

The Internal Unity of Scripture

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Bill, for those well-meant sentiments.

Now what I have to do, having stopped you all in your tracks, I suppose, is to try and start you again. And that is what this topic of mine, that we are exploring this morning, is meant, I hope with God's blessing, will have the effect of doing.

I think that since we are dealing directly with the Word of God, we would be wise before we really get down to business to pray for the light and help of the Spirit of God.

So, before we do anything more, please bow your heads and pray with me. Almighty Father, we thank you for your Word. And we ask that you will open our eyes, that we may see some of the wondrous things embodied and proclaimed within it.

As did the psalmist, so do we. We acknowledge our need of teaching from heaven, and we look to you to give it to us now.

[1 : 31] In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. The heading that I have on my notes is Grasping the Internal Unity of Scripture.

Why should I have chosen to speak on this topic? Answer. Two reasons. The first is the fundamental one. I believe that this is a study which we need.

Yes, we are evangelicals. Yes, we know in broad terms that the Bible is the Word of God. That it is inspired.

Verbally inspired, I hope we would all be willing to say. Because if the words are wrong, well, the sentiment won't be clear. And I believe that in the Bible, the words are right so that the sentiment is very clear.

And I put that down to divine inspiration. We all of us have heard preachers and teachers speak of the Bible as the maker's handbook for the human race.

[2 : 52] I'm sure you've all of you heard people like me refer to the Bible, as I for one frequently do, as a book to be read as a love letter from the God who made me and saves me.

You may know that in Calvin's Institutes, that classic, basic work that stands at the fountainhead of historic Protestant theology, Calvin invokes the thought that the Scriptures bear on the face of them, this is how he says it, the marks of their divinity, and anyone enlightened by the Holy Spirit cannot escape the perception that this is divine material.

Says Calvin, it's as clear a perception and as immediate as is our perception of sourness when we have lemon juice in our mouth and sweetness when we have sugar there.

And he says, having used this rather bold image, I speak of nothing but what every Christian experiences, though my words fall short of the reality.

I wonder if you and I could say amen to that and testify that, yes, most certainly that has been our experience.

[4 : 34] It was mine, I may say, if you'll allow me to be anecdotal for a moment. Mine quite vividly, more vividly, I think, than for most people. It was six weeks after Christ broke into my life in my first term at Oxford and I went to the Ivy Saturday Night Bible study and the guy who was leading that study was on something esoteric from either the 12th or 13th chapter of the Book of Revelation.

I can't remember which, but I know that it was one or the other. Because I remember when he started, my heart said, this is pretty way out stuff, that as we came out of the meeting, as I came out of the meeting, I found my heart was saying, now you know, don't you, that this is the Word of God and that all Scripture is the Word of God.

The fact that its first impression on you may be that this is a little bit way out, that is something that has to be replaced and will be replaced by the conviction that this is as much part of the Word of God as anything else.

Prior to that, for the six weeks since my conversion, I had carried with me the assumption that I picked up from secular sources in my earlier life that nobody can, no educated person anyway, can take the whole of the Bible seriously in these enlightened days.

These enlightened days, by the way, were 1944, if you can imagine how long ago that was. But now my heart was saying something rather different and I can remember the feeling of surprise, almost stunning, actually.

[6 : 37] I couldn't doubt that this was what the Lord was saying to me and it was the direct result of, I think, the reverence and care with which this good man had expounded whatever he was dealing with in Revelation 12 or 13.

something of that had been the trigger for God's communication of the right way to approach the whole Bible.

Well, what came clear to me then and has been clear to me ever since 1944 is something which I seek to share with people as widely and as emphatically as I can.

And that's what I plan to do this morning. So fasten your seatbelts, friends. I'm not going to pull any punches. I'm going to talk to you about the internal unity of the written Word of God.

That's what's coming. And I'm going to do so on the supposition that you already know something about this because the Holy Spirit has taught you. So we're together here.

[7 : 49] Right. Let's try then to be specific and go into a little detail about our common faith in the supernatural book the written Word of God.

I said though that I think we need to grasp the internal unity of Scripture better than most of us do. I don't find that these days evangelical folk for the most part know their Bibles as well as did the evangelicals by whom I was nurtured back in 1944.

And certainly when I got to study the Puritans which all of you I'm sure know that I've done quite a bit of I have been left feeling ever since I met the Puritans that they knew their Bible a great deal better than any of us.

I look around and I talk to people and I get the sense that not many folk today are very clear on how the Bible which is a complex and composite book as you know actually hangs together.

[9 : 08] You will all nod your heads when I say the Bible is a library 66 separate books yes and you will say yes. You will all nod your heads when I say the Bible is a kind of landscape of life an enormously varied book presenting an enormously wide panorama of God dealing with human beings of all sorts all sizes all conditions in all states and facing just about all life's problems that we ourselves could name.

Yes you'll nod your heads at that but when I say now are you as clear on the way in which it all hangs together as you are on the fact that yes it's a library with a wide range it's a landscape with a very broad coverage I would expect that most of us if we were honest would quietly say well I'm not quite sure that I do frankly alright then that's reason enough I think for me to be doing what I'm trying to do today what I want what you want is that all of us should get the full benefit of the written word of God which is given us for our learning for instance did you know that William Tyndale first significant translator of the Bible into English back in the 1520s wrote about the way to understand the text once you had it and said in the Bible there are three things to look for always look for them there's the law which sets

God's standards and tells us of his holiness and of our sinfulness which are things that we need to know about there are promises which tell us of God's saving grace in Christ which again we most certainly need to know about and there are examples we would say biographies any number of Bible biographies constituting examples of the life of faith what it means and what it leads to and the life of unbelief and disobedience and what that leads to look for the law the promises and the examples said Tyndale and you will find yourself taken straight away to the heart of all the scriptures well I wonder if we've ever got it as clear as that and then the

Puritan John Owen gives us this in a book titled Causes Ways and Means of Understanding the Mind of God in His Word Owen raises the question wouldn't it have been more straightforward if God had given us instead of these 66 books of spiritual all sorts a systematic theology textbook his words mean that although that isn't the phraseology that he uses and his answer to his own question is no it wouldn't have been an improvement on the wide range of spiritual all sorts that we have in the Bible there is so much more that we can learn from the histories the biographies the narratives the interactions between messengers of God and well folk who listened and folk who didn't all these things that are recorded for us in scripture from going through these narratives we

learn a great deal more than we would ever learn from a systematic theology textbook which simply taught us the verbal form of orthodox faith which we must defend against its critics what you have in the Bible is a portrayal from every standpoint of spiritual life and spiritual death and these are the things which we need to understand and given in the form in which we have it the Bible is the ideal and supremely fruitful source of that kind of learning and that sort of wisdom well

I think that Tyndale and Owen were right and what I hope that these two talks of mine will do is to help us to appreciate how right they were and to begin to get some of the benefit that they are talking about when they say these things and there is a second subordinate reason why I thought it good that I should give you these two talks in the world of Christian biblical scholarship at the present time after two centuries of taking the Bible to pieces and setting one piece against another and inviting us to conclude that there's nothing in the Bible that you can really trust the scholars have moved by a kind of pendulum swing to a fresh interest in the unity of scripture they study it they write about it it fills their minds they developed a vocabulary for doing this they talk about the canonical interpretation of scripture which is an academic phrase that means the interpreting of the [15:20] Bible as a whole and as a rule of faith for God's people scripture as a canon you see a standard of faith of life they talk learnedly about narrative theology which is a phrase expressing the idea that the backbone of the Bible is the story the history which evangelical preachers for centuries have been holding up and saying yes the heart of the Bible is its history it's his story God's story and what we are to learn from the Bible is how to get our story into God's story for his glory and for our blessing well modern scholars have caught up with that and they say the story of how God made a world and then as its creator became redeemer because of what had happened to disrupt the glorious order that he created and was now threatening to ruin human beings whom he created everything else in the Bible fits round the story and they have another technical term which they use it comes from the discussion of the postmodern philosophy which is something you have heard of and are quite entitled to keep clear of because it's a storm in an academic teacup the teacup is a big teacup and there's a great deal of talk about postmodern philosophy and postmodern culture and so on but while that is a fact of life these days the discussion doesn't go very deep and it isn't going to change the world and I think that ten years down the road postmodernism will be looked back to as something that was fashionable between about 1990 and 2010 something like that but which we've now got beyond but in the world of the technical discussion of postmodernism the word metanarrative has been thrown up and metanarrative is an academic technical term for the basic story that holds together all the subordinate stories and so shapes people's mindset well of course that word is pointing to something real our minds do get shaped by metanarratives views that is to say of what is really going on in the world the postmodernists say that the only true metanarrative for understanding life and appreciating today's culture is the recognition that there's no metanarrative in other words culture is fragmented and always will be well that's what they think

I believe as I say that this is a fashion that will pass but a Christian can make good use of that word metanarrative because for us the metanarrative which holds the Bible together the history which is his story it's precisely the good news of how our creator has become our redeemer and how the grace of God has saved us from sin and how the glory of God is finally going to be revealed in a new heaven a new earth a new community and a glory beyond this world which transcends our power to imagine well as I say all of this is going on amongst the learned only last week a journal came in and I noticed that I wasn't the only one who was planning to say what I just said because this journal also had said it the present work said a reviewer of a particular book is an attempt to read the Bible as a single coherent narrative whereas the last 200 years of critical biblical scholarship has highlighted the diversity within the

Bible our authors emphasize its unity comparing it and I liked this I hope you'll like it comparing it to a cathedral with varied features that become different doors from where we may come in and from which we can gain a perspective on God's whole stunning revelation it's a quote from the book the compulsion for this project comes from the conviction that unless Christians are constantly renewed by the meta-narrative of scripture their world view will be shaped by the various viewpoints up and running in contemporary culture and that these world views will then be the grid through which Christians read scripture and the result of this will be that scripture is seen as endorsing various worldly viewpoints that if the Bible were heard with clarity would instead be exposed as forms of ungodliness well there is a reviewer on the same wavelength as I have been on for these last ten minutes alright so you see what it is we're going to attempt we're going to zero in on the

meta-narrative and we are going to explore the internal links that hold together this whole kaleidoscopic panorama this whole wide range of diverse material about godliness and ungodliness we're going to try and see it within a clear frame and as having a clear structure just as we would seek to do if we were looking at a work of art like we did last week under Neil's guidance and like my friend Robert

Young will teach us to do any time that we ask him well now what's the starting point start here holy scripture the holy bible as we call it the holy bible that's the three words that are stamped on the back the spine of this book in front of me it's a composite as I said it's a complex item there are 66 items within it 39 of them we call the old testament and it took about a thousand years for all of that to be written and 29 of the items are called the new testament and it took no more than one generation for all of them to be put on paper the old testament is written nearly all in hebrew a bit in aramaic the new testament is written first to last in greek the history which is being narrated holds it all together as I've already said in general terms and there's a double focus actually in all the 66 books because they're concerned not only directly or indirectly with the history of god's work but they're concerned also equally and in parallel with the living of human life in the light of that history in the old testament that's what the prophets and the wisdom writers and the psalmists are teaching us and in the new testament that's what the epistles which follow the gospels and the acts the history books are also teaching us well that's what we're contemplating as we look at the bible now we are reading the bible the christian way continuity is claimed by all the authors of the new testament and by all christians who follow them continuity is claimed between jesus christ whom the new testament presents to us as god incarnate and our prophet priest and king the mediator of god's covenant and the channel of god's grace and of our spiritual life and the old testament with its anticipations and hopes and the christians and the jewish community which following the emergence of christianity and its theology in the first century defined itself as over against that theology it's rather important to realize that this is what shaped historic judaism the rabbis defined themselves as over against christianity at the end of the first century a.d they didn't renounce any of the hopes and anticipations of the old testament but they did insist that jesus christ wasn't it wasn't that is the fulfillment of what god had promised and that's where we are today but i speak as a christian to christians and i i work on the supposition that augustine was right when he said as he did the well i'm going to put it in english the way that it's usually translated augustine of course said it in latin the new testament in the

old is concealed and the old testament in the new is revealed that is to say the old testament really does point forward to the new testament and the new testament really does give you the clue to understanding the old testament at deepest level and the two bodies of material old and new testament together constitute the total single united coherent revelation of god all right you say what are the links in that that we can establish between old and new testament to spell out what this formula means well here i suggest a first list it's a list of common themes common purposes and it's rounded off by the reality of a common vocabulary common themes the central theme of both old and new testament is god god in action god in action as creator and as the god of providence and as the god of grace and god revealed in all of this as people are revealed by their actions as being holy what does that word holy mean well it's a bible word which gets its definition entirely from the way that the bible itself speaks of god's holiness and of god being holy and expressing his holy character and when we put together all the passages in which god's holiness is spoken of what we get is something like this god to start with is awesome for his greatness the first dimension of his holiness is what we nowadays call his transcendence he is at every point beyond our understanding greater than we are which is actually what you would expect of the creator when his creatures try to take the measure of he is surely going to transcend his creatures and if the creatures think they can understand him fully well then the question mark is to be put against the creatures ideas of themselves aren't they getting too big for their intellectual boost and if you know anything about the western thought movement that we call the enlightenment you will know that Bible believers for the most part believe that it's in that movement that the creature's mind gets too big for its boots and men in their thinking try to scale

[29 : 12] God down so that we can fully understand him and in so doing they falsify him and obscure his holiness in very significant ways awesomeness and transcendence though isn't the whole story purity on the moral front is also part of God's holiness he has standards absolute standards of good and evil right and wrong these standards are built into his nature and he labors in all that he does in the world to teach his human creatures the reality of his standards and get us to

see life in terms of his moral ideal and the flip side of that is that he's revealed as the God who brings retribution destructive retribution on those who negate and defy and ignore his standards in other words he judges sin and that's part of his holiness also and that is the complete story for his mercy his loving mercy kindness love graciousness towards sinners is also a dimension of his holiness he is holy in mercy as well as in judgment you end up therefore discovering that the word holy is used in scripture to cover all of these aspects of the reality of God and you begin to see well if I don't appreciate the reality of God's holiness

I shall never understand the Bible because it's holiness in action all through the story so there's one theme and it's taken up and pursued with remarkable consistency in both the Old and the New Testament then there's the theme of the kingdom which again runs all the way through both testaments here there are two thoughts that come together the first thought often expressed in scripture both testaments is that God is already the king over his own creation in the sense that he is the sovereign lord and nothing happens in his world apart from his will he overrules everything that's the kingship of God the sovereignty of a God which is a given in all one's thinking about God's action but the kingdom thought is that one day God is going to express his kingship in by establishing a kingdom in which his will is done his moral ideal is acknowledged and indeed embraced and a condition of shalom that's a Hebrew word with a very broad meaning we translate it as peace but it means something broader than the word peace ever means in ordinary everyday English it means a state of things in which everything is right right from God's standpoint and right from the human standpoint as well now as you see there isn't a single English word that expresses all of that shalom it becomes virtually a technical term for the ultimate rightness of everything and shalom peace is what is promised in the days when God brings in his kingdom when his kingdom comes and his will is done on earth as it is in heaven that's a second theme and of course as I say these things your minds run immediately to the

Christian claim that the Lord Jesus is the king in this kingdom and that the kingdom of God as foretold all through the Old Testament is now revealed as the kingdom of Jesus Christ the savior of sinners then there's a third theme that gives continuity and binds the two testaments together that's the theme of covenant what is a covenant well it's a bible word and what it means in the bible like holiness is something that we have to discover simply by doing an induction from the places where it's used and the things that are said about the covenant there's a great deal actually said about the covenant in scripture in the ordinary secular world covenants are ordinarily matters of negotiated agreement we know that but in the bible the covenant is a royal covenant and a conqueror's covenant covenant it's an imposed relationship which a king who is acknowledged as conqueror and lord imposes on those who from now on are his subjects he is the king is envisaged as a benevolent monarch the covenant brings great benefit to those on whom it is imposed those to whom it is given it's an enormous privilege in itself to have the king commit himself to you in the way that his covenant says that he does commit himself to you but he commits himself to you as your lord and you commit yourself to him as his subject in the ancient world royal covenants imposed on conquered nations were of quite frequent occurrence it's a bit out of our world of thought but that's the analogy for the covenant of god in scripture that's the way we're to think of it covenant actually all the way through scripture both testaments has a slogan and the slogan is

I will be your god you shall be my people which is both a proclamation of sovereignty and of grace you can see that well we're going to in due course we're going to hear of Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant that's next week's agenda theme but you can see it coming and you're right to see it coming meantime in the old testament it's already made clear that the covenant of god with the seed of abram abram's family which has become a nation is a relationship shaped by an absolute divine promise i will be your god your god to bless you watch over you lead you guide you and develop your your your your your ongoing life history and so on into something more glorious than you have seen at the moment and under god's covenant israel appears as a community of faith and when you get to the new testament it's the disciples of jesus christ who are seen as the continuation of that community of faith and i spoken i spoken of christ he of course is another theme that binds the whole of the bible together anticipated in the old testament as the davidic king great david's greater son who is coming and proclaimed in the new testament as the davidic king who has come and acknowledged within the frame of his kingship as the savior and as god incarnate and as i said as prophet priest and king and the threefold office of his ministry as mediator of god's covenant and then another theme which goes with all of these and is so basic and so pervasive

throughout the scripture that scholars often omit to mention it you know some things are too big to be seen but the fifth theme which as I say runs through the whole of the bible is the theme of god's people practicing godliness the theme that is of holy living in communion with god it's fair to say and this is my next subheading actually from common themes I move to common purposes and it is true to say that the first common purpose that we discern is that all the bible books were written in order to generate obedient faith in their readers call that edification if you like call it christian formation if you like to put it that way formation is a semi-technical term that the church uses nowadays for the same thing the life of obedient faith and the purpose negatively well actually this is a positive but it has a negative dimension to it part of this purpose of formation in the mold and shape of obedient faith as the pattern of one's life this formation is being taught in order to transcend

[40 : 10] the down drag of worldly cultures the kind of thing that was referred to in that quote from Themelios the journal from which I did quote if you remember 20 minutes or so ago the bible writers know very well that there is such a thing as a secular culture not shaped by god and his word always shifting always offering alternatives to the path of godliness in terms both of belief and of behavior and the purpose of formation in obedient faith which all the bible writers all 40 odd as they were are seeking to pursue includes quite specifically nonconformity secular culture both old and new testament you have to stand against the way of the world in the old testament it comes over and over again you have to avoid the world's idolatry in the form of its belief in pagan gods and its putting up of poles which celebrate the reality of these gods and mark out the places where you bow down and worship them all of that you've got to renounce and all the sub human things which people do in the worship of these pagan gods are to be renounced and avoided yes you are called to be different and in the new testament it's very similar same theme challenging the secular cultures of the world in order to maintain a single discipline which spans both testaments of obedient faith now next week we shall be qualifying that by saying of course within this continuity of purpose there's a recognition that the two testaments from one standpoint are related let's picture it this way as if

God poured solid concrete foundations which were going to last but first he built on those foundations a temporary structure of procedures which in due course was demolished in order to be replaced by a permanent structure of procedures as permanent as the foundations on which they're built and what I'm referring to there of course is the Old Testament pattern of the public worship of God with sacrifices and a priesthood and a temple all of that gives way to something different which is seen as fulfilling transcending and so cancelling what was there before a new pattern of ongoing worship through the Lord Jesus Christ but that's next week we don't go into that in detail now I'm simply saying that the common purpose of all the Bible writers is to further obedient faith in some way and

I did say and now I say again one of the things that the Old Testament gives us one of the things that God was painstakingly giving his people throughout the Old Testament period which is about a millennium and a half as you know as far as serious teaching goes what he's giving his people is a set of how can I say it a set of defined terms for talking about himself God and talking about godliness as a way of life terms like holiness we've already looked at that one and there are many more kingdom understood in the way that it is understood in scripture is another of them I still remember how much light came into my mind when still as a young

Christian I don't know two years perhaps after becoming a believer I heard a bible teacher say never forgotten it that the old testament is a divine dictionary and phrase book for understanding what is being said in the new testament understanding the language understanding the technical terms if you know anything about pioneer tribal missionary work you will know that one of the initial difficulties which lasts at least a generation and sometimes more is that the tribal language hasn't got some of the words you need for precise expression of Christian truth so they have to be taught a vocabulary and this takes time well God spent the old testament period giving his people a vocabulary in terms of which they would be able to understand what he was doing in Christ in the new testament just pause for a moment here let me refer to some helps which we all of us need to be acquainted with and make use of

I think if we ourselves are to get into all this and to understand the bible from the inside with all its links and connections of which I'm speaking and the very the is to read it in terms of the divisions of the material that are nowadays called the one year bible and the one year pattern is published in more than one version of the english bible I have one here a one year bible this uses the text of the

new living translation there's a one year bible which uses the text of the english standard version which is some of you know

[47 : 17] I had quite a bit to do with in its production and the one year bible goes through the whole old testament broken up into appropriate units for the 365 days of the year it takes you through the new testament in shorter bites again the new testament is broken up into 365 bits days of the year it takes you through the psalter twice all 150 psalms first journey January to June and the second journey July to December and it also breaks up the book of Proverbs into very small units but you have a bit of Proverbs to read on all of the years 365 days sometimes it's only one verse but you have these four strands of scripture and you read them together they have obviously been very carefully put together and you will find yourself amazed

I think if you follow this method of bible reading at how the four passages again and again link up with all kinds of illuminating insights there was an older way of reading the bible in a year produced by the 19th century Scotsman Murray McChain and you may be acquainted with that it's been going for longer than the one year bible pattern McChain gives you four chapters of scripture to read for something like a chapter each time round for reading all the way through the bible in a single year and well it's good I think the one year bible is better frankly I think it gives you more and so I don't want to discourage you from the

McChain version but I do want to recommend the one year bible pattern alongside it and of course in the lectionary of the Anglican prayer book there's a way of reading all through the bible at least all through the key passages of the bible in a single year I don't mind how you do it but I am anxious friends that we all of us should do it you should decide how you're going to do it but I cannot commend those who don't do it we need to read scripture daily and as I say we need to read it in a way that will get us through the bible every year and then go back to the beginning and read it again we need to soak ourselves in what we're reading the one year bible people say and it's true this is the scheme I follow now and I find it the best yet for me they say that reading what's set ordinarily will take you about 15 minutes that's true nothing to stop you reading more that we all of us ought I think to be able to allot 15 minutes of each day to reading the set passages in the one year bible at least and as I say we need to read we need to meditate on what we're reading we need to pray over what we find in these passages some of you have heard me say I'm sure that

I find it most helpful myself to ask three questions question one what does this passage or what do these passages tell me about God his works and his ways and his nature and his holiness and his love and so on second what do these passages show me about life people practicing godliness people practicing ungodliness people getting it right people getting it wrong and third having answered those two questions to the best of my ability what then have these passages to say to me to guide me in the living of my life today what are the lessons which jump out at me and then when you've asked and answered all those three questions you will find that you have plenty to pray about Bible reading should always lead to prayer and that's the path along which

I just for myself have found that it happens most directly helpfully and straightforwardly you do whatever you think fit provided that you do it as distinct from not doing it now as usual I'm finding myself embarrassed because the time has gone and I haven't said everything that I planned to say would you give me another five minutes it won't be more what I want to do in these five minutes in very much a bird's eye view way is to review the Old Testament in a way that shows you how it points forward to the new and so I put it to you that in the Old Testament first of all you start with a drama in seven stages this is the narrative this is the meta narrative this is the backbone of the Old [53 : 31] Testament first an era of disruption Genesis 1 and 2 creation and goodness Genesis 3 to 11 sin and judgment which I had time to go into details there that leads on to that takes you to the end of the book of Genesis and then an era of hope follows I'm sorry I shouldn't have said takes you to the end of the book of Genesis it takes you to chapter 11 of the book of Genesis but then as I say there dawns an era of hope choice and covenant is the first stage in that God chooses Abram and his family and enters into covenant with them that's Genesis 12 through to the end of the book and then rescue and reformation call it reformation call it renewal call it revival if you wish

I call it re-hyphen formation of Abram's family which has now become a great big plan rescue and reformation through the exodus from slavery in Egypt and the re-ordering of national life to be lived in the promised land with the morality piety liturgy and faithful worship faithful and obedient worship as the lifestyle of Israel God's family that moves into a third era which has three subdivisions it's the era of failure lack of leadership emerges as a problem in the books of Joshua Judges and Ruth the

triumphant tragedy of the monarchy is traced from the books of Samuel through to Chronicles and that section of the story ends with the people's exile under judgment they're carried off captives to Babylon for multiple unfaithfulness and then the third sub-era call it that is the time of return and restoration books of Ezra and Nehemiah cover that Israel back from exile trying in a wavering sort of way to get itself back into shape and the other books of the Old Testament are like so many ribs attached to the backbone at the appropriate place the various prophets the three big ones and the twelve minor prophets they fit into the historical story you need to know just where they fit in in date terms but what they're all of them doing is recalling God's people to holiness and hope warning folk that if they fail to practice righteousness they'll miss God's blessing and holding out anticipations of a kingdom and a reality of shalom going beyond anything that they've known thus far and then you have the wisdom literature which teaches patience book of Job and prudence books of proverbs and ecclesiastes and the path of prayer and praise in the Psalter and I think this is right pleasure in one's privilege as the message of the Song of Solomon yeah I know it's all about sex and love and him and her and all of that it's all about the love of the Lord for his people and all of that but just as in the Song of Solomon the lady is overjoyed at her privilege and being wooed by Solomon because that's what's going on she knows she doesn't deserve it but it's wonderful Solomon is wooing her and seeking a permanent relationship of what we call marriage with her and pleasure in her privilege is the wisdom which I think the Song of Solomon is teaching when you look at it from this point of view all through God is as you can now see God is nurturing his covenant people Abram's family for a destiny the destiny is related to the practice of holiness the life of obedient faith and hope and worship the awareness of atonement I haven't had a chance to dwell on that but it's there in the very elaborate pattern of ongoing sacrifice with a priesthood set apart to maintain it which is part of the pattern the reorganized restructured the new pattern that [58 : 59] God is imposing on his people as he takes them from Egypt to the promised land when you're in the promised land you must regularly offer sacrifices and the blood of the sacrifices will make atonement for your soul pick that theme up next week just as we shall pick up next week the expectation of the kingdom and the super David great David's greater son to which so many of the prophets look forward and you can see the outline of our Lord Jesus Christ is appearing more and more clearly as we discern what the Old Testament is all about and again I say that's next week's agenda we shall look back at the Old Testament from our vantage point in the New we will see how Christ fulfills Old Testament hopes promises and how he becomes central for the obedient faith of Christian people filling their horizon Christ becomes all in all and bringing them that's us into a life which is truly and is described in the New Testament accordingly it is truly a foretaste of heaven's glory but that's what has yet to come my five minutes has already turned into eight and I'm not going to say any more thank you for your patience and listening to me and we can discuss any specifics which I have hinted at and haven't been able to talk about with proper fullness so friends any reactions any questions any comments anything we have about ten minutes for this bill I would say I don't think that's that is quite the mind of Christ I don't think that is quite how the New Testament tells us to look at the Old I think the New Testament clearly holds the what we call the Old Testament together as the scriptures in which hopes of the Lord Jesus are set forth in one way or another or at the very least truths that you have to understand in order to appreciate the Lord Jesus are set forth and the the suggestion that the first five books are more important because that's what seems to be implied more important than the rest is I think with great respect a mistake it is of course the Jewish way of reading the scriptures this can be said the five books of Moses are the fundamental scriptures and they have to be read and studied in detail and the rest of what we call the Old Testament is from their standpoint elaboration commentary but second order second order inspired material and so they don't in Jewish religious culture they don't ordinarily give so much attention to it as they do to the five books of Moses but I think it's a misleading idea for Christians to take on with all due respect and more next week when we talk about how Christ saw himself and how the apostles see him as fulfilling the hopes and promises of all the Old Testament all these different parts well thank you for contributing those thoughts I would I would only say two things relating to them one is that in saying what you've said you've exhibited one discipline I think that's the right word which all Christians need to learn to practice and that is the discipline of finding where they are where the church in their day is in relation to the many pictures of life which

the biblical panorama provides and today I don't think there's much doubt that a great deal of the church is in the book of judges where everybody does that which is right in their own eyes and in fact as the narrative of the book of judges shows when people live that way they can do the most appalling things immoral plus and dehumanizing becomes the name of the game all around and the people regarded as spiritual leaders are very flawed like Gideon and Samson and so on their flaws are as glaring as the triumphs of their faith it's a very low state of church life yes you're entitled to say that second thing that I would say is that we

[65 : 02] Anglicans in particular no I know you're not talking about an upbringing in an Anglican context at all but all of us here think of ourselves as Anglicans in some sense some of us are cradle Anglicans some of us all of us I hope are convictional Anglicans now but some of us well I say convictional Anglicans some of us I'd better say are convictional Anglicans and some of us are Baptists and Brethren and Pentecostals on loan because you have found food and fellowship in the St. John's congregation which you weren't finding elsewhere ok we understand these things but now I'm talking to Anglicans and I am saying we Anglicans have a special problem in our heritage for generations the idea has been that Anglicans will lead Anglo-Saxon culture and therefore part of the calling of an

Anglican is to be the nicest possible example of the ideals which the culture accepts that's conformity to the world in a very radical way and now that the world is here in Vancouver now and across Canada and south of the border and anywhere else that you like to go in the English speaking world now that the world is so obviously in a post-Christian condition we have to unlearn that idea that we are called to be the nicest people in terms of the world's ideal for itself we have to be counter cultural and we have to live a life which challenges the way of the world and if we're not doing that we're not fulfilling our calling as Christ's disciples well that's the second thing that I want to say and I won't elaborate it now

I simply thank you for making remarks which have prompted me to say these two things because I think they're both important yeah so community and in a religion studies program at the second university I've been involved with other people and a quote water scholars and I really do revenue a lot yes I do I think that charity requires me never to forget that people's heads can be out of sync with their hearts and the mere fact that people are constantly working in biblical studies like moths you know fluttering around a candle that I hope this is the judgment of charity tells me something about their hearts deep down in their hearts they know there's something special about the bible even if their heads are following contemporary mistaken and misleading fashions in the world of scholarship now all modern scholarship in arts subjects has in it mixed in the basic assumption of enlightenment thought and academic work that man the human mind

I mean is the measure of all things and so we are in a position to dissect the bible and so on and so forth and be negative about it I'm sure that some of the people who actually do dissect the bible are people who aren't spiritually alive at all but it's not for me to try and pick them out even though I'm sure that they're there it's for me rather charitably to hope that their hearts are better than their heads and meantime to respond to their arguments and offer my arguments to them on the basis that God's revelation is coherent and cogent in the sense I mean that if you order the argumentation right it looks like truth whereas skeptical views are incoherent and when you look at the logic that produced them you find that all sorts of things have been taken for granted and they don't even look like truth of course if professors embrace these things and say them you may think in your heart this doesn't look like truth this doesn't sound like truth but the fact that you're a student and that the other guy is a professor limits what you can do although sometimes it is possible to challenge outrageous things that even professors say than they do but go gently is my word to any student concentrate on seeking on seeing seeking to see how a believing understanding of all the bible fits together in a fantastically coherent way

I'm just sort of scratching the surface of that very much in a bird's eye view way in these two talks of mine that allow me to say I am a professor who's been teaching the bible for half a century and I think I'm entitled to affirm what I'm affirming the bible view of things is fantastically coherent 40 writers writing over well over a century and a half and being consistent with each other in their view of God in their view of the kingdom in their view of Christ in their view of holy living in their view of just about everything it's a very amazing human fact you can't match it in the world's anywhere else in the world's literature and when you look at the specifics of bible teaching they make sense humanly they make sense in terms of human fulfillment it's not difficult to show that those who live

by

[72 : 10] God's ideal and practice the obedience of faith will enjoy a richer human development than those who don't and similarly it isn't difficult to make the argument that if God is anything like I mean if the real God is anything like the way that the bible presents him well most of us are out of step with him right from the start intellectually morally spiritually every way and we have to we have to humble ourselves admit this ask forgiveness and change our way of thinking now if you come out of your religious studies courses ready to maintain those points as you talk to other people the courses will have done you good even if what's been said to you hasn't impressed you as right minded at all if you're anything like me and I think that I'm just human in this

I learn as effectively by negation that is by being confronted with what I don't agree with and then asking the question why don't I agree with this what do I think is the truth here and sort of working out my own position that actually is how I got my theological education in seminary doing that and I think it's just as good a way of learning as ingesting what your professor says on the supposition that he's bound to be right well I mustn't go any further on that there stands Bill and you know what it means when Bill stands and so thank you for listening thus far and we return to our theme focusing now on the New Testament next week may I just before we close may I just show you a couple of books which are very helpful for those who really want to study the Bible knowledgeably in a way that takes account of all the solid academic work that's been done down the centuries and yet believably in the genesis of literature called Bible handbooks this is the latest and I think the best Riken's Bible Handbook A Guide to Reading and Studying the Bible R-Y-K-E-N is the way you spell Riken it has at the back incidentally the one year Bible reading plan which is a bonus and then there's this Gordon Fee was one of my colleagues at Regent College and is a most distinguished scholar Gordon Fee and Douglas Stewart have written How to Read the Bible Book by Book A Guided Tour they wrote an earlier book actually under the fetching title How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth That was introductory though to the kind of literature that the Bible is and the central things that the Bible is talking about This is a book by book survey and I think if I can guess what will help you most this is a book which all of us without exception would find helpful if we used it to try and get a bit closer and get our focus a bit sharper on the scriptures that we seek to take into our heads and our hearts How to Read the Bible Book by Book A Guided Tour Gordon Fee FEE and Douglas Stewart Publisher Zondervan Year of Production 2002 and Riken's Bible Handbook is Tyndale House hardcover came out last year 2005 OK friends it really is all over no more from me today God bless you