



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## *Understanding the Bible: Seeing Jesus as the Story of the Scriptures*

LUKE 24:25-27; 44-48

JANUARY 12, 2012

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Perhaps many of us at the beginning of a new year have made the commitment to read through the Bible. We may have started in Genesis and cruised through the familiar accounts of God's creation and man's fall. Exodus goes well too with the exciting accounts of God delivering His people from Egypt and leading them into the Promised Land. However, when we get to Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy things can bog down as we begin to read of the Law, the tabernacle, and the sacrificial system. At this point we may become discouraged with our reading and give up, or switch to the New Testament which we may seem to find easier to understand. We also may quite seldom hear messages preached from the Old Testament in our churches. Even in our ministry over the past seven years in the capitol we have not spent much time in the Old Testament, other than our studies in Psalm 119. Why is this? Why do we tend to neglect the Old Testament in our reading, preaching, and study of the scriptures? There may be several reasons why this is so.

We may consider the "Old" in the Old Testament as being a negative thing, meaning it is archaic or obsolete, something to be passed over in favor of the "new". Many see a radical contrast in the descriptions of God in the Old and New Testaments. The "Old Testament God" is depicted as harsh, wrathful, and angry while the "New Testament God" (meaning Jesus Christ) is seen as loving, forgiving, and merciful. Still others see the Bible as a rule book or guide book, with the harsh rules of the Old Testament being superseded by the kinder, gentler guidelines Christ taught in the New. Our view of the Bible as a whole, both Old and New Testaments, will greatly affect how we approach it, study it, and understand it.

We must consider the fact that the Bible is comprised of 66 separate books written over a period of about 1,500 years by over 40 authors from all walks of life, with different kinds of personalities, and in all sorts of situations. It was written in three languages on three continents, and it covers hundreds of controversial subjects. We might question how we can make sense of such a disparate collection of writings. We can do so when we realize that the whole Bible fits together into one cohesive story with an appropriate beginning, a logical ending, a central character, and a consistent theme.

The key to understanding the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is know, understand, and keep this theme always in mind as we read and study the scriptures. We find that Jesus Himself describes for us this theme or central story of the Bible in the compelling and encouraging account of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus following the crucifixion of Christ. I encourage you to read Luke 24 in its entirety, but the account can be summarized as follows:

Following Jesus' crucifixion two of His disciples were traveling to a village located about seven miles from Jerusalem. The account says **they talked together of all these things which had happened.** As they talked, **Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.** Jesus asked them what they were talking about and why they were sad. The disciples then asked Jesus an ironic question: **"Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"** (vs. 18) They summed up their discouragement with the following words: **"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel"**. Jesus proceeded to encourage them and teach them that all the scriptures pointed to the fact that the Messiah, the Savior had to suffer and die from sin, and rise again. The account ends with their eyes being opened to recognize Jesus and their joyous return to Jerusalem to share the good news with the rest of the disciples.

In the verses we want to focus on in our study, Jesus lays out for us the theme or central story and message of the whole Bible:

***<sup>25</sup>And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"<sup>26</sup>"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"<sup>27</sup>And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. Luke 24:25-27***

Just a short time later, appearing again to His followers after His resurrection, Jesus taught them with similar words:

***<sup>44</sup> Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and***

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### BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDY: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON**, TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAYS 8:00 A.M. & NOON** TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

# West Virginia

## Understanding the Bible: Seeing Jesus as the Story of the Scriptures

*the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”<sup>45</sup> Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,<sup>46</sup> and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day;<sup>47</sup> and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> “You are witnesses of these things. Luke 24:44-48*

Jesus spoke of “*the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures*” (vs 27) and of “*all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms*” (vs 44). This refers to Old Testament scriptures. He points to all three divisions of the Old Testament, the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms and teaches these early believers how they all point to Him. “The Law” refers to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. “The Prophets” refers to what we call the major and minor prophetic books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Malachi. Jesus says even the poetic books like Psalms ultimately point to Him.

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**THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE IS TO REALIZE THAT JESUS - HIS PERFECT LIFE, HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH ON THE CROSS FOR THE REDEMPTION OF FALLEN PEOPLE, AND HIS RESURRECTION - IS THE CENTRAL THEME OR STORY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE.**

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The two disciples on the road to Emmaus had missed the true meaning of the Bible because they did not understand that it all spoke about and pointed to Jesus as a suffering Savior. Jesus explained to them and “opened their minds to understand” that the theme, the story of the Bible was HIM and His suffering, death, and resurrection. He taught them, and us, that the key to understanding the Bible is to realize that Jesus, His perfect life, His suffering and death on the cross for the redemption of fallen people, and His resurrection is the central theme or story of the whole Bible.

The biblical theme of redemption through Christ has been summarized in many ways. Some describe this overarching story as that of creation, fall, and redemption (or, as one teacher wrote, “God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it”). My favorite is simply this: The

theme or story of the Old Testament: “Promises Made”. The story of the New Testament: “Promises Kept”.<sup>1</sup>

In our studies this session we will see how the Old Testament indeed points to Christ and His suffering and death for sinners. In doing so we will follow the framework Jesus used, looking at the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms and how they all point to Him.

### CONCLUSION

Jesus spoke elsewhere of the importance of understanding that He was the central message of the Old Testament scriptures. He warns of the danger of reading and studying the Bible but missing the fact that it speaks of Him as the way of salvation with these words:

*<sup>39</sup>“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;<sup>40</sup> and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life...*

*<sup>46</sup>“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. <sup>47</sup>“But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” John 5:39-40; 64-47*

Paul also spoke of this theme of the Old Testament scriptures as well:

*<sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,<sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...*

*1 Corinthians 15:3-4*

If we lose sight of the overall story or theme of the Bible, then we may begin to see the injunctions, commands, and exhortations of scripture (both Old and New Testaments) as standing alone rather than implications of the grace of God in Christ. As a result we begin to see the essence of Christianity as a matter of keeping the rules, of “being good”. The story of the Bible is that we cannot keep the rules. But Jesus did, suffering and dying for our sins so that when we repent and trust Him for salvation, our sins are forgiven and His goodness is credited to us. This is the story that is the key to understanding Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> Dever, Mark. *The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made*. Crossway Books. 2006. Kindle Edition. Pg. 22.