

351 Fake or Fortune?

Sue and I love this TV programme: someone owns a painting they think could be by a famous artist, but could it be a fake? One thing we've learnt is the importance of the frame, which can offer important clues. And in general terms the frame in which a painting is set can be crucial: switch the frames round between an old master, a Victorian piece and something modern and they would look ridiculous.

Today's glorious artwork is the death and resurrection of Jesus and all it achieved. The frame is: **Genesis to Revelation, the wrong choices that Adam and Eve made and the final judgement where God will sort out the mess we've created. What God did in and through Jesus enables me and you to reach that heavenly future, at our death or when Jesus returns.**

From my reading (esp. Tom Wright) and thinking and writing, I now think this *frame* is a fake! The artwork is genuine, but I'm guessing that the frame dates to the Medieval period. I don't believe that Peter or Paul or other early church leaders would even recognise it.

So I'm searching for the original frame; maybe it's something like this?

Heaven isn't a place – well, it sort of is: it's the domain where God is.

God is loving and creative and creates relationship-based creatures.

And God creates a place to **come** and relate to those creatures.

Relationship isn't relationship unless it involves choices – which can go horribly wrong!

God has a plan; God **comes** to a person who is willing to trust/have faith.

'All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.' (blessing = God's presence = heaven?)

Israel is then to be God's **servant** through whom God can **come** and bless the whole earth.

Israel alternately gets it vaguely right, then horribly wrong.

God **comes** and dwells in the tabernacle (so tread warily).

God provides ten vital relationship pointers.

We/they make wrong choices; God provides the Torah to help.

God gives them a king. ('Everyone else has a king!' but was it a good idea?)

God provides a place to dwell – the temple. ('Everyone else has a temple!' a good idea?)

Torah and prophets point to a special '**coming**' – the Messiah, God's ultimate **servant**.

God **comes** to earth in person, in Jesus.

Jesus is God's **servant** – a completely faithful **servant**.

Through his life and non-violent death, Jesus defeats evil, and rises from death.

God *comes* to earth as the Holy Spirit fills (overflows!) the hearts of believers.

God's presence (heaven) now *comes* into the hearts of his faithful **servants** (us).

God will *come* to earth fully and finally; God will restore everything.

Something like that, anyway.

Maybe we need to take the gospel story out of its 'going to heaven' frame and put it back into its original 'Thy kingdom *come*' frame. It certainly looks very different if you do.

Suddenly, we see that the focus of the whole thing is **God**, not 'me and my salvation'.

Paul Bev. 24.10.24