

THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE: *THE CHRISTO-CENTRIC NATURE OF SCRIPTURE*¹

Introduction:

G. Campbell Morgan followed what he called a “GLOBE” theory of teaching the Bible. That method of examining Scripture is summarized in the following way:

Day 1 – Learn the “*continents*” (i.e. the big picture of the Bible as a whole).

Day 2 – Take one “*continent*” and learn the “*countries*” of that “*continent*” (i.e. the individual books of a section of the Bible).

Day 3 – Take another “*continent*” and learn its “*countries*.”

Day 4 – etc., etc.

Morgan figured that if he didn’t have enough time available to cover all the “*cities*” (i.e. get to all the smaller details of the individual books of the Bible) he still felt ok, since he figured that if his listeners understood the “*continents*” and “*countries*,” with the Holy Spirit’s help they could figure out the “*cities*.”

“There is a tendency to regard the Bible as a handbook of timeless principles... but there are many genres in the Bible and ‘*Progressive Revelation*’ is a fact.”² So let’s see how the Bible unfolds. **We may be surprised to find that the entire Bible centers around Christ!**

- I. **OLD TESTAMENT** (i.e. *The old covenant, or agreement*). *The primary lessons are in relation to REDEMPTION and the COMING MESSIAH*. We need to approach the Bible with a “*First Time*” mentality, and if we were reading the book for the first time, we’d start at the front.
 - A. **PENTATEUCH** (i.e. “*Five-volumed*”). If you had read that first, you would notice it’s:
 1. **CONTENT:**
 - a. **LAWS** – 613 in all (248 positive, 365 negative).
 - b. **SACRIFICES** – 5 major sacrifices. *Why the sacrifices?* Because no one kept the laws, so sacrifices were instituted.
 2. **THE ISSUE: HOLINESS!** Even then, they didn’t reach perfect holiness. So the first five books have laws that nobody can keep and sacrifices that cannot cleanse (cf. Heb. 10:1 – “*these didn’t cleanse from sin*”). So what was the function of these nearly 200 chapters? Why do we read them every year? Why are they still left there by God? Answer: They are a “*schoolmaster*” to bring us, or lead us to Christ (Gal. 3 & also the book of Hebrews, which was written to Jews who wanted to keep the law).
 3. **FUNCTION: To show the need of a PERFECT PRIEST who can offer a PERFECT SACRIFICE (i.e. Jesus Christ)**. The 10 Commandments do give us good moral standards, etc. But the main purpose of the 10 Commandments is to show us our sinfulness and inability to keep God’s laws!
 - B. **HISTORICAL SECTION** (12 Books). This history is a peculiar type of history, cf. Joshua 1:2. This section has to do with this people and their land i.e. how they got it, lost it, and got it back.
 1. **CONTENT: (An emotional response)**. *Joshua* is encouraging, *Judges* is discouraging, *Ruth* is encouraging, etc. (Regarding *Ruth*, Morgan called it “*faith within faithlessness*.” That’s why God extracts it out and records it. Remember, *Ruth* was written during the times of the Judges. That theme is good, but the key is in the last

¹ All of this material has been taken from notes I took during a series of lectures given by Dr. Mark Minnick in a graduate course I took at Bob Jones University in July, 1999. The course was “*Expository Preaching on Matthew*.” Dr. Minnick has been the pastor of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina, for the past several decades. Compiled by Rev. Mike Edwards. Transcribed 23 January 2006, revised Sept., 2007 & Jan., 2013, St. Vincent, West Indies & Jan., 2015, Madison, Ohio.

² Minnick, *Ibid*.

couple of verses of Ruth, in the lineage. We discover that Ruth is the great grandmother of David. And that leads to *I Samuel* (i.e. *Eli-depressing*), but that leads to *II Samuel* (i.e. *Samuel-encouraging*), which leads to *Saul* (*discouraging*), but that leads to *David* (*encouraging*), but that leads to *Solomon* (*encouraging, then discouraging*), and then you go to *I & II Kings* and *I & II Chronicles* (*up & down, up & down, optimistic, disappointing, optimistic, disappointing, etc.*).

2. **THE ISSUE: LEADERSHIP!** They get their land and lose it, then get it back again, etc., etc. It all depended on their leadership.
3. **FUNCTION: These books show the need for a “PERFECT KING” (i.e. Jesus Christ).**

PARENTHESIS: THE POETICAL BOOKS. “The Abrahamic Covenant is Messianic in its essence (note “*seed*” not “*seeds*”-Gal 3). So Minnick feels that these poetical books are also very Christological. The books were authored by the kings of the above-mentioned historical books. In these books of poetry we see all three constituent aspects of human personality:

- A. **Psalms-The Will**, i.e. oriented toward the Word of God. Minnick feels it’s these failed leaders pouring out their hearts regarding being the ideal king and the standard that they never met! He has no direct Scripture for that idea, but he feels it’s plausible.
- B. **Proverbs-The Mind** i.e. the wisdom of God.
- C. **Ecclesiastes**-The folly of going any other way than God’s way.
- D. **Song of Solomon-The Emotions** (heart). A majority have seen this as the love between God and His people, though it certainly reflects human marriage. But it’s hard to believe that human marriage equals the Song of Songs!

C. **PROPHETS** (17).

1. **CONTENT:**
 - a. *Predictions.*
 - b. *Preaching.*
2. **THE ISSUE: LOYALTY!** The prophets who prophesied during the time of the kings, told them they were in a covenant relationship with God *and were failing!* The people weren’t loyal. Ultimately the prophets failed (II Chron. 36:15-16). Notice that finally there was no remedy, even by God. A person can wreck his wristwatch to the point where no one can restore it. So too we can ruin the inner man, the conscience. We can make decisions that cut down or eliminate our options. Those prophets would tell them that “*God is going to change your stony heart into a fleshy heart.*” **The prophets preached good things, but they didn’t have the power to change the inner man.**
3. **FUNCTION: So the prophetic books “show the need for a PERFECT PROPHET” (i.e. Jesus Christ).** Compare Mal. 4:6, where the last word of the Old Testament is “*curse.*” W.H. Griffith Thomas said: “*The Old Testament is a book of unfulfilled prophecies and unexplained ceremonies, and therefore as a reader it leaves you with unsatisfied longings.*” So the entire Old Testament sets us up for that **PERFECT PRIEST, KING, & PROPHET!** Turning the page after the final word of the OT (“*curse*”), we jump 400 years, and its titled “*The New Agreement*” (i.e. *New Testament*).”³
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³ All above by Minnick.

II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. **THE GOSPELS** (i.e. *Good News-4 books*). So if I'm leaving a section (OT) that left me with *unfulfilled desires, un-kept laws & insufficient sacrifices, what's the good news?*
1. Matt. 1:1-6: "*Son of Abraham & Son of David*"-Not such good news.
 2. Mk. 1:1: "*Son of God*"-Now that would be good news, but confusing, perhaps. So we go to...
 3. John 1:1 -This explains how the above two concepts make sense i.e. *this man is God!*

FUNCTION (*of the Gospels*): **INTRODUCES TWO THINGS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST:**

- a. **THE PERSON OF CHRIST.**
- b. **THE WORK OF CHRIST.**

These are the two things the gospels do. But His sayings are not fully explained, and His teachings are not fully understood (even by His disciples). **The Gospels are basically Introductory.** Acts 1:1 shows us that the Gospel of Luke was an introductory "*Life of Christ.*"

- B. **THE ACTS... OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST!** (*Acts of the Apostles?* They would have disagreed with that title!). Note who sent out the Holy Spirit and inaugurated the church: JESUS CHRIST! (2:34)
1. In the book of Acts the apostles repeatedly denied that they did anything! Rather, they said that Christ did it! e.g. 3:12. In Acts the apostles are witnessing to the true doer, but Christ is the power behind it!
 2. **FUNCTION: The PROCLAMATION of THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS, THE MESSIAH!** (i.e. the same purpose as the Gospels)
- C. **EPISTLES** (i.e. letters). The apostles wrote them. Not one of them was written to a lost person. But you see, whenever you witness to somebody and proclaim Christ (i.e. the Gospels and Acts), people have questions. So the epistles answer those questions. ***They supply the interpretation*** cf. Rom. 1:1. Note there that Paul is separated unto what? "*The Gospel.*" The Gospel concerns a person. "*Were 456 Messianic prophecies right?*" Answer: Acts 1:3. **Yes**, the facts confirm that we are right! (Acts 1:3-5). So the epistolary section of the New Testament shows us that our interpretation is right.
1. **Romans.** The *first epistle*. It deals with **salvation** (i.e. justification, etc.).
 2. **Jude.** If we go to the *last epistle* (i.e. Jude), what did he want to write about? **Salvation!** (v.3). But instead, Jude says to "*earnestly contend for... all those doctrines that were taught.*" In the first 20 books (epistles).
- D. **REVELATION** (1:1): "Is the book subjective or objective? *Does it reveal Christ, or is it Christ's revelation to us?* Answer: **Yes!** It does reveal Christ (He opens the seals, etc.), but He is also the one who reveals it to us.

1. **FUNCTION: CONSUMMATION** (not of the *person* of Christ, and not of the *work*, since He never ends). **It is the consummation of the work of Christ IN HISTORY.** If a plane is going from New York City to Los Angeles and stops in Iowa, it's an *end*, but not a *consummation*. But if it gets to Los Angeles, **THAT** is a CONSUMMATION. **So in a sense, the whole Bible is a witness to and the story of, CHRIST!**
2. **THE BIBLE IS LIKE A "CAMEO."** A cameo is a round or oval shaped display with a picture or figure in the center, surrounded by pearls and jewels. Our error is that we tend to focus so much on the pearls (i.e. the individual portions of Scripture) that we lose sight of the **FACE** that is central, i.e. **JESUS CHRIST!**⁴

⁴ All above from Minnick.