

THE BIBLE

A Miracle Book

by

Gavin Hamilton

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE BIBLE'S CENTRALITY

The unique feature about the Bible is its uniform, consistent presentation of Jesus Christ the Lord. Everywhere His voice is heard, His glory is revealed, and His portrait is set forth. In all deference to Him it has to be acknowledged, even by His critics, that He is the center and circumference, the Alpha and Omega, the all in all, of the divine revelation.

The fact presents no surprise. In the immutable purpose of God the Lord Jesus Christ is the pivot around whom that purpose revolves. He is the central figure in the Holy Trinity for the revelation of the Deity. It was the Son that became Man to reveal God to men. For this reason we read of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Then, He is the central figure at the Cross for the expiation of human guilt.

Jesus alone is the sin-bearer. Once more we see Him the central figure in the midst of His own for the impartation of peace. Quickly their fears were removed and His peace enjoyed. **“Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.”**

Finally, we follow Him to that heavenly scene where He is the central figure, the Worthy One, to take over the administration of God's government upon earth.

PHOTOGRAPH OF A MAN

The miracle of the Bible's centrality reminds us of that well-known, illuminating incident related by Dr. W.H. Gordon. He came into a room where his children were playing and casually placed before them some wooden blocks, all different sizes, and asked them to solve the puzzle. To their father's great surprise it was not long before they had mastered their assigned task. He enquired how they managed to do it so quickly. One of the children spoke up saying, “Why, father, it was easy. We discovered the photograph of a man on the back of the blocks, and when we pieced him together, and turned the blocks around, there was the solution of this puzzle.”

So with the Bible. Though it has sixty-six books, each one complete in itself, yet all are required to give a perfect picture of the Man Christ Jesus.

Obviously, this truth was before the Lord when He told His hearers: “**Search the Scriptures . . . they are they which testify of Me**” (John 5:39). And surely it became transparent when He “expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself.” At that time He said: “**All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me**” (Luke 24:44).

PROGRESS OF DOCTRINE

Reviewing the Book of Genesis to Revelation, it is impossible to escape the progress of doctrine unfolded in connection with the Christ of God.

Dr. C.I. Scofield, in an abstract, elementary manner marks the progress thus:

“The Old Testament, Preparation: The Gospels, *Manifestation*: The Acts, *Propagation*: The Epistles, *Explanation*: and The Revelation, *Consummation*.”

However, let us pass from the abstract to the concrete. Here I borrow the figures of speech employed by Dr. R.G. Lee, in his description of the Bible, in reference to the Christ. He is a Person above and beyond all persons “as a river is beyond a rill in reach, as the sun is beyond the tallow-tip in brightness, as a tree is beyond a twig in fruit-bearing, as the wings of an eagle are beyond the wings of a sparrow in strength, as Niagara is beyond a mud-puddle in power and glory.”

THE CHIEF ACTOR

Every reader of the Old Testament is deeply conscious of the Theophanies, the personal manifestations of the Deity. By such manifestation Christ kept Himself in the forefront of the revelation. But it could not be otherwise. Let it be understood, once for all, that God is unfolding a great drama in the world with Christ the Chief Actor. And, for this very reason, Christ is presented in a variety of ways, playing the leading role in every act.

Let us detail this truth.

- He came into the Garden to recover fallen man from the wreck and ruin of sin (Genesis 3).
- He entered into consultation with Cain to show him that acceptance with God is on the ground of a blood-sacrifice (Genesis 4).
- He visited Abraham and Sarah and partook of their hospitality to reveal His passionate desire to fellowship with men (Genesis 18).
- He wrestled with Jacob till the break of day to break Jacob's will, and to bring him into the place of dependence upon Himself (Genesis 32).
- He communed with Moses face to face, as friend with friend, to announce how intimately He wishes to commune with man (Exodus 33).
- He presented Himself before Joshua as Captain of the Lord's host to predict the utter defeat of every foe and the ultimate triumph of His people (Joshua 5).
- He walked with the three Hebrews in the furnace of fire to indicate that He is with His own in all their afflictions (Daniel 3).

The story is told. Since “The New Testament is in the Old contained, and the Old is in the New explained,” we have antedated in the Theophanies all that Christ is to His own today.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Let us now piece together the fragmentary prophetic revelation of Christ as made known in the thirty-nine Old Testament Books. We shall see that the Old Testament is Christocentric.

Moses begins. He declares that Christ shall be “**The Seed of the Woman**” (Genesis 3:15).

- Isaiah insists that “A virgin shall be with Child” (chapter. 7:14).
- Jeremiah predicts a “**New Thing**” in the earth – “**A woman shall compass a man**” (chap. 31:22). The writers herald the Virgin Birth and the Virgin Son.
- The birthplace of Christ is foretold by Micah. He was to be born in “**Bethlehem Ephratah**” (Micah 5:2).

Jeremiah foretells the massacre of the innocents when the life of Jesus was sought – though the Apocalyptic Seer lifts the veil to show the great red Dragon inciting Herod to commit the dastardly act (Jeremiah 31:15; Revelation 12). Information about the visit to, and departure from, Egypt is given by Hosea (chap. 11:1). Then His early life, development, and the silent years in Nazareth are the subject of the prophets to fulfil the word, “**His shall be called a Nazarene**” (Matthew 2:23).

PANORAMA OF EVENTS

Both Isaiah and Malachi write about the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ (Isaiah 40; Malachi 3). Many prophets portray the lovely life and public ministry of Christ, but Isaiah's description excels in beauty and brevity. “**The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing**” (chap. 35:5, 6).

- The betrayal for thirty pieces of silver is described by Zechariah (chap. 11:12).
- The panorama of events at the Cross are detailed by the Psalmist (Psalm 22).
- The two malefactors are mentioned by Isaiah as well as being buried in, and coming forth from, a rich man's tomb (chap. 53).

“**Sit Thou at My right Hand**” described the present glory of Christ advanced by David (Psalm 110).

Then comes the kingdom glorious. Where shall we begin? All the prophets seem to anticipate it.

Listen to Daniel: “**The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed**” (chap. 2:44).

Hear Obadiah: **“Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness . . . and the kingdom shall be the Lord's”** (vss. 17, 21).

Let Micah speak: **“He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”** (chap. 4:3).

EMMANUEL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We turn to the New Testament. At once the words of David Livingstone come to mind:

“The Old Testament opens with man in the image of God, and the New Testament opens with God in the image of man.”

How true! As we have said before, the four Gospels each set forth a particular phase of his life as Man on earth, though ever God, and all make clear that He died and rose again.

Dr. William Evans says:

“The New Testament is the effect of Christ's resurrection. It was the resurrection that put heart into the disciples to go forth and tell its story.”

Skeptics would have us believe that the resurrection of Christ was an afterthought of the disciples to give the story of Christ's life a thrilling climax, a dorative incident which satisfies the dramatic feeling in man, a brilliant picture at the end of a heroic life.

We reply: There would have been no beautiful story to put a climax to if there had been no resurrection of the Christ of the story. The resurrection does not grow out of the beautiful story of His life, but the beautiful story of Christ's life grew out of the fact of the resurrection. The New Testament is the book of the resurrection.

The Acts confirms the resurrection. It presents a Man on high and the Holy Spirit descending from Him to take possession of the disciples to bear Him witness. This witness persists. For the Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit is unfinished. Then follow the Pauline Epistles which introduce the exalted Man Christ Jesus as the Head of the Body, the Church; the Great High Priest of the priestly family: and the Forerunner for us entered within the veil. John, in his three Epistles, brings Christ before us as the Advocate of the erring children of God, and in his Book of the Revelation he makes clear that He is “The End” of all the vast purposes of God.

In the final analysis, the Book reveals Christ. He cannot be hid. Everywhere we hear the Father's voice saying, **“This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.”**

THE RIVER OF BLOOD

One thing more. Just as it is impossible not to discover Christ in the Holy Scriptures, so we cannot fail to see the blood of atonement. Like a mighty river it rises in Eden, flows down the valley of time, and empties itself into this great eternity ahead.

It flows typically from birds and beasts in the Old Testament. Its presence is the solemn acknowledgment that **“It is the Blood which maketh an atonement for the soul”** (Leviticus 17:11). But the divine comment is highly interesting. **“It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins”** (Hebrews 10:4). Evidently no lasting satisfaction in the blessedness of **“no more conscience of sins”** was given the offerers.

HE PAUPERIZED HIMSELF

The Blood flows literally from Emmanuel's veins in the four Gospels.

“One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19:34).

This was the purchase price of our blessing. It is beyond our computation. As another has said, **“He pauperized HIMSELF.”** How can we estimate it? Paul declares, **“Who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich”** (II Corinthians 8:9).

Do these lines, from the immortal hymn, “The Ninety and Nine,” help?

“None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found the sheep that was lost.”

Note how the Blood flows doctrinally in the Acts and in the Epistles! Precious truths are before us.

- The Church of God is purchased by it (Acts 20:28).
- We are **“justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”** (Romans 3:24).
- We are **“made nigh by the blood of Christ”** (Ephesians 2:13).
- John says we are cleansed from our sin. **“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”** (I John 1:7).

Meantime, while passing through this wilderness, waste and wild, we have **“boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,”** and there commune with God.

REDEEMED BY BLOOD

The Book of the Revelation affords us the privilege and pleasure of listening to heaven's admiring and adoring redeemed hosts raise their paean of praise, thus:

“Thou art worthy . . . for Thou was slain, and has redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9, 10).

In the light of these things we conclude that the divine intention is to focus our gaze upon Christ. True, the Bible narrates the biographies of men, and relates the beginning, history and destiny of nations, but in all Christ is seen either by comparison or contrast.

Then, too, the seven dispensations are clearly distinguished in Scripture, viz, innocence, conscience, government, promise, law, grace, and glory, but here again we discover that Christ is their perfect answer. He is the image of the invisible God.

THE IMAGE OF THE CHRIST

God desires our confidence. In this way He is able to transform us into the image of His Son. And who amongst us would not love to be like Him? Like Him in love, in purity, in faith, in patience, in self-sacrifice, in humility, in obedience. What an achievement! Yet it is possible. It is the Christ-life. And here is the secret.

“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

The second coming of Christ will bring the saints into moral and physical perfection. We shall then be transformed into His image, and translated into His presence. As John puts it:

“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” (I John 3:2).

Beyond our glorification and the millennial age is **“the generation of the age of the ages.”** This is eternity. It envisages a new heaven and a new earth. Here righteousness dwells, and God is all in all. Here is a scene of infinite perfection. Everything and everybody reflects the glory of God. Thus, at long last, the universe will bear the image of the Christ whose divine presence fills the Bible.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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