

The Big Story of the Bible

Introduction

Luke 24.27; *And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning himself in all the scriptures.*

Luke 24.44,45; *'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms, must be fulfilled'. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that **the Christ** should suffer and on the third day and rise from the dead...'*

Jon Neilson; *Tracing God's Big Story*

Systematic Theology

From the earliest days of the Christian church has discerned the important benefit of bringing careful *organization* and *explanation* to the truths and doctrines that the Bible clearly teaches God's people. Through the church councils early creeds were formed as fundamental summaries of Christian doctrine.

Biblical Theology

Biblical theology, you might say, is an attempt to 'do theology' the way the Bible does it and in step with the rhythm and shape of the biblical narrative. It is the discipline of carefully tracking with every step of the progressive revelation of God in Scripture. In biblical theology, we are enjoying and savouring every moment of the story with every step along the way. And as we step back from the biblical narrative at every point, we see the glorious arc of God's redemptive work in his world to save sinners, which culminates in his sending his own Son (the one by whom all things were created) to die in the place of his sinful people and to conquer sin, death, and Satan forever as their Saviour and King.

The Need to See the Whole Picture

Many repeated themes emerge - e.g. King – Kingdom / Sacrifice / Clean – Unclean / Light - Darkness / Blessing – Cursing

1. We need Christ to understand the Bible

'The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed.' - Saint Augustine

Historical Trajectory

Creation – Fall – Redemption - New Creation

To draw an arc in computer programming, you need at least three points of reference. It's a matter of geometry. In the same way, to draw a historical trajectory in the Bible and see how it relates to the gospel.

e.g. Ecclesiastes 12.1-8; Romans 1.

Back to Genesis 1 & 2 or forward to 2 Cor 5.17.

We're called to look back and call it forward...

2. We need the Old Testament to understand Christ

John 5.39; *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is **they that bear witness about me...***

Luke 24.44,45; *'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, **that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms, must be fulfilled**'. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, **that the Christ should suffer and on the third day and rise from the dead...**'*

The Three divisions of Old Testament scripture; that is the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms (the writings).

John Stott, *Understanding the Bible*;

*The fundamental relation between the Old Testament and the New Testament, according to Christ, is that between **promise and fulfilment**. The **very first word** Jesus uttered and his public ministry, in the Greek text in the Gospel of Mark indicates this; it was the word fulfilled: 'the time is has come / fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1.15).'*

The Law

The Pentateuch (*Genesis to Deuteronomy*).

Genesis 3.15; Genesis 11 & 12; Genesis 15.5ff; Genesis 49.9-10.

And so, it was revealed here, in the first book of the Bible, that the Messiah would be **human** that is descended from Eve, and Jewish, **part of Abraham's family line; covenantally committed to His people and from the tribe of Judah** and that he would crush seat in bless the world and rule as king forever.

Deuteronomy 18.15 **the perfect prophet**.

Exodus is like a narrative shadow of how God saves.

These great words of salvation and hope reflect our relationship to Christ: Election; Atonement; Covenant; Inheritance.

The Prophets

The prophets included **the history books** (*Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings*) as what are known as **the former prophets** because the authors were judged to have written it as prophetic or sacred history, as well as the **latter prophets** who we call **the major and the minor prophets**.

The tedious history of Israel?

Remember Christ's first words, in his ministry, relate to a time that is *now fulfilled* and that *the Kingdom of God has drawn near* (Mark 1.17).

A theocracy.

The instability of human institutions.

The humiliating exile.

God had made a covenant with King David (2 Samuel 7).

The prophets describe **what kind of king** this son of David, would be.

These characteristics of the **Kingdom of the Messiah**; peace, justice, universality and eternity, are brought together in one of Isaiah's most famous prophecies (Isaiah 9.1-7) but they also foretold the King's sufferings (Isaiah 53).

Christ in the Writings

The third division of the Old Testament is known as **The Writings** sometimes called the *Psalms* because it was the chief book of the section (that we today might call **Wisdom Literature**).

Several psalms are applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament:

Psalms 2.7; Psalm 8; Psalm 22.1; Psalm 110.1

Wisdom Personified; Proverbs 1.7

John Stott, *Understanding the Bible* concludes this section:

...another way of summing up the Old Testament witness to Christ is to say that it depicts him as a prophet greater than Moses, a priest greater than Aaron, and a king greater than David. That is to say he will perfectly reveal God to man, reconcile man to God, and rule over man for God. In him the Old Testament ideals of prophecy, priesthood and kingship will find their final fulfilment.

3. We need the New Testament to understand Christ

If the idea of discovering Christ in the Old Testament seems at first sight strange there is no similar difficulty about finding him in the New Testament.

The Gospels

Each of the writers tells his story as the **good news of Christ** and his salvation.

The Acts of the Apostles

What Jesus did next...*and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved* (Acts 2.47).

The **Epistles /Letters** extend the New Testament's witness to Christ across the known world, writing to specific churches at particular times of need, by unfolding the glory of Jesus' divine human person, His saving work, and by relating the life of the Christian and of the church to him.

Ephesians 1.1-14 *God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.*

The apostles and their letters explain to us what it is to be '**in Christ**' (united to Him) as he is presented as all sufficient, one who is able to save to the uttermost and for all time those who draw near to God through him.

In the **Revelation of John** Jesus is portrayed in vivid picture language:

- as a glorified man
- among the believers in the church
- as a lamb, looking as though it had been slain,
- a King to be worshipped by countless numbers of the redeemed
- a majestic rider on a White Horse going out in judgement
- the heavenly bridegroom

'ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ' – Jerome

John Stott; Understanding the Bible; Just as in the children's treasure hunt one is sometimes fortunate enough to stumble immediately upon the treasure but usually we have to follow all the clues, laboriously, from clue to clue, until the lost treasure is found - so it is with Bible reading. Some verses point us directly to Christ, others are remote clues. But a painstaking pursuit of the clues will ultimately lead every reader to that treasure whose worth is beyond price.