what I believe.

You might spot loopholes in my arguments here, but please bear with me, and maybe talk to me; you and I can then get closer to God together.

After reading it, you might think, 'Yes, but how?!' Food for more articles, I think!

OK, let's get started.

Ready, steady, go...

However you read the early chapters of Genesis, it tells us that God loves people and has provided a haven where we can live in harmony; harmony with God within that haven.

But it's not going too well, to say the least, and God gets really cross about it: God's wrath is directed towards people who deliberately hurt others (Rom 1), but he's also very cross with people who have a relationship with God, and yet who stand in judgment over others (Rom 2).

Because God loves us, he is also very unhappy when people are suffering – whether that's due to sin, sickness and death, or through the structures that humans have set up.

God has a very long-term plan to re-educate humans away from the cringing fear of 'the gods' who will crush you soon as look at you. God explains – and eventually shows us personally – that God wants nothing better than to totally restore us now, to that haven, and will one day totally restore everything.

God starts from where people are – where Abraham was – with the idea of sacrifice. OK, we know (certainly post-Jesus) that God *already* loves us massively, and so sacrifices can't be aimed at 'making God love us', so what were they for?

God's aim was for sacrifice to be an outward sign that would effect an inward healing, i.e. to restore our relationship with God and each other. But at times, God got really cross and said, 'I hate your sacrifices!' because their lives weren't changing for the better – it was mere outward show, with no inward change.

Through the blood of the sacrifices, God was washing away people's sin, renewing, forgiving and restoring them... but then they sinned again – like painting the Forth Bridge. But Hebrews explains how God provided the one single ultimate sacrifice: Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that defeated the evils of sin and death, once and for all. Not just personal sin, but *all* sin; and not just sin, but also sickness and death – he died to restore us. (Rom 3, esp. 25,26, Rom 5)

And Jesus' death defeated the powers who promote those evils. (Col 2)

Hebrews contrasts the sacrifices – OT: people provided the sacrifices and God effected the change in people's hearts (washed away their sin) – NT: *God* provided the sacrifice and God (Jesus) *was* the sacrifice – the ultimate willing self-giving sacrifice. It wasn't the nails that held Jesus on the cross, it was Jesus' (God's) love. But both sacrifices, OT and NT, are for our sanctification, to heal us, change us, restore us, to make us new, right now!

God cleanses us through Jesus' sacrificial death; so we can then be agents of God's love in the world. God isn't planning to take us away from this evil world ('to heaven'); rather we're here to work with God in changing this world *now*, and God promises to bring heaven (God's domain) finally and fully to earth one day. What a glorious prospect!

Let's get working, folks! (Rom 12, 'living sacrifice')