

BYOBible

How to read your Bible, Part I – THE BIG STORY and the Stories

October 10, 2021

Overarching Theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Hebrews 1:1-4 NRSV

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³ He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

This Week: Hebrews 1:1-4

The sermon that we call Hebrews is predicated on the affirmation that God speaks and on the exhortation, "See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking" (12:25 NRSV). God's speaking in the past was "in many and various ways by the prophets." Such sweeping introductory statements characterizing the past were fairly common in this kind of literature. Here the writer describes God's past revelation in several ways. First, God's speaking took many forms, and the OT bears witness to these forms: voices, events, visions, dreams, stories, and theophanies, among others. Second, revelation came through the prophets. There is no reason to understand prophets here in a restrictive sense,

as distinct from the Law and Writings. In the broader sense, the term "prophets" was used to refer to those who spoke for God, and for the writer of Hebrews certainly included Moses and David. God's speaking begins in Genesis (Heb 11:3).

Continuous with and yet distinctly different from past revelation is that which is "to us." God's speaking is here presented with two strong qualifying phrases. First, it comes "in these last days." The expression is not so much chronological (a specific time period) as it is eschatological (symbolic for the eschaton was inaugurated by the advent of Jesus Christ). Second, God has spoken "by a Son." There is no need to add "the" Son or "his" Son as some translations do, as though there were a need to specify to whom the writer refers. About that there is no doubt. God's definitive Word is revealed through Jesus Christ and the kingdom he came to initiate.

So the BIG STORY OF SCRIPTURE, the whole Biblical mission of God reigning in love and justice on earth, a mission which was offered to (and rejected) by the first humans (Genesis 1-11), and then offered to the children of Israel (Genesis 12 ff) with the same ultimate result, was then fulfilled in the mission of the 'Son', whose powerful word and witness prevailed. Through Jesus' life, death, resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon his followers, God's reign of love and justice continues among his disciples, until the Son comes to "renew all things" (Matthew 19:28), or as Revelation 21:5 puts it, to make "all things new." So in this brilliant, highly condensed summary, Hebrews 1:1-4 alludes to this "Big Biblical Story" that begins with Genesis and ends in Revelation.

All of the different stories and parts of the Bible make more make sense when understood in light this bigger Story. Conversely, could it be that all of our lives make more sense when understood in light of this bigger story?

-- Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol XII, p. 22

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Some stories of the Bible can be confusing for many, and readers can get caught in the 'weeds' at times. Have there been parts of the Bible that have been "weedy" for you? If so, briefly share with your group.
2. Does the "BIG STORY OF SCRIPTURE" (see paragraph 3 above) help clarify some of the more confusing parts? If so, can you give an example?
3. The writer of Hebrews points to Jesus as offering an ultimate, powerful word of clarity, culminating and fulfilling the entire Biblical story. How

does the ministry of Jesus bring clarity to your understanding of the Bible?

4. Consider this statement from above: *"all of our lives make more sense when understood in light of this bigger story (the BIG STORY OF SCRIPTURE)."* Do you tend to agree or disagree? Why or why not?
5. How do you see God's reign of love and justice continuing among his disciples today?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC and/or to journal in the *"Morning by Morning"* gratitude resource.
2. Take the "Chapter Challenge" to read or listen to a chapter a day from one of the Gospels each day this week.
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: **Hebrews 1:3** NRSV
"He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."