

The Purpose of Revelation:

Tonight's question: If you could choose one Scripture that would summarise the message of the Bible, and what it meant to you, what would that verse be?

The Bible took about 1500 years to be written. 40 or more authors wrote it.

- It has love stories in it.
- It has stories of political intrigue and manoeuvring.
- It has stories of violence and gore.
- It has some poetic passages.
- It has simple accounts of everyday occurrences.
- It has stories with intricate plots.
- It has strange and cryptic passages filled with weird symbols and hidden meanings.

The Bible has one message and theme that running throughout it and this makes this book greater than anything humanity could produce. There is no way, that over a period of 15 centuries and 40 or more separate authors, could have conspired to produce a book that has one message, tells one story, moves to one point, and directs our attention to one Person.

So one of the chief reasons we can accept the Bible as the Word of God is that it would simply be impossible to take at random any collection of books from literature, put them together under one collection, and have any coherent theme develop.

If you look at the Bible you will find it follows the same story, and has one theme from beginning to end - essentially, the *story of man!* It is the story of your life, of my life. It explains man. It leads us into all the truth concerning ourselves.

Because it is the book about man, it is also the book about Jesus Christ, the Son of man. The whole Bible is the story of how God became flesh, and became a man like ourselves.

How did this book come into being? [Read II Pet 1:21]

How could ordinary men, like ourselves, have been so led by the Holy Spirit in recording what they thought and felt that they could have captured somehow the thoughts and attitudes of God, and not mere men's opinions? We do not know. It is a miracle!

Studying the Bible is like studying the physical universe around us: *The more we look into the secrets of the universe, the more complex, and mysterious and fascinating it becomes.* This is true of the Word of God. The more we study the Bible, the more it begins to unfold its wonders, and we discover that there are vast areas yet unknown which we have not begun to plumb.

The Bible has been kept and preserved for us through the centuries in strange and providential ways. It cost men and women their lives that we might have this book!

What is the ultimate purpose of the Bible? What is God wanting to accomplish by giving us a book like this, and giving us the Holy Spirit to interpret it and make it understandable? Nothing that man makes is without a purpose. Therefore it is certainly logical and reasonable to assume that everything God makes is for a purpose. What is that purpose? The Bible itself gives us the answer.

[Read Ephesians 1:9-12] God has a plan in mind, and it is only as you and I begin to understand what God's plan is, that we can move in the same direction. This is a double statement that God has a direct purpose in all that is going on in your life and mine.

[Read Ephesians 3:8-12]

Probably the clearest declaration of this purpose is found in **Ephesians 4:11-13**. So this is God's purpose: to bring us to "*mature manhood*." **[Read Ephesians 4:12-13 in the Amplified Bible]**

The whole record of Scripture, this verse says, all that God has done in human history, exists that you might become a *mature man*, that you might fulfil your manhood or your womanhood in Jesus Christ. That is God's purpose! It isn't some distant and future goal - one day when you arrive in heaven! It is something which has to do with each of us today! God's revelation through His Word exists in order that you and I might fulfil the possibilities God has hidden in our humanity, and the measure of that humanity is the measure of the manhood of Jesus Christ.

If you could go anywhere in the world and ask any man anywhere, "*What do you think it means to be a man?*" you would get the same answers! All men everywhere want to be men. All women everywhere want to be women. Nowhere on earth is courage is regarded as unacceptable and cowardice is acceptable. Everywhere it is cowardice that is regarded as being unacceptable and it is courage that is admired.

There is only one person who was 100% a man. It was Jesus. He was God's perfect man. That is precisely what God's purpose was in giving us the Bible. It is to make available to us all that He has provided in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. In fact, this is why the universe exists - that you and I might fulfil our humanity.

[Read Ephesians 4:13] This verse says that we must come to mature manhood, and that there are *two* steps:

- **First**, we are to come to "*the knowledge of the Son of God*" - the accurate knowledge of the Son of God. There is no possibility of achieving manhood, as God intended man to be, if there is not the knowledge of the Son of God - personally and experientially.
- The **second** step which takes us to this knowledge is that "*we all attain to the unity of the faith*." Faith is always the operative word. Faith is always the way by which we actually experience all that God has made available.

Paul says that isn't just my faith, or your faith, but *our* faith which brings us to this knowledge. In other words, we need each other (*that is the unity of the faith*).

[Read Ephesians 3:16-18] This means that unless you are in unity with other saints you cannot possibly develop as you ought to as a Christian. It is impossible to move to maturity unless we are ready to share truth with each other - unless what the Dutch Reformed know is shared with the Pentecostals, and what the Baptists know is shared with the Methodists, and the Catholics share with the Protestants. We need each other - to the end that we grow in the knowledge of the Son of God.

So this is the purpose of the Bible. It is all about Jesus Christ, from Genesis to Revelation - in symbol, in story, in prophetic vision, in simple narrative account, in history, in poetry, in everything - it is all about Jesus Christ.

In learning about Jesus in the pages of the Bible from the beginning to the end we discover that we learn about ourselves also. We discover our true nature as we see it reflected in Him. We understand our problems and our reactions as we see His dealings with men. We find all our needs fully met in him.

Who was Jesus? He was perfect man. He was God's ideal man - man as God intended man to be. For thirty-three and a half years He lives in the very circumstances and under the same pressures, up against the same problems as we face every day.

You ask yourself: "What do I get out of all this Bible study?" It isn't a question of what you get out of it; it is a question of what God gets out of you. If you simply taking God at His word, you will discover that He is quite willing to live His life through us, and we can allow Him to be what He is - in us.

For this, we need the word of revelation. We don't come to the knowledge of the Son of God without learning, without a process, without a gradual, deepening understanding of his truth. We never can grow into fullness of maturity until we begin to know Jesus Christ.

[Read 1 Corinthians 2:7, Matthew 11:25 and Luke 10:21]

We get to know him through the pages of the Scriptures, interpreted to us by the Holy Spirit. We can't separate those two. The Bible without the Spirit leads to dullness and a dead Christianity. The Spirit without the Bible leads to groundless fanaticism. *We need both the Spirit and the entire Word:*

For instance, the story of man before the fall is necessary in order that we might know what God made man to be and what to expect in our relationship to him, that is, *what we are to be restored to*. We need to know the story of the fall itself, to study it, in order that we can understand the strange reactions which arise within us, that is, *our present condition of fallen mankind*.

[Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17] This is God's promise to us!

(Next time: The Old Testament)