

Have you ever looked at one of those Magic Eye posters? Did you see what you were supposed to see? Don't you hate it when you feel like you're the only person in the room that doesn't see the embedded image in the picture? That's how a lot of people feel when they study the Bible. "I know I'm supposed to be really blown away by what I'm reading but I don't even understand what it says." I'm hoping we can change that. For the next nine weeks we are going to consider the grand narrative of the Bible. We will fly through the biblical narrative at the 50,000 ft. level and see if we can get a feel for the terrain. The goal is that when you pick up the Bible and read it you won't feel like you're the only person in the room who doesn't get it.

The Bible is a miraculous work of art. It's 66 books were written over more than a thousand years against a wide variety of cultural backgrounds by people who, for the most part, worked independently of each other and had no idea their writings would become best selling literature. The Bible contains poetry and prose, history and hymns, sermons and statistics, laws, letters, liturgies and a love song or two. Through it all, there is a coherent message that is simply stunning. There is only one hero in the story, one historical perspective and one solid body of teaching about God and how to relate to God. Only God's revelation could maintain a dramatic story line that stretches out over thousands of years.

The central figure in the Bible is Jesus; the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the Creator and the goal of all history. Long before Jesus is born in a manger in a place called Bethlehem, the OT foreshadows His coming through types and symbols. His presence may seem hidden in the OT, but He is hidden in plain sight.

After the resurrection the disciples of Jesus were disoriented to say the least. Just as everything was becoming clear to them their Lord and living hope was executed. Two of the disciples were commiserating with one another on the road to Emmaus when Jesus showed up incognito. Lk. 24:25-27

In the book of Acts one devout man had been trying to put the pieces of life together in a way that made sense. Once he encountered the news about Jesus he had the picture on the puzzle box. With that in hand he could go back to the Scriptures and see that the story was one coherent life-giving message. Acts 18:24-28

The Bible presents Jesus as the answer. But what's the question? There are four profoundly important themes that are repeated over and over in the Bible. These themes address four questions that help define reality and explain our

existence. Every religion or philosophy attempts to answer these four questions:

1. Where did we come from? The question of Creation is answered by verses like Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Colossians 1:16 elaborates on this same theme, **Colossians 1:15-17**, He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

2. How did it ever get so crazy? The question of the Fall. Jesus was there in the beginning creating everything and enjoying a perfect relationship with the first two people on the perfect planet. Early in the story something went terribly wrong and Adam and Eve sinned and fell from the righteousness of Christ.

3. Who will save us? The question of Redemption. Man has desperately searched for a way out of this mess. Surely if we can educate people or if we can elect good government leaders, or if we can fund important projects then we will be able to make the world a better place.

4. Where are we going? The question of Restoration. The way you answer these questions forms your world view. Everyone answers them. For example British physicist Stephen Hawking, one of the smartest men on the planet would suggest that we were placed here by aliens from another planet and it is aliens from another planet who can save us.

For the next nine weeks we are going to be exploring the God narrative presented in the Bible. If you have never understood the big picture of the scriptures, if you have ever been confused about all the different books of the Bible, don't miss this series. Once you have a firm grasp on the God narrative in the Bible you will be able to spot competing narratives that make up the daily headlines. But, more importantly, the narrative you follow can have serious consequences. Listen to how one man describes the Muslim narrative that has led to a steady parade of suicide bombers and Islamic terrorists:

“The Narrative is the cocktail of half-truths, propaganda and outright lies about America that have taken hold in the Arab-Muslim world since 9/11. Propagated by jihadist Web sites, mosque preachers, Arab intellectuals, satellite news stations and books — and tacitly endorsed by some Arab regimes — this narrative posits that America has declared war on Islam, as part of a grand “American-Crusader-Zionist

conspiracy” to keep Muslims down.” Milton Friedman

God created the world and has revealed Himself in many ways. He has revealed Himself through nature. “The heavens are telling the glory of God.” He has revealed Himself through the scriptures. But His magnum opus or greatest work was to reveal Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Heb. 1..can you see Him? He is here.

In January, 2007, The Washington Post set up an experiment to learn whether people would pause long enough to recognize real quality in their midst of their everyday lives. They asked Joshua Bell, a young violinist, to dress in jeans, T-shirt, and baseball cap and play his violin near a busy Washington D.C. Metro (subway) station. Bell stood by a wall near a trash can, took his violin from its case, tossed a few bills and some coins in the case to encourage donations, and began to play. He played Bach for 45 minutes as subway riders passed by -- more than a thousand of them. While he was playing, a few people tossed a little money in his violin case -- \$32 in all. Most of them walked by, scarcely acknowledging his presence.

Joshua Bell makes a little more at his night job. A few evenings earlier, this young virtuoso sold out Boston Symphony Hall with most tickets going for \$100 or more. He played a Stradivarius violin worth \$3 million -- the same violin that he played at the subway entrance.

The Bible says, “The Word became flesh and lived among us” but the world barely noticed. In every generation from the beginning of time God has spoken but the world was deaf in disbelief. I wonder how often Jesus makes Himself known but I’m too busy to notice.

The bread and the cup are sometimes called “the Presence” or “real Presence” of Christ. That’s because Jesus distributed the bread and the cup to His disciples and said, “This is me; my body, my blood.” For 2,000 years theologians have debated whether these simple words mean that when we take communion this wafer and juice somehow magically become the literal body and blood of Christ or whether these are mere symbols which remind us of His death on our behalf. Whichever way you choose to interpret His words one thing is clear; Jesus is here and He will not be ignored. To some He may be like a prodigy with a 3 million dollar Stradivarius playing in the background at the Metro station. But some day the trumpet will sound and He will appear in all His glory not as a crucified criminal but a conquering King accompanied by

a heavenly army. When that day comes no one will ignore Him but every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.