

A PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE on God's Big Picture

“Grasping God’s Big Picture” by Lee Compson

Open up Scripture to any number of passages and you are likely to find yourself mired in different types of literature or categories of communication. There are sweeping narrative stories. There are ornately crafted poems. There are carefully worded law codes and terrifyingly intense visions.

So how are we to make sense of such diversity?

We must grasp God’s Big Picture. From beginning to end, the Bible cohesively traces God’s plan for all of history, starting in Genesis with the very creation of the world and concluding with Revelation.

The entire first portion of the Bible – the Old Testament – traces the work of God over vast periods of time. He created the universe perfectly, including mankind. But Scripture describes how quickly humanity corrupted God’s creation through disobedience and sin. Yet hope did not vanish. God began working to redeem mankind from their fall. He chose the nation of Israel, starting with Abraham, as the instrument through which he would save a people for himself. He made covenants—with Abraham, Moses, David, and the New—both to govern his people and to confirm his gracious purposes for them.

As time wore on, it became obvious that Israel could not live up to her end of the covenants. So God followed through with refining judgment, as communicating through his prophets. Meanwhile, promises of a coming Deliverer, God’s Messiah who would make all things right, remained unfulfilled.

The New Testament demonstrates that this redemptive promise was fulfilled when God sent Jesus to be that promised Messiah. The Gospels record much of Jesus’ life and teachings, along with his sacrificial death and supernatural resurrection. It is his death and resurrection that sparked a new movement, the Church. The rest of the New Testament—the Acts narrative and apostolic letters—focuses on the formation of this new people of God. As the canon comes to a close, the book of Revelation acts as the capstone to God’s Big Picture, by casting a glorious vision of the future that awaits God’s faithful followers.

While God intervened in different ways at different times throughout history, it is vital that we understand the progression of His work. The different types of literature within the Bible certainly require their own specific rules. Yet in each of these genres, it’s crucial to understand their context and position within God’s Big Picture. The better we understand God’s Big Picture, the better we will be able to handle his Word and discern his will for us today.

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