

The Bible In A Nutshell

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We call the Bible the book of books. Sixty-six books make up the Bible, thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament. My purpose is to tell you the one story of the whole Bible.

The first thing I would have you understand is that the Bible is given for the purpose of setting before you the work of Jesus Christ. Now, if you don't keep that in mind you'll get lost. The whole Scripture is about the work of Jesus Christ. What is this work of Jesus Christ? You could say it is God's plan to save men. The Bible will start out at the beginning and tell you about the creation of man and then it will tell you how God has planned to save man through Jesus Christ.

Two Parts. Of course the Bible is divided into two parts. We speak of the Old Testament and the New Testament. But actually when we use the words Old and New the division between the two testaments is not so clear. We could speak of the part that came before Jesus of Nazareth and the part that comes after Him. For so far as the Bible is concerned, the central focal point is the incarnation of God in human form in Jesus Christ and even more narrowly His death at Calvary and His resurrection. The Old Testament leads up to Him and points out what He was to do. The New Testament going from Him points back to Him and tells you about what He has done and what is significant about these events. In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ you have the whole truth of God.

Three Divisions. This total story of God's plan to save man falls into three natural divisions. Two of these divisions are in the Old Testament, one is in the New Testament. The first division will show you the need of man for salvation. The second division will present a description of the salvation which God will provide. The third division is the appearance of the Savior who brings the salvation.

The first part - the need for salvation - is found in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Although that seems to be short, we don't know how many hundreds or thousands of years of history are actually covered. We are brought from the time that man was first created up until the time God called Abraham and promised to bless all nations through his seed. How many generations lived in that period will remain largely unknown to us. But in those eleven chapters you have a description of the need, on the part of man, for salvation.

The second division begins at Genesis twelve and goes through the historical books of the Old Testament. From Genesis this section goes through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges and then through the time of the Kings (I and II Samuel, I and II Kings and I and II Chronicles). Finally it ends with the period of captivity and the return in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. Throughout this second division we are given a description of the salvation which God is going to provide.

Then, in the third division, which consists of the whole New Testament, we are shown the appearance of the Savior.

Of course, you'll recognize right away that there's more in the Bible. One of these sets out the mind of

the people of God. That's the poetical literature . . . Job, Psalms, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes. The other part shows the mind of God toward His people and we find that in the prophets. The poetical books and the prophetic books, are grouped together because of their special nature.

Need for Salvation. Now let us pick up the story and look at it. In the first section the Bible shows you that man in his human nature just hasn't got what it takes to live. There is no way he possibly can manage to be what he ought to be in order to realize his potential and to be right with God. What would man need in order to be happy? What would he need in order to be satisfied, in order to feel that life is actually worthwhile? The Bible reveals that man as he is hasn't got what it takes. You find in the first two chapters of the Bible a revelation of the nature of man. It is amazing how much you'll find there. Frankly, you find very little else in the Bible about the nature of man that you don't find in the first two chapters of Genesis.

Then, as early as the third chapter, you have the fall of man. What is actually brought out there is that the first man living sinned. In his sin he forfeited his relationship with God. And because the whole human race was in his loins when he sinned, all were involved. The Bible will tell you that just as sure as you are a child of Adam you are born in sin. David could say, "In sin did my mother conceive me." He said he was born in sin, shapen in iniquity. And David didn't think his mother was a particularly bad woman. But that is just the way we all are.

You also have in these first eleven chapters of Genesis the judgment of man. There you find the great classic instance of the flood which indicates that, so far as man is concerned in his sin, God will destroy him. You need to keep this in the background of your mind. You need to have in mind that so far as man is concerned in the Bible, he is slated for destruction. He is under sentence of death. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The sentence of death is passed upon all men. Man is actually living in a doomed existence.

Now I realize that there are some people who don't like that. But that's the way it is. I am not going to take time to argue; and please notice the difference. If somebody says that he just doesn't believe that, it means he doesn't accept what the Bible says. He will have to deal with God about that and live his life accordingly. I am now just talking about what's in the Bible. Nobody making any study of Scripture can possibly, with any degree of logic or consistency of interpretation, hold out any other idea than that the Bible tells us that all have sinned and that the sentence of death is passed upon all men.

There is one other thing in this first portion of Scripture that will show you man's incapacity to do what needs to be done. This is found in the account of the Tower of Babel in the eleventh chapter of Genesis. Men got together and tried to make something of themselves. And God actually intervened so that they never could succeed. The lesson is taught that man will never be able to join together to accomplish anything worthwhile or lasting. The thousands of years of human history has proven it over and over again right down to this present time. When you get through with these first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis, the human being, the human creature on the face of the earth, is in trouble. He needs help. Somebody has to do something for him.

Description of Salvation. In our second portion we find God is going to provide a way of help. This is also in the Old Testament. It is to be found in the rest of the historical books which give the

description of salvation. I have divided some four things here for you to think about.

There is, first of all a description of the promise of God. It starts in Genesis, chapter 12 and it goes through to the end of the book of Genesis. These chapters have mainly to do with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. In their lives there is a picture that will be valid all the way through the Scripture. Never in the Bible will it ever be changed. This is the way of the promise of God. And what is it? God will freely in grace give you what you need. He gave it to Abraham. He gave it to Isaac. He gave it to Jacob. He gave it to Joseph. God will freely give you what you need. But you need to obey Him. You must obey Him. Abraham walked where God wanted him to walk and God blessed him. Isaac did what God wanted him to do and God blessed him. Jacob did what God wanted him to do, he trusted in God, and God blessed him. Joseph put his trust and his confidence in God and God blessed him. This is the great truth and the description of the promise of God. God will provide for you what you need if you put your trust in Him. You can read all the way through the Bible and that will never be changed. For us Christians God has presented to us the Lord Jesus Christ and has given us the gracious promise that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God will do for you what you need, by His grace and mercy.

The second thing is the deliverance of God's people. That is set out in the Exodus of Israel. You'll find it recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua. One great big simple truth is brought to you - God's way of saving people is to take them out of the natural into the spiritual, to take them out of the situation in which they were born into a situation that He will give them. Now you can work on that any way you want to. You can read it. You can study it. You can go back and forth in those books of the Bible. You'll see that is God's plan of salvation. God provides deliverance in His grace and mercy and by His almighty power.

Now following that, in the book of the Judges, which is the record of over four hundred years of time, you will see something of the life of faith. This book shows God's people living in the land, living under the help of God. You will find that if you're obedient God will bless you, and if you're not obedient God will forsake you. If God forsakes you, you'll fall into bondage. If you fall into bondage, you'll have trouble. In trouble you'll have distress. But if you turn to God in repentance, God will send a deliverer, a judge, who will deliver you. Over and over again this thing happens. The life of faith is to realize that you are dependent upon God. If you trust in Him and walk with Him, you will be blessed. If you forget Him, He will withdraw from you. The enemy is all around you all the time. He can rise up any time and take you captive. And even though you belong to God, you can be in misery until you repent, until you turn to God and call upon Him. God is always available. He will deliver you out of bondage by His power in response to faith every time.

The fourth division in this description of salvation is found in the history of the Kings: this is found in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles and in Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. You will find that the blessing of God, which He promised to Abraham and which He promises to anybody in faith, will actually be produced in you as it is structured in obedience to the king. There should be a personal king who will rule over you, and the blessing of God for you will come as this king is obedient to God. And, of course, that points forward to the King of Kings and the Lord of All, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have quickly sketched before you what you will find in the Old Testament. First you find the need for salvation (man in his plight). This is why God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Man needs salvation. The second thing is the description of salvation. We found that God will give it for free. God will deliver man out of bondage into freedom. That's exactly the course of salvation in Jesus Christ. Then, living in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a matter of daily believing. Finally, in the kingdom of God, peace, power and blessing are to be had when you're obedient to the King, who Himself is to be obedient to God.

Appearance of The Savior. Now we come over into the New Testament. Here we have the appearance of the Savior. In the one person of Christ, God's chosen servant, this whole plan of salvation is actually to be activated and demonstrated before men. Here again I find four divisions.

First of all, you have the division telling about Jesus of Nazareth who was the express image of God. You read about Him in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. You are told about the incarnation when God became man in order to accomplish the thing that was necessary for man's salvation. You see the works of the Lord Jesus Christ, His power to deliver that people might be blessed. You see the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, how He took the human body to the cross. He then set God's pattern for us, because we are to come to the cross and be crucified in ourselves that God might raise us from the dead. In Jesus of Nazareth the victory is won in the resurrection of the dead. His is not a case of winning the victory by will power, never a case of reducing, overcoming or somehow bringing human nature under control in such a way that human nature would do the will of God. All the way through is the idea that there is the death of the first man, the old man, and the resurrection of the new man in Christ Jesus. This is set out in Jesus of Nazareth.

Then the next great division in the appearance of salvation is Pentecost. God sent into the hearts of those who believe in Jesus Christ, the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. His function is to take the things of Christ and make them operative in the individual believer. Then started something the world had never seen. There's nothing like it in the whole wide world - God Himself will dwell in the human being and lift that person into His will by His grace and mercy. This brings to fruition what God had in mind when He created man in the first place. He created man in His own image, to have fellowship with him, and man sinned. But Jesus Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." From the very beginning God had in mind that in the fullness of time He would send forth His Son, and He would come to effect this whole plan of salvation, actually saving those who would believe. So, when He had died for them and had been taken up into the presence of God, He poured out His Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit came into the hearts of the people. You read this in the Book of Acts.

Then you come to the epistles of the New Testament. These are discussions and explanations of the relationships of believing in Christ and living by the Spirit. You have an explanation to believers of what's involved in their believing in Jesus Christ. Christ in you is the hope of glory. There's an explanation of what the arrangement is; God works in you "to will and to do of his good pleasure." By your understanding and believing of it, you'll be able willingly to exercise your faith, receiving from God, believing in God, trusting in God, yielding to God. The book of Romans, the Corinthian letters,

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, the Thessalonian letters, the letters to Timothy and to Titus, the Hebrews, James and the general epistles of Peter and John are all dealing with this one thing - what happens when you believe in Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit? How does God work when Christ is in you? That is argued and worked out.

Then we come to the fourth division concerning the appearance of the Savior in the New Testament. This is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Let's say more than that. It is the coming again of Jesus Christ, the actual manifestation here on earth of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Coming when the plan of God comes through to fulness and completion. That has to be in there, because the whole Bible winds up with man in the presence of God, free, delivered and like the Lord Jesus Christ. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Now that's the principal story of the Bible all the way through.

Psalms and Prophets. I will not now dwell on the poetic literature in which you get the mind of the people of God. You find their philosophy in books like Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. You get their expression in worship in the Psalms. The second of the books of the prophets shows the mind of God toward his people. The preaching done by the prophets was actually God speaking to His people and urging His people to put their trust in Him and obey Him.

Repent and Believe. One thing is taught all the way through the Bible: man is to have one attitude about his human nature. Man is called to repent. So far as the human being is concerned, we are to have in mind that we don't have it: we are not strong enough to do right and to get to heaven. The second thing is that we are to believe. Believe in the promise of God that is set for you in Jesus Christ. God will, in Jesus Christ, save you to Himself. That's the whole thrust of the Bible. "Whosoever believeth in Him" shall never perish but shall have everlasting life.