

Epic Easter

Drawn Into the Story

April 20, 2014

Welcome to a place where we diagnose the deceptions that blind us to truth.



He is risen! He is risen indeed! Why? To make the way, open the door, draw us in, out of the darkness, into His Kingdom, His power, His glory; into our Father's house, to offer us life undying, love unending. **To bring us back home.**

He is the One, the One is the Way, the Way is the Truth, the Truth is the Word, and the Word is the Door, the Doorway to Life.

There is no afterlife, only pre-life. And, it's all we know. Shades of death. From the moment we're born. Each heartbeat clocking the countdown. *That's why!* And, that's why we proclaim: *He is risen!*



We're like wandering travelers with amnesia.

We know this isn't home. We can feel it.

So, **we're shown confusing pictures to help us remember**, where we're going, who we are, *Whose* we are, where we belong, before the Door stops knocking at our heart, calling us home.

[The Teacher implores us to look at the pictures and remember!] Remember him — before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. — Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 NIV

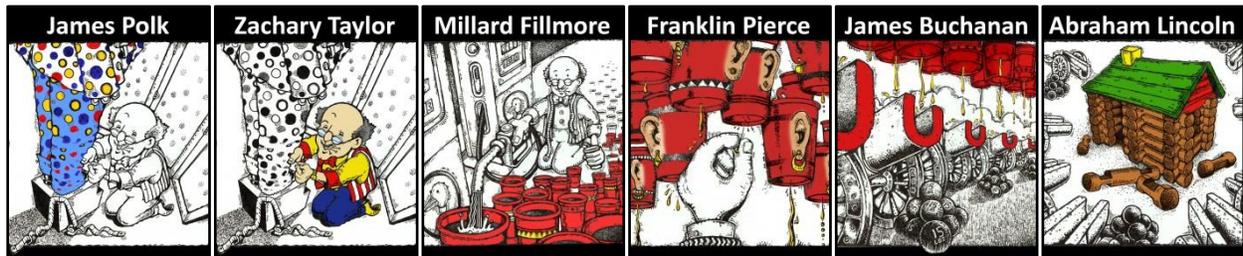
Every colorful image connects to stories and pictures throughout the scriptures. Epic Easter eggs filled with ultimate treasures, waiting to be collected and considered, to open our eyes to realize we can know the Way, *He's* Home! **When you return, what will you return with? All the treasure you can carry ... in your heart.**

"I don't want to look at the pictures. They're confusing, disturbing, boring. I don't relate to the culture or the people portrayed. And, why do the images and symbols have to be so weird?" There's something you don't realize, **all the pictures, portraits, and parables unlock an epic superpower you don't know you possess.** Want to see?

Here's a list of six US presidents, our 5th-10th presidents: James Monroe; John Adams; Andrew Jackson; Martin Van Buren; William Harrison; John Tyler. Read their *last* names again: Monroe; Adams; Jackson; Van Buren; Harrison; Tyler.

Now, with the 11th president, we'll add *weird* symbols and stories.

#11 is **James Polk** in a size 11 polka dot suit. See how Polk's legs form a polka dot 11? Will the tailor's pins poke Polk's #11 legs? Look down at Polk's tailor, That's **Zachary Taylor**. Taylor is Polk's tailor. But, Taylor doesn't tailor in a tailor's shop. Taylor works in **Millard Fillmore's** filling station where he has to fill more cups with *gas*, while Millard quacks, "Fill more! Fill more!" Know why? So they can *Pierce* 'em! **Franklin Pierce** 'em! How would you *hold* those pierced cups? The handles are ears, *pierced* ears! And, pierced cups drip gas into what? Cannons! U-shaped cannons. **James Bu'chanans!** Pierced cups drip into U-cannons, with 15-pound cannon balls. Could you lift a 15-pound ball to load a Bu'chanan? What'll *U* shoot with a U-cannon? A **Lincoln log cabin**. KA-BOOM!

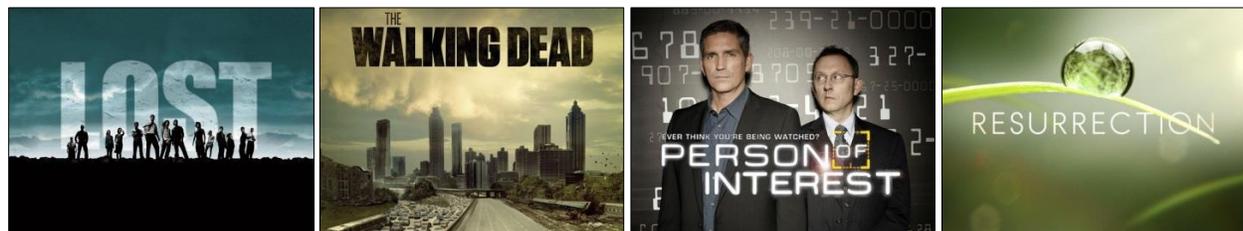


We categorize information in two ways: **Study and Story.**

We *avoid* the study category so we can squeeze in more time with the story category. "I finally finished my homework – my history book, my science book, my math book – now I can relax with a good book (or TV show or movie)." Why? **Study requires energy. Story restores energy. Stories use images and emotion to draw us into a world we've never seen, to see ourselves through someone else's eyes.**

How do *you* view God's Word? Bible study or Bible story? Your view will determine whether you reflexively avoid it or embrace it.

God's Word was composed, beginning to end, as a book of about 215 stand-alone stories that all build to an epic Easter! It's like a well-produced TV series: stand-alone episodes in a greater story *arc*. Like *Lost*. Or, *The Walking Dead*. Or, *Person of Interest*. Or, *Resurrection*. Each episode simultaneously stands alone *and* adds.



See what I did there? I told the Easter story. We were lost, and dead in our sin; then *Jesus* came, and rose from the grave!

I love the theme song on Resurrection: *"I'm coming home, I'm coming home, tell the world I'm coming home; let the rain, wash away, all the pain of yesterday; I know my kingdom awaits, and they've forgiven my mistakes; I'm coming home."* After He rose on Easter, **Jesus explained to two depressed disciples how each episode in God's Word is a part of an epic story-arc.**

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. **[Later, their eyes were opened and they recognized Him]** They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened **[all the Old Testament episodes and the Epic story-arc of]** the Scriptures to us?" – Luke 24:27, 32 NIV

Is that how it is when you read scripture? If not, you're not alone. There are a *lot* of depressed disciples. Watch *this ... "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."* Look at the vibrant colors! Look around at the setting, the characters, and the costumes. Or: **"Luke, I Am Your Father"** Feel the mood, the darkness, the fear, the shock. What are the unspoken thoughts going through Luke's mind? How about: **"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."** Anything? Do Jesus' words just float in a vacuum of empty space in your head?



It's nighttime. Jerusalem. A cloaked Pharisee struggling to grasp why God would send His Son. **We've been robbed!** Deceived by an art thief! **The halls of our mental galleries are stripped bare!** The Prince of Darkness wants to keep those walls white, to cripple you, because **the colorful pictures God has created to be collected and displayed, automatically activate your superpower.**

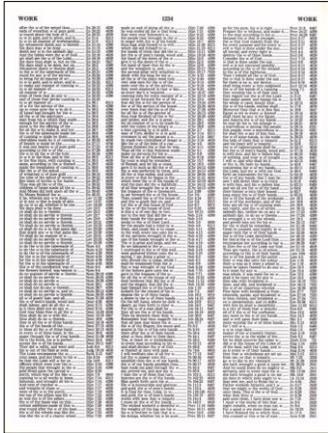
Name those first six presidents that didn't have any pictures. Starting with the 5th president; who was president #5? #6? #7? #8? #9? #10? Now, with #11, we'll add pictures! Stories! Weird images! The 11th president, who was president #11? Look down, who's next? He doesn't work inside. Who's next? Fill those cups. Then who? Dripping cups. And next? How much do those cannon balls weigh? You even know he's the 15th president! And finally? And, once these are hung in your gallery, they're permanent!

Remember being disappointed if a book didn't have pictures? "Oh. It's just *words*." That's what the enemy wants for you and God's Word. **Jesus didn't say it's okay to become like a child.**

He said: **"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."** – Matthew 18:3 NIV

This is how God chose to communicate:





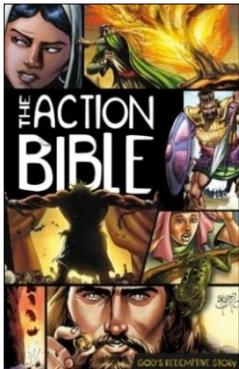
And, this is how we tend to *think* God communicates. **The Bible isn't a burden; it's the story of our salvation!**

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. [Think ‘recess’] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, [Did Jesus teach with studies or stories?] for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” – Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

You see, **God wrote to you in the precise way He wired you, to speak to you in a profoundly powerful, personal way. The stories and pictures are just a means to knowing God and getting home.**

He wants to draw you in. He has far more episodes than those He wrote in the Bible. John ends his gospel saying that all the books in the world couldn't contain Jesus' Epic story-arc. Did you know there's one *entire* episode entitled: “[YOUR NAME HERE!]”

He's made you His co-producer, co-writer, and main character! You get to decide how your character will face challenges, what it'll battle to overcome, who it'll help, what it'll learn, how it'll grow, and the *greatest* cliffhanger: will it make it home? **He's the Senior Partner, so don't be surprised when He throws some curves into the story you didn't see coming. You always have creative control over how your character will respond.** Just keep in mind that you'll review your standalone episode one day, when you stand alone before the Lord to give an account.



You're going to need some inspiration; so, I got you something: it's called, **“The Action Bible”**. 215 episodes, in chronological order, emphasizing the sweeping, redemptive, story arc of scripture! And, it's all pictures! It's a graphic novel. **IT'S NOT MEANT TO REPLACE YOUR BIBLE.** But, **it's a way to fill the halls and walls of your mind with all the stories and people and settings and costumes.**

It's got a scripture index in back, so you can find John 3:16. And, **each short story shows where it's at in scripture, so you can start putting the verses in the story they belong to.**

Read it to your kids, your grandkids, and especially to the big kid that's staring in the episode you're co-producing. *You.*

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. – Philippians 4:8 NIV

What is more true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy than the Word, who became flesh to dwell among us, died to redeem us, and rose to bring us home?

Nothing. He's the Prince of Peace. Our Savior. The Son of God.

Without Him there is *no* Easter. With Him, Easter is *Epic!*