

Romans 8:11-23

"Is our 'big picture' of the Bible the right one?"

[have two jigsaw puzzles with same-size boxes -- so lids are interchangeable]

how many of you like to do jigsaw puzzles?

Karen loves them. (she &amp; I both be looking for a piece - 9x out of 10 she find!)

Brian McLaren (prolific Chrn author/spkr) finds puzzles diffic. says if ever puts one together, put glue on back so never comes apart again.

also came up w powerful metaphor I'm going to use thru this entire serm : McLaren says: every now & then gets perverse, mean-spirited urge to switch the puzzle lids. [do it -- switch lids]

"you like puzzles/ think you're good at them, here's one. have some fun."

it would be a bad day for the person.

espec for me -- I use lid more than K does.

when see a piece w distinctive markings, look on box lid (see which part of pic in goes in).

if I can't find it on the lid, set it aside.

if we had the wrong lid, would end up putting piece after piece aside.

we can be "given the wrong lid" for our Bible too.

as we read the B, sorta like putting jigsaw puzzle together:

look at all these pieces, enjoying the indiv stories, admiring the sep truths. also try to fit them together, wanting to see the "big picture" appear.

B has lot of pieces. --not 1000 piece puzzle. but 10,000 or 50,000.

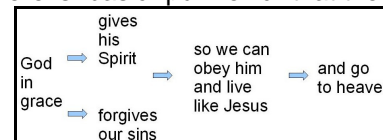
so our task as read B - quite overwhelming.

and God hasn't given us the picture that goes w the box of pieces.but bro/sis thru the centuries who have worked on puzzle quite a bit say have pretty good idea what the completed picture will look like.--they've gotten a bunch of the pieces to fit together and think discern what completed picture will be like.we're interested! we let them teach us, and help us fit various bib passages into that picture.but what if we keep finding B pieces don't fit into their suggested picture?? see more & more pieces have to set aside?at that pt, have to decide: am I more loyal to the puzzle pieces? or to the lid-I've-adopted (that may or may not have the right pic)?

am I more loyal to Sc passages? or to theology given to me?

am I willing to ask whether the picture I've been taught \* is wrong? "wrong lid."

here is basic "puzzle lid" that the ch has for the B :



all evang /B -believing churches teach all those pts .

differences betw ches :

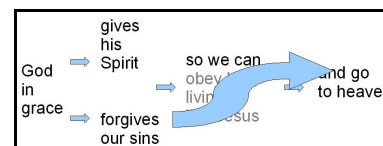
some emphasize one, some another.

one of marks of evangelical culture: emphasize "forgives our sins." inviting persons to pray "sinner's prayer." --"ask J to forgive your sins, and he will." (best deal ever. say this formula, &amp; got eternal fire insurance. no-brainer!)

now.

**There is one change some Christians make to this picture that they shouldn't make. And one change we should make.**first, the change we shouldn't make.

some ches teach "forgives sins" so strongly virtually "gray out" "obey / live like J" and jump from f-ness to heaven.

are many w this as their "puzzle lid."

would say can have "J as Sav" without "J as Lord."

but someone rdg B using this as their pic-to-put-the-pieces-together would have set aside raft of Scs.lots & lots of vvs read in B don't fit into this picture.**Major chunks of the Bible don't fit into this picture.**as read B, doing-God's-will is not something can take or leave.

eg.

- verses saying that God's major objective in our lives is that we grow to be like Jesus

Romans 8:29

God's plan is that we *be conformed to the likeness of his Son*

Ephesians 4:13

*become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*

2Corinthians 3:18

*we are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory*

Philippians 2:5

*let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus*

1Corinthians 11:1

*follow me as I follow Christ*

Jesus' most common call:

"Follow me"

another major chunk of vvs that don't fit into saying obeying God is not imp . all kinds of passages say our eternal salv and doing God's will are linked.

- verses saying that doing God's will is essential for our salvation

is it okay if the B says that?

if we found pieces of the B saying that, would we have to set them aside?

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Jesus:

John 5:28-29 Jesus:

*<sup>28</sup>"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup>and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*

better hope somehow qualif to be "those done good" not "...evil"

Matthew 7:19-21 *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

*<sup>21</sup>"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

Matthew 25:31-46

*"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ...*

how will he judge?

by whether we fed hungry, gave drink to thirsty, clothed poor, cared for sick, visited those in prison.

maybe J said all that bec was before J died on cross for our sins.

no. Epistles same:

Epistles:

Romans 2:6-10 talking about the Final Judgment--the "day...when [God's] righteous j will be revealed"

*<sup>6</sup>God "will give to each person according to what he has done." <sup>7</sup>To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. <sup>8</sup>But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. <sup>9</sup>There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; <sup>10</sup>but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

Hebrews 12:14 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

goes on about not being sexually immoral, or godless like Esau

Hebrews 10:36-39 *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. <sup>37</sup>For, "In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay." <sup>38</sup>And, "But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back." <sup>39</sup>But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved. (TNIV)*

Galatians 5:19-21 *<sup>19</sup>The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup>idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup>and envy; drunkenness,*

**orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

this is major, persistent theme thru whole NT.

**Romans 8:12-13 So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. <sup>13</sup> For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live.**

still a bunch more passages. (eg. 2Pet 1:5-11, 1Tim 1:18-20, Heb 3:12-14)

if our puzzle lid makes us set all those aside, our teachers haven't quite gotten us the right puzzle lid, yet.

some of you might worry that making obedience and living-like-Jesus essential might undercut God's grace.

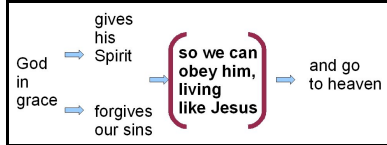
Sc is very clear we can not earn our salv .

Eph 2 - "not of works, lest anyone should boast"

Titus 3 - *when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.*

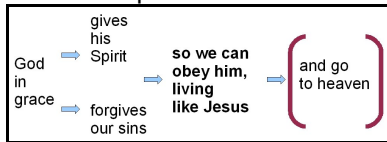
all I'm saying is: the B has both "forgives our sins" and "obey / live like J ". so they do fit together.

our "puzzle lid" for the B needs to include obedience /living like Jesus in its picture as well as "forgives our sins."



so that's the change we shouldn't make. now do we have "big pic ," right?

No. there's change should make to this pic . it involves the part haven't talked about yet.



this is major new understanding in my faith. radical change in how I see the Chr'n life.

God's goal for history is not "so we can go to heaven." he's not settling for rescuing some people before he kicks the world into a trash basket.

the B's msg does not just focus on you & I as indivs but on whole of creation.

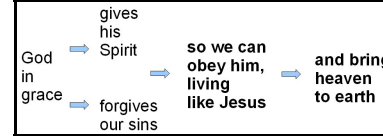
J didn't come to earth & die on cross to merely save some indivs . yes, that's true. but only one part of larger pic .

acc to 1 John 3:8 *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

Jesus came to vanquish Satan and the powers of darkness and to free the entire creation. (John 12:31, Hebrews 2:14-15, Colossians 2:15)

God doesn't stop w goal of "me going to heaven."

God's goal is "heaven coming to earth."



some of you may have already caught this in Sc . I "heard it" but didn't "hear it."

in moments have left, look at some bib passages I used to (unconsc ) set aside bec didn't fit "puzzle lid" I had been given (that said goal "go to heaven").

whereas w the new puzzle lid, these passages overflow w mng & set one's godly imagination soaring.

turn to last chpts of last bk of B . Rev 21-22

the B ends, not w the company of saved being taken up into heaven, but w the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth, and God's new creation (new heavens and new earth).

instead of talking about us going up to an ethereal heaven, it tells about a New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven to earth as our proper home.

### Revelation 21:1-4

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with [the people], and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>*

*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

then list of those whose place will be in the "lake that burns with fire and sulfur."  
 --...unbelievers, and the corrupt, and murderers, and the immoral, and those who practice witchcraft, and idol worshippers, and all liars (v8)  
 then descrip of gates, measurements, walls

## 22-26

<sup>22</sup> I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. <sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light,--clearly talking about something happening here on earth-- and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. <sup>25</sup> On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

clearly heaven has come to earth: "nations," "kings of the earth" interacting w it.

## 22:1-2

<sup>22:1</sup> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

do you realize what that's saying?!

God's goal for history is the New Jer coming down from heaven to earth -- some sort of joining of heaven & earth & the utter redemption of earth. the God who made the world will one day put it "to rights."

are bunch of OT prophecies saying this too.

## Isaiah 11:4-9 (NLT)

when Messiah comes as King to reign (ref to J's 2nd Coming):

...He will rule against the wicked and destroy them with the breath of his mouth. ... <sup>6</sup> In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all. <sup>7</sup> The cattle will graze among bears. Cubs and calves will lie down together. And lions will eat grass as the livestock do. <sup>8</sup> Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes and pull it out unharmed. <sup>9</sup> Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord.

is that just poetry / metaphorical prophecies??  
 can that be possible?? listen to Eph :

## Ephesians 1:9-10

***And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.***

another Epistle:

## Romans 8:18-23 TNIV

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup> The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

that's a passage I would always sorta gloss over as read it. bec not fit into my "big pic ."

*creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay* -- always told myself "mustn't really mn that bec creation gonna be destroyed."

but now it "leaps off the page"!

whole creation is waiting w eager longing until we are fully redeemed --not just our souls but our bodies too.

this renewal of creation is tied in w / timed w you & I being given resur bodies.

rest of NT says our resur happens at the pt Christ comes back again, when the "last trump" sounds.

**(1 Corinthians 15:23,52 NLT** *But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised first; then when Christ comes back, all his people will be raised. ...*  
*...It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die.*

and that when Christ comes back, his ch will rise to meet in the air.

those of us who are alive will be snatched up, & those who have died in Christ will be "resurrected" up.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)** NLT *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. <sup>17</sup> Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever.*

I always pictured J reappearing in midair & everyone flying up to meet him in order to be taken somewhere else.

but that was bec I didn't understand what those words meant in first-c world when they were written.

the original readers were picturing this as when an emperor or a ruler returns after a long journey or a victorious battle far away, & the citizens go out to meet him and welcome him --not to go w him some where else, but to escort him as he continues his arrival!

so Paul may be saying that the "meeting w the Lord in the air" is in order for us to escort him onto this new creation!

J is not appearing to snatch God's people away somewhere while chaos & destruction triumphs on earth, but to rule earth / transform it w power of his love!

is your mind reeling?

hopefully you're not mad at me for saying that I needed to change in my pic of God's end movement.  
(some of you might be saying, "what took you so long?!")

not saying there is no "heaven" we go to when we die.

there is a place that we go to after death that is "w J."

--Paul says "my desire is to depart and be w Christ." J says to dying thief:  
"today be w me in paradise."

but that place is not our ultimate destination.

that is only a place where God looks after his people who die until their final bodily resur into the new heavens/new earth.

what happens when we die and go to be w J is impor . but "it's not the end of the world" (quoting N.T.Wright). there's more. --there's "life after life-after-death."

how does this impact us? what diff does it make in our lives?

## **We are not following Jesus in order to escape to heaven when we die, but following Jesus in order to help the kingdom of heaven come to earth!**

remember Lord's prayer: k come, will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I'm hearing that phrase quoted all over the ch .

all over the ch I'm hearing persons letting Rev 21 and Rom 8 spk .

(on the old puzzle lid, have to tune out indications Jn the Rev & Paul writing about this earth made new.

& on that the puzzle lid, J messed up his prayer -- the Lord's prayer should have major editing:  
shouldn't say: may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,"  
but "may we go to heaven as soon as possible. & let the earth be left behind." )

actually, is very little in the B about us going to heaven after death.

can search thru Romans to find that the object of the game is to go to heaven when you die.

rather: one day God will make new creation, & give us bodies to share in that.

has huge implication for our Chrn life:

if goal is heaven when die,

then really impor thing is private, interior spirituality. your pers belief.

then always have sense that any work to improve the way this world is, any work for justice/ peace / ecology, is simply "oiling the wheels of a machine that is going to go over a cliff one day."

might as well not bother. might as well be preparing for totally diff world by saving souls or cultivating your own spirituality.

msg of B is not: do this so that when you die can go to really sweet place.

msg of the B - people living in such a way that they bring heaven to earth.

puzzle lid cover had been given: looks like sky & clouds & angels playing harps.

but God has promised not to abandon this world but to heal it.

a more accurate picture for our puzzle will include :

Jesus's victory over the Powers,

a restored creation / people & nations living in harmony.

God's goal: not just to get us saved & then whisk us to heaven.

goal is : heaven to earth. & use us in bringing.