

The Bible - What is it? (part 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 August 2014

Preacher: Steve Ellacott

[0 : 01] If you've been following this series we've been doing on basic doctrines that Phil has been doing most of, and Chris has done a bit as well, this is the first bit that I've done.

But it won't have escaped your notice that we've been making extensive use of this book or one rather like it. And it's a fair question to ask why do we do that?

I mean, we might have expected, for instance, that Phil would stand up here and present to us the latest theological research, the latest results of scholarship.

But largely he doesn't do that, though it's always a good idea to be up to date with the scholarship. But that's not what he stands up here to do. We could perhaps repeat to you the words of some spiritual leader, say the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Pope or somebody like that.

But we don't do that either. We could do what the Quakers do and we could sit quietly and wait for the inner light to appear in our hearts and perhaps try and hear the word of God directly in our hearts.

[1 : 15] Or we could do what some American churches do, some of the more extreme ones. We could sing exciting songs and we could have live snakes to wind us up a bit and hope that through that excitement we could hear the words of God in that state of spiritual excitement.

But we don't do all of these things, any of those things. Instead, what we do is refer to this book. And it's a fair enough question to ask why do we do that?

What is this book anyway? On the slide there, I've got a rather nice Victorian Bible at home and that's the title page from it.

It doesn't show up wonderfully well on the slide, but it's got all these rather fine coloured illustrations. What does the title say?

Well, that one says Holy Bible. Some of your Bibles may just say simply Bible on the front. What does that mean? Well, it means book, so that doesn't really tell you a great deal, does it?

[2 : 29] It may say Holy Bible, as this one does. Well, that tells you I suppose it's some sort of religious book, but not much more than that, really.

What is this book? That's not really that helpful, is it, the title page? Sometimes it's referred to as the scriptures, but even that just means the writing, so that doesn't tell you a lot either.

What exactly is this book? Well, it's actually not a single book at all, in fact. It's a collection of 66 individual books, which somewhat confusingly we usually refer to as the books of the Bible, so the books of the book, so it's a somewhat confusing terminology really, but that's what we do.

And of course, strictly speaking, what we have here is a translation of the Bible into English. This one's the 1974, I think it is, translation of the New International Version.

There's a later version of the New International Version. The one that you, I've got the title page there, is a King James Version, a much older translation.

[3 : 45] And of course, this book has been translated into many languages. I did ask Michael if he had his Italian one with him, but he hasn't bought it today. But this one's German. It says, Die Heilige Schrift, which I think means the Holy Writings, the Holy Scriptures.

It's been translated into many languages. And it consists, of course, of two sections, which we call the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In fact, you probably can't read it, but this scroll bit here says, Containing the Old and New Testaments. So, have a look at the contents page of your Bibles.

It's usually about page three on the Church Bibles. And as you can see there, it talks about the books of the Old Testament and the books of the New Testament.

What are these? Well, I'm quoting here from the Lyon Electronic Library. The Hebrew Old Testament. The Old Testament is made up of 39 books of the Christian Bible.

[5 : 03] These books are the holy writings or scriptures of the Jewish people and their religion, Judaism. They were first written down in Hebrew and Aramaic, the ancient languages of the Jews.

Many of these writings are so old, little is now known of their origins. The Jewish scribes used to make new copies of Hebrew sacred writings from time to time.

But documents did not last long in the climate of the Bible lands. And so we rarely find very old copies of the writings. End of the quote from the Lyon Electronic Library.

But why these 39 books particularly? Which books were regarded as we say the canonical books? Those as represented true scripture?

We know that they were those that were regarded as having priestly and prophetic authority. And in fact, there's a strong Jewish tradition that says it was the scribe Ezra who finally sort of made the judgment and edited, as it were, the Jewish scriptures and arranged and collected the material.

[6 : 10] Not absolutely certain it was Ezra, but it was certainly from the priestly and scribe class of the Jewish teachers. Just to confuse matters further, there's also a Greek translation of the Old Testament which is called the Septuagint because it was translated by 70 scholars.

And the New Testament writers, when they quote the Old Testament, quite often quote from the Septuagint. Well, what about the New Testament? 27 books of the New Testament, by contrast, were written over a quite short period of time, probably less than a century.

They described the life and teaching of Jesus and the spread of the gospel, the message about Jesus after his death and resurrection. But just as there were many other old writings dating from the Old Testament period, there were many other writings that refer to Jesus one way or another. How do we know what are the books of the scripture? The key question that was asked is whether these books had apostolic authority, not necessarily were written by the apostles, but were written with the approval and authority of the apostles.

And in fact, it wasn't until the Council of Carthage in AD 397 that the final list was finally agreed, but this requirement that they had apostolic authority and were consistent with the apostolic teaching was an important one and most of the books had actually been accepted as scripture much earlier than that.

[7 : 49] Now, there's one surprising thing about the New Testament, and that's that it's written in Greek. Now, why is it surprising? Because Jesus probably didn't speak Greek, certainly not in his everyday teaching and life.

He would have spoken either in classical Hebrew or in Aramaic, a sort of more popular language that the Jews used. If you think sort of Yiddish today, Aramaic is a similar sort of slightly downgraded version of Hebrew.

And so when we read the words of Jesus in the New Testament, you need to bear in mind we're actually reading them already in translation from Aramaic into Greek. And that's why the exact wording sometimes differs from gospel to gospel.

So we have a large collection of religious literature here in various forms. Some of it's history, some of it's proverbs and sayings, there's poetry, there's prophecy in the sense of people speaking the words of God in a direct way.

There are visions and symbolic sections we call apocalyptic, which means revealed or uncovered. Sometimes a bit of a struggle to work out what they mean.

[9 : 22] There are letters. Some letters are on giving practical advice, some letters are essentially theological treatises. There's at least one academic exposition meditating on the meaning of life, the book we call Ecclesiastes.

There's a dramatised debate on suffering and the will of God that we call the book of Job. And you could probably find other sorts of literature as well.

These books are written by a variety of authors in a lot of different styles. Some cases a book has several authors. In some cases it's just one.

Some cases it's clear who the author is. Some cases it's disputed. And in some cases we have no idea at all who the author was. The earliest books date from prehistory.

I don't know if you've ever thought of this before, but they couldn't be written down until the invention of writing. And the invention of writing was only about 5,000 years ago in Sumeria, where, of course, is where the earliest books of the Bible come from, that part of the world.

[10 : 42] They invented writing about 5,000 years ago. The newest books are about 1,900 years old. Now, as I've already said, the Bible has all sorts of different kinds and styles of writing.

So I'd just like to give you an example of this. You can look them up if you want to. I'll read them out to you. If you read the story of Solomon, you'll find that he was somewhat obsessed with women. And in 1 Kings 10 and 11, we have some sober history, which recorded the details and also assessing the ups and downs, the good and the bad, of Solomon's relationship with women. And it's very balanced, neither demonising Solomon nor whitewashing him. And it's the mark, I think, of a good historian or chronicler. Let me just read a short passage here. This is 1 Kings 11, verses 1 to 6. King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. [11:58] They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, you must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.

He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

He followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done.

What we have here is the cool, measured words of a historian, a chronicler. We're presented with the whole historical data, in this case the statistics, and where the wives came from.

It's calm, it's balanced, and we get an almost dispassionate assessment of the impact of Solomon's relationships with these women, don't we?

[13:08] What we have here is chronical history. Now there's another book that takes a very different take on Solomon's relationship with women.

It's called The Song of Solomon. It's written down, it's written about, and it's very possibly written by Solomon. I said before, when I did a couple of sermons on this, I think the best, it's best to think of it as an opera.

It deals in very graphic terms with the human experience of love. It talks about the ecstasy of love fulfilled and the despair of desire thwarted.

It shows how love can skew calm judgment, not in the way the historian says that, says it in a very different way. It shows how the intensity of the relationship affects those around, describes love as being stronger than death.

And in this case, unlike that historical passage, it's clearly not meant as an actual literal description of the events. One doesn't normally converse in poetry. Rather, it captures in language the intensity of the passion.

[14:21] So again, I'll just read you a short sample passage from this book. The speaker in this passage is the beloved, who's the Shunammite woman, who's the female lead in this drama.

So it's not Solomon himself speaking. Again, it's his beloved. And she speaks in these terms, Solomon chapter 2, 16 to 3, verse 5.

My lover is mine and I am his. He browses among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, turn, my lover, and be like a gazelle or like a young stag on the rugged hills.

All night long on my bed, I looked for the one my heart loves. I looked for him, but did not find him. I will get up now and go about the city through its streets and squares.

I will search for the one my heart loves. So I looked for him, but did not find him. The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. Have you seen the one my heart loves?

[15:24] Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go till I'd brought him to my mother's house, to the room of the one who conceived me.

Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field. Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires. It could hardly be more different in style and content, could it, and that calm history that we read in 1 Kings.

So the Bible is a collection of writings. It's obviously of some historical and cultural importance, but surely it's not more than that, is it?

Why should people in the 21st century be concerned with these ancient texts? Surely it's just a text for the historians of the ancient world. Why should it be relevant to us some 1900 years later after the last book was written?

And there are two reasons we can give for that and really for the rest of our talk today and next week, I'm going to be looking at those two reasons.

[16:48] First of all, because it is a record, or purports to be a record, of God's dealing with mankind and more specifically, more particular, God's determination to save mankind from himself and his own folly.

And secondly, it makes the even more remarkable claim that behind the variety of human authorship, and of course there is a variety of human authorship, but behind that, there is in fact one divine author.

That this Bible, this book, with all its different styles and different ways of speaking, is ultimately the work of one author, that the Bible was written, in fact, by God himself.

So those are two remarkable claims and we need to think about them and evaluate them. Well, certainly the Bible provides a historical record of the Jewish people and their God, together with an early history of Christianity.

I can hardly argue about that. But on the level of human testimony, when it's writing history, when it's compared with other historical records, we find that it's largely consistent.

[18:11] Of course, there are always disputes over dates and so on. Scholars spend lots of time arguing about the date of the escape of the Jews from Egypt, for instance, because it's a bit tricky to tie it in with the dates of the Egyptian records.

But still, nothing that would cause a serious doubt as a historical record. And indeed, how, perhaps, see how accurate the historical record is.

We can just look, think about 2 Kings, chapters 18 and 19. If you want to look in your Bible, you can look on page 390, but I'm not actually going to read this passage out because it's a bit too long.

But in this passage, we read of the invasion of Judah by the Assyrians. And this tells us that Judah's second city, Lachish, fell to the Assyrians, but that the capital city, Jerusalem, did not.

Now, does that match up with the historical records that we have? Well, you don't actually have to go to Assyria to find out. One of the advantages of having at one time ruled an empire is that a lot of stuff was removed from where it should be and brought to Britain.

[19:30] And so you only need to go, in fact, as far as the British Museum in London and you'll find that there's a frieze which literally, graphically, it's carved pictures, carved into stone, describes the siege and fall of the city of Lachish and the Assyrian invasion.

And it really is quite graphic. You can see all the ancient world siege technology, how they used to build mounds to breach the walls and so on.

And you can see how the city fell and how the captives were carried away from the city. It's a really quite fascinating thing to go and look at. But that's where it stops.

There's no frieze or other record describing the fall of Jerusalem because it didn't. And the Assyrian records are very quiet about that.

But 2 Kings tells us what actually happened. It says an angel of the Lord intervened. If we read the description, it doesn't seem to be sort of the archangel Michael with a sword.

[20:39] It's probably some deadly disease or something. But it smote the Assyrian army. It says I think 185,000 I think of them died.

I think that's the figure. You can look it up. And the army was forced to withdraw. The Assyrian records are silent over this defeat. They didn't like to talk about the defeats.

And shortly later, Sennacherib the king was assassinated. And the city of Jerusalem didn't fall to the Assyrians. It didn't fall in fact until the Babylonian invasion a century or so later, which is also described in detail in the books of the Kings and Chronicles and which ties up again very accurately with the Babylonians records.

So the Bible in human terms wasn't written by people who were stupid or ignorant or interested in making up fairy tales. And so these claims that they made have met with the living God and to be writing the very words of God really ought to be taken at least seriously considered.

So let's see if the Bible does indeed make these claims for itself and see if we can evaluate them and examine some of the things that the Scripture says about itself.

[22:01] Now actually the development of the understanding of Scripture in the Scripture is roughly chronological. So I will go through and pick out some main points.

And of course you'll realise this is an absolutely enormous subject and I can't explore every avenue in detail but we'll try and get an overview.

And in fact this morning we're just going to look at the Old Testament view of God's Word and next week we'll try and see what the New Testament says about the importance of Scripture which does give a somewhat different slant on it actually.

but we'll look first of all this week at what the Old Testament says about it. So I'd like to look at it under four headings. First of all God speaks and man speaks.

Secondly look briefly at the law of Moses. I'll look a little bit about law wisdom and meditation how we're supposed to read the Scripture although Phil is going to say a lot more about this in a couple of weeks so I won't say too much about that and look at the prophetic message what the prophets thought they were doing or said they were doing.

[23 : 10] So I'd like to look at those four things. So you might like to turn in your Bible to Genesis the beginning of the Bible the first few chapters of the Bible I think it's page three in the church Bibles.

Genesis 1 verse 3 says the following and God said let there be light and there was light and I'd like to focus on the word said there.

God spoke move on to verse 22 it's talking about the winged creatures and the water creatures. In verse 22 it says God blessed them and said be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas and let the birds increase in the earth.

And again look at the speech words there God blessed them and he spoke he said move on to verse 26 where we find something slightly different.

[24 : 32] Verse 26 it says God said let us make man in our image in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air over the livestock over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

Interesting there you notice it's plural. God said let us make man now we won't go into here who he was talking to but obviously there is communication of some sort there.

It says let us he's talking to somebody and we notice that God blessed the animals but if we move forward to verse 28 when it talks about the creation of man it says God blessed them and said to them different he didn't speak directly to the animals but he did speak directly to man God blessed them and said to them be fruitful and increase in number fill the earth and subdue it and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. I'll look forward to chapter 2 verse 19 which says the following the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air he brought them to the man to see what he would name them and whatever the man called each living creature that was its name or in chapter 2 verse 23 Adam discovers woman he says the man said this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man now if you're being sceptical you might want to debate how literally you're meant to take the details of the story but certainly it tells us that speech starts with God and what is completely undeniable is that humans can speak all humans unless they're very badly damaged in some way can speak we are all one species it's a remarkable thing in itself that the the

Inuit of northern Canada can interbreed with the Maori from New Zealand even though they may have been separated from thousands of years so we're all one species but more to the point is we all have language we all speak and that's fundamentally different from animal communication I couldn't find the source of this quote but it makes it very clear bees can only talk about honey humans can talk about anything language gives us an entirely different perception of the world than is possible without it and the Bible claims indeed that that language is part of the image of God and that it enables communication between humans but also between God and man and as we've already seen language can change our view of the world we can illuminate the mind with calm objective history we can inflame the passions and emotions with poetry we can name the animals as Adam did we can study and analyse and classify the world around us in ways that the animals themselves can't their perception of the world is immediate ours sorry to use long words but the only words

[28 : 33] I could think of to say ours is abstracted and it's constructed we construct the world around us our view of the world around us by language you can use language to talk a potential suicide down off beachy head that would certainly change their life in a radical way you can use language to prepare a nation for war the threat of Nazi invasion in this country is long past yet you can still hear those if you hear those words of Churchill you still get a tingle down your spine don't you we will defend our island we will fight them on the beaches we will never surrender can't do

Churchill's accent Phil would do it much better than me but the way he says it is so portentous we will never surrender that's a use of language to prepare a nation for the threat of invasion and war Phil perhaps that our current western leaders have forgotten this sort of rhetoric but unfortunately our jihadist enemies haven't and then finally man's own ingenuity found ways of freezing and preserving language and I've just pointed out writing down wasn't invented until about 5,000 years ago it's an aspect of human technology writing and from 5,000 years ago up to the internet we've had this perception that words capture knowledge knowledge if we preserve the words and we preserve that knowledge and if you propagate the words you disseminate knowledge and that's the same thought that those ancient Sumerians had who thought we will write down the records of the king we'll find a way to preserve them for the future and of course it's the same thought we have today when we go on

Google or Wikipedia and try and find words that people have written about a particular subject the words both preserve the knowledge and enable us to spread it and before we leave Genesis let me just note one more thing Genesis 3 verses 9 to 10 this was after Adam and Eve had sinned of course had eaten the fruit of the tree and disobeyed God the Lord God called to the man where are you he answered I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked so I hid I won't read any more of it but of course what goes on is the conversation between God and Eve which really

God's plan for the future God wants to talk to man even if man doesn't always want to answer and will you treat God's call like one of those annoying phone calls you get about PPI sometimes on the landline we don't get anything else except junk calls nowadays and you always in two minds whether even to bother to answer it or not you do of course because it might be something important but most of the time it isn't but will we treat God God's Is that what it is?

! Is that better? Try that. Oh Hello? Still making a noise. Okay.

[32 : 39] Do you want me to take this off then? Yeah. Is that okay? We'll use the other mic. Yes, so will you listen to the voice of God or will you treat it like one of those annoying phone calls is the question that we have to answer.

Well, let's move on to the law of Moses. I'm just going to read two passages from this. First five books of the Bible are called the books of Moses not that he wrote all of them he can't have done because they describe his death.

They're referred to as the books of Moses and they talk about Moses bringing the law of God to the people to his people the people of God.

So first of all Leviticus 18 1 to 5 it's on page 120 if you want to look it up I'll read it out to you. It starts with God speaking and then Moses speaking the Lord said to Moses speak to the Israelites and say to them I am the Lord your God you must not do as they do in Egypt where you used to live and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you do not follow their practices you must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees I am the Lord your God keep my decrees and laws for the man who obeys them will live by them I am the Lord and then after Moses has finished teaching them all the laws he this is his own words now Deuteronomy chapter 4 verses 5 to 9 he says the following see

I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of observe them carefully for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations who will hear about all these decrees and say surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people what other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near to us whenever we pray to him and what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let children and to their children after them so what is it that God wants to talk about well he wants to tell his people how to live he says he's given them wise guidance in the laws that

[35 : 40] Moses wrote down and although it was Moses who wrote them down and it was Moses who spoke them and yet we're told they're a message from God himself and you'll notice also the law of Moses isn't just some dry and dusty legal code that gets shoved up on a shelf somewhere and only referred to when you absolutely have to the aim is to give the people understanding and wisdom and indeed life and indeed to have the law there was a sign that God is near and that he will respond when they pray to him so that leads us doesn't it to the understanding and as I said Phil

is going to talk about how to read the Bible the week after next so we can be brief on this but the teaching on how to respond to the words of

God give us a clue as to the nature of what the word of God is and so it's worth having a brief look at it now Psalm 119 which Michael wrote part of is a meditation on the use of God's law let me read to you here just a few different verses from the Psalm verses 9 to 16 it's headed Beth the Psalm is actually an acrostic poem each section starts with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet and this is the second section Beth how can a young man keep his way pure by living according to your word I seek you with all my heart do not let me stray from your commands I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you praise be to you O Lord teach me your decrees with my lips

I recount all the laws that come from your mouth I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways I delight in your decrees I will not neglect your word look at the verbs he uses here to describe his relationship to the word I will live according to your word I will seek you with all my heart do not let me stray from your commands I have hidden your word in my heart praise to you oh lord teach me your decrees I recount all the laws that come from your mouth I rejoice in following your statutes I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways in other words I sit down and think about it I delight in your decrees and finally sums up saying I will not neglect your word I'm going to keep doing all these things we had a slightly different slant in

Proverbs chapter one Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature or the wisdom writings and it gives a slightly different slant it's a slightly different form of literature to the law but the basic principle of how we understand it is the same and this is just the introductory section to the book of Proverbs Proverbs chapter one verses one to seven wisdom wisdom and some of it might be hard to understand and verse six it talks about the riddles which is

I gather quite a good translation of the Hebrew dark sayings sayings that you have to think about to try and understand what they actually mean so we can think of the law which lays down long term principles and the wisdom and the poetry books provide hooks on which we can stimulate our minds and our emotions to increased understanding but there is also in the Old Testament there is prophecy and the job of the prophet is to speak the word of the Lord directly into the current situation now there are a lot of prophets in the Old Testament and we can't talk about all of them so I thought I would just pick one let's pick Amos you will find the book of Amos I think it is page 916 in the church bibles towards the end of the Old Testament so Amos chapter 1 verses 1 to 3 just in terms of the geography I should say that

[41 : 46] Tekoa is actually in Judah in the southern kingdom but Amos takes a trip north the words of Amos one of the shepherds of Tekoa what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake when Isaiah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehorash was king of Israel he said that's Amos said he said the Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem the pastures of the shepherds dry up and the top of Carmel withers this is what the Lord says for three sins of Damascus even for four I will not turn back my wrath because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth a lot more in the same vein this is not very politically correct because Amos is from Judah and talks about Zion Jerusalem which is in Judah and where the

Lord is supposed to speak from and Damascus of course is the capital of the northern kingdom well it's in the northern kingdom anyway the important city of the northern kingdom Israel so it's not very politically correct but Amos says two things first of all he says these are my words these are the words of Amos son of one of the shepherds of Tekoa but he also says this is what the Lord says that only his words they're the words of the Lord himself Amos actually was challenged about this by the Israelites the northern kingdom weren't too keen about him coming up from Judah and stirring things up and so he responds in turn towards the end of the book Amos chapter 7 I'll read you verses 12 to 16 Amaziah was a priest a priest of the northern kingdom though not a priest in Jerusalem Amaziah said to Amos get out you seer go back to the land of Judah earn your bread there and do your prophesying there he was suggesting that he was actually only in it for the money don't prophesy any more at Bethel because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom it means of course the northern kingdom not Jerusalem Amos answered Amaziah I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son but I was a shepherd and I also took care of sycamore fig trees in other words I'm not a professional prophet I'm not doing it for the money I had a perfectly good income before that I was a farmer but he says the Lord took me from tending the flock and

said to me go prophesy to my people Israel notice he says the northern kingdom and then now then hear the word of the Lord so Amos wasn't in it for the money he didn't need to be a professional prophet to earn his living he could have stayed in Judah except the

Lord had told him to go to Israel to the northern kingdom and he was doing it because he realised that what he was speaking were the very words of the Lord and then he comes up and says at the end now then hear the words of the Lord it's not me you've got to listen to I mean I'm just some Judean shepherd you could ignore me if you want but these are the words of the!

So we've looked at this we've seen that God speaks and man speaks we've seen that the law of Moses was regarded as the very words of God himself we've seen how we're supposed to receive the words by meditating on them and studying them and achieving wisdom through them and we've seen that the prophets also claimed that their words were the very words of God himself this is the passage actually that part of the passage that Chris quoted in our prayer meeting this morning I was also going to finish with it the last book in the Bible in the Old Testament is Malachi Malachi Malachi actually isn't even a proper name it just means my messenger it might have been his name but it might have just been a term to refer to him well how would you finish all this book of wisdom well it actually finishes with a curse just read the last couple of verses verses five and six the last two verses of the

[47 : 14] Old Testament it says see I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers or perhaps not or else I will come and strike the land with a curse it's not a matter of take it or leave it we have to judge for ourselves whether these are the very words of God and therefore we can't afford not to listen to them or whether it's all just made up stuff but the Bible says that God is on the line to you to say will you pick up or will you just assume it's a junk call and ignore it is the Bible's claim to be God's word to mankind credible well if we read it we find out that it is

I think it was J.B. Phillips one of the Bible scholars who said the Bible really in the end authenticates itself when you read it when we read it it speaks to us as being the word of God and the Bible doesn't tell us everything that we might need to know about anything it does tell us a little bit about farming and a little bit about politics and a little bit about economics and medicine and arts and crafts it doesn't tell you very much about those things that it says fairly certainly it says absolutely nothing at all about nuclear physics or computer programming and yet these are things these are useful things to study things we ought to know about but the Bible tells us about the most important things most important thing it tells us about the nature of mankind and the state of mankind and what God is doing about that and Malachi promised didn't he a prophet who would turn the hearts of their fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers though interestingly when Jesus came he said a man's enemies might be those of his own household but the prophet came and the

Bible points in fact to Jesus Christ and we'll see that as we look at what the New Testament says about scripture next week but we couldn't finish except with that promise of a prophet who would indeed turn the hearts of the people back to God and that Jesus Christ is the prophet and a priest and a king it's the prophet who declares the words of God to us he's the priest who makes peace with God for us so the law doesn't condemn us and he's the king who is the law giver himself the very source of the words so we ignore the scriptures at our peril and that's why Phil and Chris have been taking their doctrine from the scriptures because it claims to be the very words of God to us of the and the and and the and and