

## ***“Survey of the Scriptures”***

### **Session #1 – THE BOOK OF BOOKS**

To see a valley at its best, we climb to a high vantage point where the whole scene is spread before us. The panorama of forest, field and flowing river combine to make a complete and beautiful picture.

Afterwards, we may look more closely at the village by the river, or walk through the forest, but we still see these things in relation to the whole picture we had surveyed from the hilltop.

When studying the Bible, we should first climb the Hill of Survey and view the Scriptures as a whole. A panoramic view brings things into their right relationship. Certain mountain peaks and shadowed valleys may invite our exploration, but we will always see them as part of the complete picture.

More than anything else, a survey reveals the unity of the Scriptures, and we find that this amazing collection of 66 books is in reality one book.

The Old Testament consists of the sacred Scriptures of the Hebrew people; the New Testament is the guide book of the Christian church. Yet, these two are dependent on each other. The New Testament is concealed in the Old; the Old is revealed and fulfilled in the New.

The Bible is the work of about 40 inspired authors and was written over a period of 1500 years. Among the writers were priests, prophets, statesmen, kings, fishermen and shepherds, but still this is one book.

From Genesis to Revelation is the story of the progress of time between two eternities. It begins with a formless earth; ends with a new heaven and earth. It tells of the creation of life and ends with the perpetuation of life. Genesis tells of the beginning of sin, and Revelation foretells its final consequence.

Across the pages of the Bible marches an ever-changing pageant of people, for this is a record of God’s dealings with mankind.

A simple way to outline this far-flung story is to break it down into **six main topics**: patriarchs, leaders, kings, foreign rulers, Christ and the Church.

The **first** period begins in Eden with Adam – patriarch of the human race; includes Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – **patriarchs** of the Hebrews; then moves to Joseph in Egypt. In Genesis 1-11 God is dealing with all mankind, but from that time on the history of the Bible is the story of God’s chosen people.

The **second** period is the time of great **leaders**: Moses, who led God’s people out of Egypt’s slavery; Joshua, who helped them to possess the Promised Land of Canaan; the warrior judges; and Samuel, the greatest judge of all.

The **third** period is the time of **kings**. Under Saul, David and Solomon the land prospered. Shortly after the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided with Israel to

the north and Judah to the south. During this time, prophets were prominent in the history of the Hebrews.

During the **fourth** period, we find the Hebrew people under **foreign rulers** just as the prophets warned. Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722 B.C., and Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar 140 years later. Even when the Jews returned to their own land, they were in turn under Persian, Greek, Egyptian, Syrian and, by New Testament times, Roman rulers.

The **fifth** period in the story of God's dealings with mankind belongs to His Son, **Jesus Christ**. Four New Testament writers tell of His ministry and His death and resurrection.

The **sixth** period belongs to that group of people called the **church** – believers who gathered together in towns and villages throughout the Mediterranean world. Historically, this period extended from Pentecost to Patmos but prophetically to the consummation of all things.

We see, then, that the 66 books of the Bible combine to tell the story of God's dealings with mankind, from the creation of the world where man lives to the preparation of his eternal home. But, even apart from history, the **unity of the Scriptures** is evidenced in many ways.

Every writer, whether he be a prince from Egyptian courts as was Moses, or a shepherd of the Judean hills like David, has the **same attitude toward God** and God's righteousness.

Every writer has the **same attitude toward sin** as that which separates man and makes him unfit to approach God.

Through the book there is only way in which sin may be covered – through the shedding of blood. The Old Testament offerings were types, fulfilled when Christ became the perfect sacrifice.

Through the book runs the red cord of Redemption – the great story of God's love toward sinful man which led Him to give His own Son to pay the price of man's redemption.

Above all, we see Christ in the books of history, law, poetry and prophecy. **Christ is the central theme** throughout, this is His story. He is the fulfillment of what has been promised from Genesis to Malachi.

“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me,” Jesus said to His disciples as they talked with Him after the resurrection.

Through the Old Testament, prophecies of the coming of Christ the Messiah become clearer – He is to be of the human race, to come through the Hebrew nation, the tribe of Judah, the family of David. Isaiah says, “A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” – meaning God with us.

Micah foretells the place of His birth will be the little town of Bethlehem; Daniel, the manner and time of His death.

Poets and prophets alike write of His beauty and grace, of His healing ministry as He moves among the people, of His preaching in precept and parable.

The psalmists dwell on Christ's suffering and death and foretell His resurrection. Prophet after prophet looks forward to the day when He shall return to reign in power and great glory.

We have seen the unity of the Scriptures in structure, subject material, viewpoint and theme, and this amazing unity is one of the strongest proofs that the Bible is truly the Word of God. But there are many **other evidences of the Bible's divine origin**.

**First**, there is the proof of **prophecy**. Ruins of ancient cities throughout the Middle East are evidence that Bible prophecies of their downfall and destruction have been fulfilled. Yet the prophecies were written decades – sometimes centuries – before the events took place.

Then, there is the evidence of **accuracy**. The Scriptures were immediately accepted by the Jews as the Word of God; and, because of this, their scribes copied the sacred writings with utmost care. Recent discoveries of early manuscripts confirm this.

The letters written by Paul and other writings of the apostles were treasured and carefully preserved. They were gradually collected to form the canon of New Testament Scriptures we know today and were accepted as authoritative and divine.

The Bible has been wonderfully **preserved**. Time and again men have sought to destroy the Scriptures, ordering them to be burned and making the possession of even a verse of Scripture punishable by death. Yet, more ancient copies of the Bible have survived than any other book.

When printing was invented about 500 years ago, the Bible was printed in 33 languages. Today it is printed in over 1000 languages, and 30 million copies are sold each year.

The **standards** of the Bible are evidence of its divine origin and are far superior to those of any other religion or philosophy. Many of our own laws are based on the commandments given to the Hebrews centuries ago, and we still fall far short of them. The standards of man are raised wherever God's Word is introduced.

Perhaps the greatest proof that the Bible is the Word of God lies – not in its confirmation and preservation – but in its **application**, its effect upon the hearts and minds of men.

By its own witness and external evidence, we accept this book as the Word of God, and a survey of the Bible helps us to appreciate the wonder and beauty of it as a whole.

As we continue our survey of the Bible, these four words help us to keep our aim in mind:

- **history** – to master a brief outline of the factual content of the Bible;
- **unity** – to recognize its unity;
- **revelation** – to see Jesus Christ as He is revealed through the Word;
- **application** – to apply the truth to our own lives.

The **six main topics** or divisions – patriarchs, leaders, kings, rulers, Christ, the church – help us to remember the **historical sequence** of the Bible.

As we make a further study of the Bible, its unity will become more evident. We will recognize that these 66 books, written by men in many walks of life over centuries of time, were really inspired by one mind, and that this is indeed one book.

To the Christian the Bible is the most rewarding book in the world because from Genesis to Revelation he sees Christ, the Living Word. John's postscript would serve for all the Scriptures: "*These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing ye might have life through His Name.*"

The Bible has changed history and the laws of many lands; but better still, wherever its truths have been believed, it has changed the lives of men.

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