



Blackfoot Church of Christ

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A Puzzle of Scripture

By Ross Ward

Over the years puzzles have been a favorite pastime **in my house**. As we think about putting together a puzzle, there are many analogies we can make to our beliefs and how we arrive at them. Let's think about how we put together a puzzle. Each puzzle contains hundreds or even thousands of pieces. There is a picture to reference to help with identifying where pieces might be placed. You start with the easiest, likely finding and placing all the edge pieces, then you start with what you think are the easiest areas, working your way to the more difficult areas where there are larger quantiles of pieces that could fit in the area. Now let's consider how completing a puzzle can be applied to our beliefs.

As we noted, when we start a puzzle, we start with the easy parts first. Usually all the edge pieces. Similarly, we do not start learning math with Algebra. We must first learn basic math. After Algebra we can move on to Calculus and other advanced math topics. Thus it is the same when we teach and study, we start with the basics. As we study the bible, it is important to start with the fundamentals, the easier doctrines to understand, and building up to the more difficult. That is how we learn. Heb 6:2 gives us some of the basic doctrines: "Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." These were a good place to start for the Jew (the audience of the Hebrew letter) who already had a foundational belief in God. For a non-Jew one might start with the Gospel of John which was written so the readers would believe in Jesus. There is an important message here that we approach scripture on the correct level. Teaching an atheist about baptism is important but with no foundation of faith in God or Christ it would be pointless.

When we work a puzzle, we have a picture to work from. This can be analogous to the bible doctrines we have been taught from our family or home church. We

all have some concepts of most all bible doctrines. They may be accurate, they may be skewed. There is the one true picture as determined by God and there is the one we have been taught. As we study, at least on some level, we all have a preconceived concept of what the “picture” of bible doctrine looks like. This can be a great help, but it can also be a hindrance. Like with a puzzle. How often does one look at the picture to see where to work, where to place a piece, or what pieces to look for, I bet frequently. Probably every few pieces. Yet, the true picture may be obscure to us because our fundamentals are not accurate. The Jew should have had the advantage in accepting Jesus, Rom 3:1-2, “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” Did they take advantage of this? Some did, like the Bereans who searched the scripture, Acts 17:11. But to others, their “history” was a stumbling block, Rom 9:32-33, “Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” So having a concept of the picture of the puzzle can be an advantage, but only if it is a true picture. So we find ourselves working a puzzle knowing that our vision of the picture may be incorrect. Suppose you are putting together the “puzzle” of Calvinism or of an earthly reign of Jesus. You can find “puzzle pieces” that fit that this picture, but how do you handle the puzzle pieces that do not fit? Discarding and stating “it does not belong in this puzzle” is not the correct decision. One of the great struggles of study and learning scripture is letting the scripture teach us what God taught, not what we want it to be.

Have you been working a puzzle and focused upon finding this one certain piece. You know it has a unique pattern and coloring that should make it obvious and easy to find. Yet how many times have you said, “That pieces is missing”. You finally move your focus to other pieces and stop looking for it, only to find it in the end. We can often experience this in our study of doctrines in that we think we know a doctrine, but struggle with different aspects. Then later in life through study, patience, and probably as we mature as a Christian, we have that “ah ha” moment when it clicks and makes sense. At times in our study we may struggle with a particular doctrine. We may focus on a particular scripture, read, study, and meditate on it and maybe even feel frustrated that it just does not make sense. We can be assured that all the “pieces” that are needed to understand bible doctrines are there. Paul instructed timothy that the scripture can make a man complete, 2 Tim 3:17. He is stating that they are sufficient, nothing lacking.

All that man needs is there. It maybe these hard to find “pieces” are the intricacies of the power of Prayer, working of the Holy Spirit, or of a faith in God that allows one to live without anxiety. Here is a good lesson in diligence and patience toward understanding all aspects of doctrine. Some aspects of doctrines are not simple, though we may think they should be. It takes diligence and patience, two seemingly opposing behaviors, to realize solutions to some doctrinal issues.

Then there are those areas of the puzzle that are just difficult. The area where there are lots of pieces that all look similar but yet, each one has a unique place where it fits. You have already placed all the easy pieces and now have a smaller pile of the difficult ones. You start the very tedious work of picking up each peace and trying to make it fit in each place. We always save this area till the end. We all realize there are doctrines and studies that are just difficult for everybody; where maybe there are many of scriptures to study through or language that is more difficult to understand. It is very important that we understand the basics of the bible before we advance to the more difficult. We should have the edges of the puzzle in place and the easier area finished. If we proceed in the wrong order, we will become frustrated and often fail in learning the truths of scripture. Understanding the writings in Revelation or Romans will require a good understanding of some fundamentals before one can advancing to a proper understanding of these writings as a whole. As with the previous paragraph, this is a good lesson have the basics down before attacking the difficult areas. As mentioned before diligence and patience will be necessary. Some doctrines are not simple, though we think they should be. It takes diligence and patience, two seemingly opposing behaviors, to discover solutions to some doctrinal issues.

From these analogies we can see the need to start with the easy and basics before trying to advance to the more difficult. It seems simple enough, but sometimes we get the cart before the horse. We should recognize that our background can provide a skewed view of the true “puzzle”. We must be willing to place puzzle pieces where they belong, not where we want them to be, by letting scripture teach what it teaches. If the puzzle does not look like our preconceived vision, then we are wrong, not God. We can trust that all the pieces are there. We can be assured that God has revealed all that we need to know about salvation and living under the sun. In the end, some doctrines in scripture can be as complicated as putting together a complex puzzle. With patience and diligence we can solve these puzzles, though it might take maturing as a Christian to place the final pieces.

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Laura Mattock has been diagnosed with Cancer. Surgery is scheduled for Thursday
- Pat Stockwell, Kass's mom, is undergoing test and treatments for a blood clot
- Tom is recovering from surgery
- Brenda is having surgery on her ankle in January for a problem with a tendon
- Jack Mitchell (Tom's brother) is having a knee replaced Wednesday
- Shirley Torres pass away from cancer
- Carl Stevens passed away, he was a member of a congregation in Denver that some from our congregations has worshiped with
- Many will be traveling over the Christmas Holidays:
 - Ross leaves tomorrow and will return with Debbie and Rachel on Jan 1st or 2nd
 - Brenda and April will be traveling to Boise Tuesday for Dr's appointments, returning Thursday
 - Chad, Kass & kids leave Tuesday and plan to return next week
 - David and Catherine leave Wednesday and return Saturday
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines.

Assignments

<p><u>Today</u> Bible Study – Ross Ward Song Leader – David Porter Lord's Table – Ben Palmer Sermon – Ross Ward</p>	<p><u>Wednesday</u> Bible Study – TBA Song Leader – Tom Mitchell Invitation – TBA</p>
<p><u>Next Sunday</u> Bible Study – David Porter Song Leader – Ben Palmer Lord's Table – David Porter Sermon – Tom Mitchell</p>	<p><u>Next Wednesday</u> Bible Study – TBA Song Leader – Ben Palmer Invitation – TBD</p>

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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