

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE BIBLE

The Bible, incomparably the most widely circulated of books, at once provokes and baffles study. Even the non-believer in its authority rightly feels that it is unintelligent to remain in almost total ignorance of the most famous and ancient of books. No barrier of language now exists, for the Bible has been translated into practically all languages and dialects. And yet most, even of sincere believers, soon retire from any serious effort to master the content of the sacred writings. The reason is not far to seek. It is found in the fact that no particular portion of Scripture is to be intelligently comprehended apart from some conception of its place in the whole. For the Bible story and message is like a picture wrought out in mosaics: each book, chapter, verse, and even word forms a necessary part, and has its own appointed place. It is, therefore, indispensable to any interesting and fruitful study of the Bible that a general knowledge of it be gained.

First. The Bible is one book. Seven great marks attest this unity. (1) From Genesis the Bible bears witness to *one God*. Wherever he speaks or acts he is consistent with himself, and with the total revelation concerning him. (2) The Bible forms one *continuous story* — the story of humanity in relation to God. (3) The Bible hazards the most unlikely *predictions* concerning the future, and, when the centuries have brought round the appointed time, records their fulfilment. (4) The Bible is a *progressive* unfolding of truth. Nothing is told all at once, and once for all. The law is, “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn. Without the possibility of collusion, often with centuries between, one writer of Scripture takes up an earlier revelation, adds to it, lays down the pen, and in due time another man moved by the Holy Spirit, and another, and another, add new details till the whole is complete. (5) From beginning to end the Bible testifies to one *redemption*. (6) From beginning to end the Bible has *one great theme* — the person and work of the Christ. (7) And, finally, these writers, some forty-four in number, writing through twenty centuries, have produced a *perfect harmony* of doctrine in progressive unfolding. This is, to every candid mind, the unanswerable proof of the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Second. The Bible is a book of books. Sixty-six books make up the one Book. Considered with reference to the unity of the one book the separate books may be regarded as chapters. But that is but one side of the truth, for each of the sixty-six books is complete in itself, and has its own theme and analysis. In the present edition of the Bible these are fully shown in the introductions and divisions. It is therefore of the utmost moment that the books be studied in the light of their distinctive themes. Genesis, for instance, is the book of beginnings — the seed-plot of the whole Bible. Matthew is the book of the King, &c.

Third. The books of the Bible fall into groups. Speaking broadly there are five great divisions in the Scriptures, and these may be conveniently fixed in the memory by five key-words, Christ being the one theme (Luke 24. 25-27):

²⁵Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:
²⁶Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? ²⁷And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”
— Luke 24:25-27 KJV:

PREPARATION.
The O. T.

MANIFESTATION.
The Gospels.

PROPAGATION.
The Acts.

EXPLANATION.
The Epistles.

CONSUMMATION.
The Apocalypse.

In other words, the Old Testament is the preparation for Christ; in the Gospels he is *manifested* to the world; in the Acts he is preached and his Gospel is *propagated* in the world; in the Epistles his Gospel is *explained*; and in the Revelation all the purposes of God in and through Christ are *consummated*. And these groups of books in turn fall into groups. This is especially true of the Old Testament, which is in four well defined groups. Over these may be written, as memory aids:

REDEMPTION.	ORGANIZATION.	POETRY.	SERMONS.	
Genesis	Joshua	Job	Isaiah	Jonah
Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Jeremiah	Micah
Leviticus	Ruth	Proverbs	Ezekiel	Nahum
Numbers	I, II Sam .	Ecclesiastes	Daniel	Habakkuk
Deuteronomy	I, II Kings	Song of Solomon	Hosea	Zephaniah
	I, II Chronicles	Lamentations	Joel	Haggai
	Ezra		Amos	Zechariah
	Nehemiah		Obadiah	Malachi
	Esther			

Again care should be taken not to overlook, in these general groupings, the distinctive messages of the several books composing them. Thus, while *redemption* is the *general* theme of the Pentateuch, telling as it does the story of the redemption of Israel out of bondage and into “a good land and large,” each of the five books has its own distinctive part in the whole. Genesis is the book of beginnings, and explains the *origin* of Israel. Exodus tells the story of the *deliverance* of Israel; Leviticus of the *worship* of Israel as a delivered people; Numbers the wanderings and failures of the delivered people, and Deuteronomy warns and instructs that people in view of their approaching entrance upon their inheritance.

The Poetical books record the spiritual experiences of the redeemed people in the varied scenes and events through which the providence of God led them. The prophets were inspired preachers, and the prophetic books consist of sermons with brief connecting and explanatory passages. Two prophetic books, Ezekiel and Daniel, have a different character and are apocalyptic, largely.

Fourth. The Bible tells the Human Story. Beginning, logically, with the creation of the earth and of man, the story of the race sprung from the first human pair continues through the first eleven chapters of Genesis. With the twelfth chapter begins the history of Abraham and of the nation of which Abraham was the ancestor. It is that nation, Israel, with which the Bible narrative is thereafter chiefly concerned from the eleventh chapter of Genesis to the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The Gentiles are mentioned, but only in connection with Israel. But it is made increasingly clear that Israel so fills the scene only because entrusted with the accomplishment of great world-wide purposes (Deut. 7. 7).

“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:” – Deuteronomy 7:7 KJV.

The appointed mission of Israel was, (1) to be a witness to the unity of God in the midst of universal idolatry (Deut. 6. 4; Isa. 43. 10);

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:” – Deuteronomy 6:4 KJV

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.”

– Isaiah 43:10 KJV;

(2) to illustrate to the nations the greater blessedness of serving the one true God (Deut. 33. 26–29; 1 Chron. 17. 20, 21; Psalms. 102. 15);

"26There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. 27The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. 28Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. 29Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

– Deuteronomy 33:26-29 KJV

"20O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 21And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt?" – 1st Chronicles 17:20-21 KJV

"So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory." – Psalm 102:15 KJV;

(3) to receive and preserve the Divine revelation (Rom. 3. 1, 2);

"1What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." – Romans 3:1-2 KJV;

and (4) to produce the Messiah, earth's Saviour and Lord (Rom. 9. 4).

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;" – Romans 9:4 KJV.

The prophets foretell a glorious future for Israel under the reign of Christ.

The biblical story of Israel, past, present, and future, falls into seven distinct periods: (1) From the call of Abram (starting in Genesis, Chapter 12) to the Exodus (Exodus, Chapters 1-20); (2) From the Exodus to the death of Joshua (from Exodus, Chapter 21 to Joshua, Chapter 24); (3) from the death of Joshua to the establishment of the Hebrew monarchy under Saul; (4) the period of the kings from Saul to the Captivities; (5) the period of the Captivities; (6) the restored commonwealth from the end of the Babylonian captivity of Judah, to the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70; (7) the present dispersion.

The Gospels record the appearance in human history and within the Hebrew nation of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, and tell the wonderful story of his manifestation to Israel, his rejection by that people, his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

The Acts of the Apostles record the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the beginning of a new thing in human history, the Church. The division of the race now becomes threefold — the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God. Just as Israel is in the foreground from the call of Abram to the resurrection of Christ, so now the Church fills the scene from the second chapter of the Acts to the fourth chapter of the Revelation. The remaining chapters of that book complete the story of humanity and the final triumph of Christ.

Fifth. The Central Theme of the Bible is Christ. It is this manifestation of Jesus Christ, his Person as "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3. 16),

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

– 1st Timothy 3:16 KJV,

his sacrificial death, and his resurrection, which constitute the Gospel. Unto this all preceding Scripture leads, from this all following Scripture proceeds. The Gospel is preached in the Acts and explained in the Epistles. Christ, Son of God, Son of man, Son of Abraham, Son of David, thus binds the many books into one Book. Seed of the woman (Gen. 3. 15)

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." – Genesis 3:15 KJV

he is the ultimate destroyer of Satan and his works; Seed of Abraham he is the world blesser; Seed of David he is Israel's King, "Desire of all Nations." Exalted to the right hand of God he is "head over all to the Church, which is his body," while to Israel and the nations the promise of his return forms the one and only rational expectation that humanity will yet fulfil itself. Meanwhile the Church looks momentarily for the fulfilment of his special promise: "I will come again and receive you unto myself" (John 14. 1-3).

"1Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."
– Gospel of John 14:1-3 KJV.

To him the Holy Spirit throughout this Gospel age bears testimony. The last book of all, the Consummation book, is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1. 1).

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:" – Revelation 1:1 KJV