

392 Will way want? Purpose plan power? Problem? People!

As often happens, I have more questions than answers; my typesetter's upper case tray has run out of question marks! And all the questions above start with 'God', e.g. 'What is God's will?' We regularly pray for it to be done, but what is it? generally? specifically?

Currently, most of my thinking revolves around the Bible: What is its purpose? OK, God created a people and a place (Genesis), but what is God's purpose/plan? (Revelation?)

We know what the problem is: people (us!), yet people do have huge potential for good. And I still have problems knowing what 'evil' is, but I do know that people (we) can get things horribly wrong, so what is God's way? As at Sunday School, the answer is 'Jesus'.

Greg Boyd, in *God looks like Jesus*, claims (and I agree) that the main way we get things *wrong* is by having a wrong view of what God is like: the answer we give to my seven question marks could be very wrong if we start with a distorted view of God.

God provided the Bible (says Jesus) to point us in the right way – towards him! But the Bible was written by people who didn't (yet) know what God is really like. Yes, God inspired them as they wrote, and God also guided the Jews as a people, so we can watch their journey as they try to understand God's way. They had to be guided away from their view of God (the gods) as powerful but capricious, needing to be placated by making offerings, or they'd get smited. (A long, hard job: Abraham => Jesus was ~2000 years!)

The 2000-year journey to understanding the true power of God – self-sacrificing love, seen most clearly in the cross – is full of misunderstandings. But having seen the centre point of God's way (the cross), and as we trust in God's promise to totally restore creation, as per Revelation, we can look back at the earlier stages and make more sense of what was going on: God was trying desperately to show them the true way, God's way.

One example might help: in Exodus,^{23:20-33} God tells them to take over the land of Canaan, warning them of the dangers (the locals had an even worse view; they sacrificed children to placate the gods), and explains God's way and will for them. Here's my rough summary of verses 28–30:

I will drive them out; **you** need to be patient. They don't like hornets, so they will move away gradually, and as they do, you can move in, but it'll take time; trust me, be patient!

Did they take over the land. Yes! How? As everyone else did in those days: they killed and/or enslaved the people of the land. What's more, they said they were doing what God told them to do.

Greg Boyd is helping me understand how to read the Old Testament, using his 'cross-tinted' glasses. Thanks, Greg!

Paul Bev. 26.8.25