


A POPULAR SURVEY  
OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT



NORMAN L. GEISLER



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# A Christ-Centered Introduction to the Bible

## Introduction

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Jesus said five times that he was the theme of the entire Bible. Once is enough to draw our attention to the fact, and five times makes it an important teaching of our Lord.

Matthew 5:17—“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

Luke 24:27—“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Luke 24:44—“All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me.”

John 5:39—“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me.”

Hebrews 10:7—“Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.”

Of course the New Testament was not yet written when Jesus uttered these words. However, most people have no problem understanding that Jesus is the theme of the New Testament.

In the *Gospels*—Jesus is the *prophet* to his people.

In *Acts* and the *Epistles*—Jesus is the *priest* for his people.

In the *book of Revelation*—Jesus is the *King* over his people.

But what about the Old Testament? It is not clear to all that the entire Old Testament is about Christ. This will become more evident as the next three points unfold. First of all, Jesus is the theme of both Testaments (see box below).

St. Augustine put it succinctly: “The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed.”<sup>1</sup> Christ is *implicit* in the Old and *explicit* in the New. In the Old Testament the Rose of Sharon is just budding, but in the New Testament it is in full bloom. The whole Bible is all about Jesus.

**Jesus Is the Theme of Both Testaments**

In the Old Testament	In the New Testament
Anticipation of Christ	Realization of Christ
He is coming	He has arrived
He is prophesied	He is present
He is contained	He is explained
He is enfolded	He is unfolded
He is in shadow	He is in substance
He is found in type	He is found in truth

**Jesus in Every Section of the Bible**

The Bible is divided into eight major sections: four in the Old and four in the New. In each Old Testament section there is a different direction.

**1. Law—Downward Look**

There are five books of the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). In these books God moves down into human history by choosing a nation (Genesis), redeeming them (Exodus), sanctifying them (Leviticus), guiding them (Numbers), and instructing them (Deuteronomy).

**2. History—Outward Look**

In the next twelve books of the Old Testament there is an outward look. Moses brought Israel out of bondage, but Joshua took them into the blessing of the Promised Land. God had to get the Holy Nation into the Holy Land so they could bring forth the Holy Son of God (the Savior) and the Holy Word of God (the Scriptures). In Joshua they *possessed* the land; in Judges they were *oppressed*

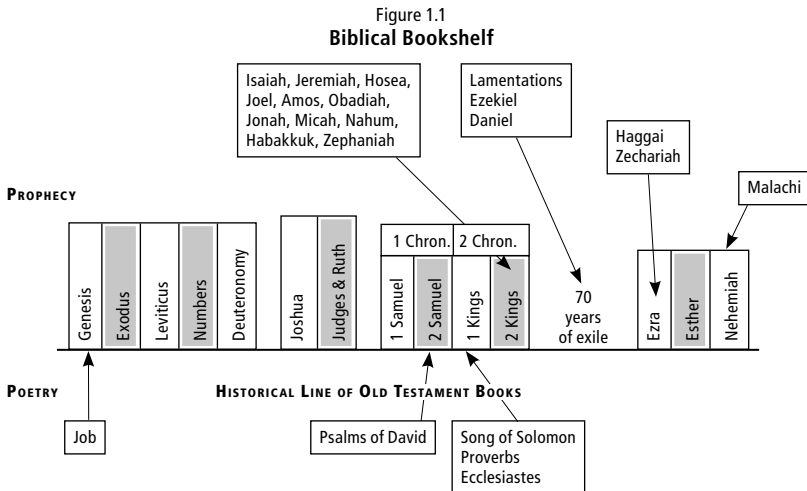


by the people of the land. Ruth is a *lily* in contrast to the mud pond of Judges. It is a story of faithfulness in a day of unfaithfulness. In 1 Samuel the nation is *established* under Saul (the people's choice). In 2 Samuel the nation is *expanded* under David (God's choice). In 1 Kings the nation is *declining* because of polygamy, idolatry, and disunity. In 2 Kings the nation is *deported*, the northern ten tribes going into Assyria in 722 BC and the southern two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) going into captivity under Babylon in 605 BC. In Ezra the remnant of the nation is *returned*, in Nehemiah they are *rebuilt*, and in Esther they are *protected*. Thus the messianic nation returns to its land and begins to rebuild, preparing for the coming Messiah.

### 3. Poetry—Upward Look

By the end of the historical books (Nehemiah) we are at the end of the Old Testament at about 400 BC. So all the poetic and prophetic books fit back into this historical structure. This can be illustrated by a biblical bookshelf (see below).

The poetic books show the aspiration of the nation for Christ in spiritual and moral matters. In Job the aspiration is for *mediation* (see 9:33), of which Christ is the ultimate fulfillment (1 Tim. 2:5). In Psalms the aspiration is for *communion* with God, which is also fulfilled in Christ who taught us to pray (Matt. 6:5–15). Proverbs manifests the aspiration for *wisdom*, which Christ personified for “in [Him] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). In Ecclesiastes the aspiration is for ultimate *satisfaction* (1:8) found only in the “one Shepherd” (see 12:11–13). And in the Song of Solomon the aspiration is for intimate *union* with the Lover of our souls. Hence, all the poetic books find their ultimate focus in Christ.



#### 4. Prophecy—Forward Look

The last seventeen books of the Old Testament look forward to Christ. These prophetic books are divided into two sections: the five Major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel) and the Minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).

The prophets all looked forward in anticipation of Christ. Before the seventy-year captivity (the exile), the prophets, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, stressed *exhortation*.

The prophetic books, written during the captivity, were Lamentations (which looked back in *lamentation* on the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple), Ezekiel (which looked forward to Israel's *spiritual restoration*), and Daniel (which anticipated their *political restoration*).

After the captivity, three books were written. Haggai exhorted the people to build the temple of the *present* (under Zerubbabel), and Zechariah urged them to behold the temple of the *future* (under Christ). While these writers spoke of the nation's *spiritual restoration*, Malachi wrote of their *moral restoration*.

After Malachi, four hundred “silent years” passed before “the fullness of the time had come” (Gal. 4:4) and the next Jewish prophet declared: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). In Christ the anticipation of the Old became the realization of the New. The prophetic expectation became a historical manifestation.

#### 5. Gospels—Downward Look

In the New Testament there is an exact four-directional parallel with the four sections of the Old Testament. In the Gospels there is a downward move. God does not simply act in history as he did in the law, but he entered history in the life of his Son. He does not merely manifest himself in laws for his people (as through Moses), but he manifests himself in the life of his people (through Christ). Christ is manifest as King to the Jews in Matthew, as Servant to the Romans in Mark, as the Perfect Man to the Greeks in Luke, and as God to the world in John.

#### 6. Acts—Outward Look

At the end of the Gospels Jesus died, rose again, and ascended into heaven (Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19). In Acts he promised the Holy Spirit would come and empower the apostles to be witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 1–7), Samaria (chap. 8), and to the uttermost parts of the earth (chaps. 9–28). Herein is the outward movement of the church.

### **7. Epistles—Upward Look**

Once Jesus ascended to heaven and took his place at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 1:2–3), he became head over all things to his body, the church (Eph. 1:22–23). Hence, the church looks upward to its Head in the Epistles. It is he who through his Spirit gave instructions to the churches through the apostles. Thus they were to build up one another (internally—Eph. 4:7–16) and reach out (externally—Matt. 28:18–20) to disciple believers in all nations, awaiting his blessed return (1 Thess. 4:13–18; Titus 2:11–14).

### **8. Revelation—Forward Look**

The last section of the Bible, like the last section of the Old Testament, is prophetic. It looks forward to the consummation of all things in Christ. Not only was the world created by him (John 1:3; Col. 1:16), but it “consists” (is held together) by him (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), and it will find its consummation in him (Rev. 11:15). He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End of all things.

So each of these eight sections of the Bible unfolds in a Christocentric way.

1. Law—*Foundation for Christ*
2. History—*Preparation for Christ*
3. Poetry—*Aspiration for Christ*
4. Prophecy—*Expectation of Christ*
5. Gospels—*Manifestation of Christ*
6. Acts—*Propagation of Christ*
7. Epistles—*Interpretation of Christ and Application*
8. Revelation—*Consummation in Christ*

## **Christ in Every Book of the Bible** \_\_\_\_\_

Christ is the theme of each book in the Bible. Indeed, in most books Christ is presented in many ways, but there is one significant way he is presented in connection with the theme of each book:

Genesis—*the Seed of the woman*

Exodus—*the Passover Lamb*

Leviticus—*the Atoning Sacrifice*

Numbers—*the Smitten Rock*

Deuteronomy—*the Prophet*

Joshua—*our Leader*

Judges—*our Deliverer*

Ruth—*our Kinsman Redeemer*

1 Samuel—*the Anointed One*

2 Samuel—*the Son of David*

1 and 2 Kings—*the Glorious King*

1 and 2 Chronicles—*the Priestly King*

Ezra— <i>the Restorer of the temple</i>	Mark— <i>the Servant of the Lord</i>
Nehemiah— <i>the Restorer of the nation</i>	Luke— <i>the Son of Man</i>
Esther— <i>our Protector</i>	John— <i>the Son of God</i>
Job— <i>our Mediator</i>	Acts— <i>our risen Lord</i>
Psalms— <i>our All in All</i>	Romans— <i>our Righteousness</i>
Proverbs— <i>the Wisdom of God</i>	1 Corinthians— <i>our Sanctification</i>
Ecclesiastes— <i>the Chief Good</i>	2 Corinthians— <i>our Sufficiency</i>
Song of Solomon— <i>the Lover of our soul</i>	Galatians— <i>our Liberty</i>
Isaiah— <i>the Messiah</i>	Ephesians— <i>the Head of the church</i>
Jeremiah— <i>a Man of Sorrows</i>	Philippians— <i>our Joy</i>
Lamentations— <i>the weeping Prophet</i>	Colossians— <i>the Preeminent One</i>
Ezekiel— <i>the Restorer of God's glory</i>	1 Thessalonians— <i>the Coming One</i>
Daniel— <i>the Great Rock</i>	2 Thessalonians— <i>the Glorified One</i>
Hosea— <i>the Healer of the backslider</i>	1 Timothy— <i>our Teacher</i>
Joel— <i>the Hope of his people</i>	2 Timothy— <i>our Helper</i>
Amos— <i>the Husbandman</i>	Titus— <i>the Great God and Savior</i>
Obadiah— <i>the Savior</i>	Philemon— <i>our Substitute</i>
Jonah— <i>the Resurrected One</i>	Hebrews— <i>our Great High Priest</i>
Micah— <i>the Witness</i>	James— <i>our Wisdom</i>
Nahum— <i>the Avenger</i>	1 Peter— <i>our Rock</i>
Habakkuk— <i>the Holy God</i>	2 Peter— <i>our Hope</i>
Zephaniah— <i>the Judge</i>	1 John— <i>the Life</i>
Haggai— <i>the Restorer of the temple's glory</i>	2 John— <i>the Truth</i>
Zechariah— <i>the Righteous Branch</i>	3 John— <i>the Way</i>
Malachi— <i>the Sun of Righteousness</i>	Jude— <i>our Advocate</i>
Matthew— <i>the King of the Jews</i>	Revelation— <i>King of Kings and Lord of Lords</i>

## The Bloodline of the Messiah

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The Old Testament reveals the progressive narrowing down of the bloodline of the Messiah.

Genesis 3:15—*the Seed of the woman*

Genesis 4:25—*the line of Seth*

Genesis 9:27—*the son of Shem*

Genesis 12:3—*the seed of Abraham*

Genesis 21:12—*the offspring of Isaac*

Genesis 25:23—a descendant of Jacob

Genesis 49:10—the tribe of Judah

2 Samuel 7:12–16—the Son of David (see Matthew 1; Luke 3:23–39)

This bloodline is further narrowed to the Son of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), who would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); the suffering Servant (Isaiah 53); the dying Messiah who would be cut off about AD 33 (Dan. 9:24–27). One and only one person in history fulfilled all those predictions—Jesus of Nazareth. He claimed to be the Messiah (John 4:25–26; Mark 14:61–62), and he proved to be the Messiah by fulfilling nearly one hundred predictions at his first coming.

## **A Poetic Picture of Christ in Scripture** \_\_\_\_\_

An anonymous author put the Christ-centered structure of the Bible in this poetic form:

I find my Lord in the Bible  
Wherever I chance to look,  
He is the theme of the Bible  
The center and heart of the Book;  
He is the Rose of Sharon,  
He is the Lily fair,  
Wherever I open my Bible  
The Lord of the Book is there.

He, at the Book's beginning,  
Gave to the earth its form,  
He is the Ark of shelter  
Bearing the brunt of the storm,  
The Burning Bush of the desert,  
The budding of Aaron's Rod,  
Wherever I look in the Bible  
I see the Son of God.

The Ram upon Mt. Moriah,  
The Ladder from earth to sky,  
The Scarlet Cord in the window,  
And the Serpent lifted high,  
The Smitten Rock in the desert,  
The Shepherd with staff and crook,  
The face of my Lord I discover  
Wherever I open the Book.

He is the Seed of the Woman,  
The Savior Virgin-born;  
He is the Son of David,

Whom men rejected with scorn,  
His garments of grace and of beauty  
The stately Aaron deck,  
Yet he is a priest forever,  
For He is Melchizedek.

Lord of eternal glory  
Whom John, the Apostle saw;  
Light of the golden city,  
Lamb without spot or flaw,  
Bridegroom coming at midnight,  
For whom the virgins look.  
Wherever I open my Bible,  
I find my Lord in the Book.

### Study Questions

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1. What does Jesus claim about the Scriptures?
2. What is the relation of Jesus in the Old Testament to Jesus in the New Testament?
3. What are the eight sections of the Bible?  
How do these sections reveal Christ?
4. How is Christ revealed in each book of the Bible?
5. What does the Old Testament predict about the Messiah?  
Does Jesus fit the requirements?

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