

THE GOSPELS AS STORY:

*I love to tell the story of unseen things above
Of Jesus and His glory of Jesus and His love
I love to tell the story because I know tis' true
It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do*

*I love to tell the story
Twill' be my theme in glory
To tell the old, old, story
Of Jesus and His love*

Arabella Katherine Hankey, 1866

INTRODUCTION:

THE NECESSITY OF HERMENEUTICAL ACCURACY

A short while ago, one of my students and fellow teachers at my church came to me and asked me for a book on hermeneutics, as he had been asked to teach a one time lecture in someone's Sunday School class. He asked me about hermeneutics and what he should teach.

I replied, "Just teach the Story." In other words, the story is the single focus of the Bible. Everything must align and contribute to the plot or the explanation of some part of the plot that leads to Jesus ascending the throne of the universe to rule over an eternal earth. If one understands the "Story," then all must focus on that one plot, one goal.

But, one might reply, "How do you know that the Biblical Story is a correct interpretation of the canonical literature called the Bible?"

One of my favorite cohorts, also a professor, has a reply to this, "Just read it."

Now this seems simplistic, and it is, but it is not without basis. In other words, when one reads Cinderella, they don't consult academic giants for some great formula that they can impose on the text that seems to work. They don't send their little girl to Hermeneutics 101 with a notepad and a 1000 word textbook before they begin to read it. No, they "just read it." And she automatically understands that when mommy begins to read, that mommy is taking her into another world that is not her own. She is taking her into the world of narrative literature, more simply known as "story." And the little girl understands as the plot weaves through the introduction of a little girl and her wicked step-sisters (protagonist heroine and antagonists), through their oppression, to her deliverance to the prince and the wedding, and finally to the goal of "living happily ever

after.” Because of the nature of story, one starts at the beginning of a world which is apart from theirs. It goes until it ends and the little girl understands that the girl in the story has won because she was good.

That’s the nature of narrative, of “story.” You just read it. The story, by nature, is constructed so the reader cannot stop at any point until one gets to the end and finds out how all the good and bad actions resulted in some success or failure. It does that by beginning with a setting that is somewhere else with someone else with other hopes and dreams. The story moves to a conflict that stops those hopes and dreams, and the reader must hang on until the resolution appears later in the story, and finally the “happily ever after” confirms that the “good” character got rewarded and the “evil” character lost.

It’s not hard. So “just read it.” And the reader will soon see the simple story that God created. One cannot stop until the end. And no parts stand on their own, but either contribute to moving the plot along, or help explain some part of the plot. But they are all related to going to one place . . . the end.

And so, welcome to the Gospels. They are a “part” of the Biblical Story. As such they are not nice lessons for life, but are meant solely to move the story along to the “end.” And the end is Jesus on the throne of the new earth. The Gospels are just a part. But what a part! Without the crucifixion and resurrection there is no “end.” But Jesus will not die again and will not be resurrected again. The reader doesn’t hope they will reoccur. And everything Jesus did was about HIM!! And it was necessary to move the plot along.

So what’s the part of the reader? Well, in short, you aren’t in the Gospels. They are not about you. They are about one person, Jesus, who came to move the plot along to the end, by fulfilling the expectations of the earlier part of the plot. So the Old Testament moves to Jesus. Jesus appears and fulfills that expectation, which is in the amazing sacrifice and resurrection, and then the plot continues into the church age where the believer endures as he waits for the “end.” That end is none other than the return of Christ, the bodily resurrection, and the eternal reign on the earth.

So welcome to the Gospels, a part of the story that moves the plot along to the “end.” Without knowing the story the interpreter will introduce “error,” because, if nothing else, he will not fit this “part” into its place. By knowing the story, the interpreter will see who Jesus is, what He did, and why we praise and glorify Him.