

## THE PROGRESS OF REDEMPTION

Lesson 1 – Beginning Principles: The Problem of the Bible and the Principles of Unity  
The Progress of Redemption – Dave Sturkey

Intro: The Bible is a Mysterious Book

- What do you do with Chronicles, which simply repeats so much of Kings?
- Or, why do we have such horrible stories in the Book of Judges, like a man cutting his concubine into pieces, and sending a piece of her to each of the other tribes of Israel? Why would God record such an event for us and protect its transmission into our days?
- Or why do we have the story of a woman named Tamar in Gen. 38, who pretended to be a prostitute, so that she could have sex with her father-in-law Judah. Why is that in the Bible?
- Why does God spend so much time telling us ancient history?

Statistics on Best-Seller Lists (Top 6)

- 2 are Christian Books = Lord of the Rings (+150 million) and The Hobbit (+100 million), both written by Tolkien.
- All-Time Best-Seller = A Tale of Two Cities by C. Dickens (200 million +)
- 1 is Chinese (Dream of the Red Chamber), 1 is French (#3 The Little Prince), and 1 is Agatha Christie's "And Then There were None" (#4).
- In 2009 – the Best-seller was ... New Moon by Stephanie Meyer (100 million)
- The Bible sold **100 million** last year!
- The Bible has sold **6 billion** in its history. (That's a million a year for **6,000 years**)
- The Bible is the most popular book of all time. The next best-selling book is only **3 %** of the Bible's total sales.

THE BIBLE IS USED BY THREE WORLD RELIGIONS

- Judaism = with at least 10 versions or denominations of Judaism.
- Islam = with at least 13 versions of Islam.
- Christianity = with at least 25 denominations of Christianity.

What is similar among these thousands of groups that use the Bible is the that everyone DISAGREES over its meaning.

THE BIBLE IS ATTACKED BY MODERN ANTI-SUPERNATURALIST (and ancient ones too).

The Modern Argument against the Bible: The Bible is a rough haphazard human collection of writings, of different people's thoughts and claimed experiences with and about God, repeated verbally for generations before being written down, and then loosely collected over time, eventually brought together by editors with an agenda, who roughly molded each book to fit the other books, so that a discordant product, that we call the Bible, was produced.

SUMMARY: The Bible is either a DIVINE book that no-one can agree concerning its meaning, or the Bible is a HUMAN production, of people's discordant perspectives about God, which doesn't mean anything at all.

Dave Sturkey Testimony: I've only seen ONE miracle ... The miracle is how the Bible is put together. It is written in such a way, over 1500 years of writing, that it MUST be of God. The structure, teaching, nature, and supernatural character of the Book is amazing. If God didn't oversee its production, it is impossible to explain its existence. This course, when I took it in college, is the reason I came CONVINCED of God's existence and the Christian understanding of Him. This course is the lens I use to see everything.

## **I. The Problem of the Bible**

### A. The Three Great Difficulties of Understanding the Bible

1. The VARIETY of Material (genre) in the Bible is the first reason that it is difficult to understand. It is unique in FORM. It is unlike any other book that you've ever read.

"If you bound into one volume Knox's History of the Reformation, the Olney Hymns, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Savonarola's Sermons, the Sayings of Samuel Johnson, Cowper's Letters, and Hamlet, you would not have a volume more miscellaneous in FORM than the Bible." Marcus Dodds, Scottish Biblical Scholar, 1850's

66 Different Books

**30**-some different authors

**1500** years of writing

**3** different languages

**COUNTLESS** different cultures

How do you understand a book like this? It is unlike any other book in the whole world? How is it possible to even call it 'a book'?

2. The Bible is difficult to understand because of our **DISTANCE** from God.

Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD."

We can't conceive of communicating with someone very different than ourselves, but God is very different ...

1 Corinthians 2:14 "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

a. The Wonder of God's World is Great

Eccles. 11:5 As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.

b. The Wonder of God's Word is Greater

Isaiah 44:18 They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.

1 Cor. 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

3. The **TYPE** of Unity found in the Bible is the third reason that the Bible is difficult to understand.

1. Organic Unity = LIKE CHALK, it is the same throughout.

2. Functional Unity = LIKE A PEN, different pieces fitting together to make a single unit.

Which is the Bible? The Bible is FUNCTIONAL in its unity. We must understand the different pieces and how they fit together.

## II. Unifying Principles

A. First Unifying Principle: The Bible is **ONE** Book and contains only **ONE** Story

Compare: Gen. 1:1; Gen. 11:5,8; Num. 11:25; Judges 2:16; Ezra 1:1

"The Bible stands out as a book of deeds, not stories." Bible Commentator

Second Unifying Principle - ?

Two Categories of God's Activity in the World

(Num. 23:19; Amos 3:7; Acts 1:1; Romans 4:20,21; Matt. 11:4,5)

Look for the two categories.

1. Moses "God will not **PROMISE** anything unless he is willing to **PERFORM** it."
2. Amos "God will not **DO** anything unless He first **REVEALS** it."
3. Luke "I wrote about all that Jesus began to **DO** and to **TEACH**."
4. Paul "Abraham was persuaded that what God **PROMISED** he was able to **ACCOMPLISH**."
5. Jesus "Go show John what you **SEE** and **HEAR**. The blind **REGAIN** sight ... and the poor have the gospel **PREACHED** to them."

The Bible is about God **DOING** things and **SPEAKING** things IN HISTORY.

B. Second Unifying Principle - All of the Bible is either God **DOING** and **SPEAKING** things in history. If you follow the historic books, you have **ONE** story.

Each book is EITHER about one of these two possibilities.

What are some of the books that describe?

God Doing (historical) God Speaking (teaching)

Genesis (doing), Exodus (doing), Leviticus (teaching), Numbers (doing), Deuteronomy (doing), Joshua (doing), Judges (doing), etc.

If you take out the "didactic" (teaching) books, and leave the "historic" books, you have ONE story from beginning to end. (Now this is treasure)

C. Third Unifying Principle: The Bible is about the **ACCOMPLISHMENT** of God's GOAL On the Earth.

1. Progress Defined – **The Bible is not a collection of how a lot of people believed in God. The Bible is a story of how God moves from a seed to a goal.**

What is a good definition of "progress"?

progress - from the Latin = **TO STEP FORWARD**

progress = an **ACORN** – The acorn is "fully" tree, but just in its beginning stages. All that the tree will ever be is already found in the DNA of the acorn. Only God can do this kind of work.

"When God speaks, he begins small – with a seed – but in that initial word – that seed – is the entire future. When God acts, he begins small – with a seed – but in that initial action is all that God will ever do!" Buck Hatch

Remember: When God reveals himself, he does it progressively, like an acorn. BUT REMEMBER THIS TOO, EVERY SEED STOPS GROWING. IT EVENTUALLY REACHES MATURITY. IT EVENTUALLY GETS TO ITS GOAL.

## **2. The Goal Defined**

What are possible themes of the Bible?

The Bible is not a collection of how a lot of different people believed in God. The Bible is a story of how God moves from a seed to a **GOAL**.

## WHAT IS GOD'S ULTIMATE GOAL?

Habakkuk 2:14 "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." NIV

Numbers 14:21 "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." KJV

GOD'S ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO BRING HIMSELF **GLORY**.

### Three Facts about God's Great Goal

1 - **EARTH** not Heaven, will be the target for the accomplishment of God's plans!

2 - The Goal involves the **PARTICIPANTS** of the Earth!

3 - The realization of this goal will be accomplished when there is a people **FILLING** the earth that glorify God!