

Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 355, 01-26-2020 † 3rd Sun. after Epiphany

“*Domine, volumus Jesum videre,*” John 12:21.
“*Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,*” Mark 9:24.

JOHN 5:39

Search the Scriptures, because in them you think that you have eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.



In our time there are so many books. There is no lack of books. Sometimes you see people achieving something in the news, and you know the level of opportunism out there. That person is ready to write a book and go on tour. “*Of making many books there is no end,*” Ecclesiastes 12:12.

Where are the books teaching us how to find peace with God and eternal rest for the soul? There is only one such book; it is the Bible. Whatever is not taken from the Bible might appear as great wisdom, but the Bible alone is given from God and teaches the way to God. If we read other books, we should prefer to read the Bible. Do you read news and novels and not the Bible? Do you study books making you wise for the world, but ignore the book that makes wise for salvation? Are your fingerprints all over books that make you better or show you how to lead, but you ironically leave the Bible behind in the dust?

Yet many who do read the Bible nevertheless do not find the way of salvation in it, because they do not read it right. We must be careful to so read as to find the treasure that enriches our soul, so that it can never starve. The Lord teaches us this life hack. He tells us in this one verse how to read the Bible right ...

Jesus Christ Is The Heart And Center Of The Bible

In this text the Lord is speaking to the religious class among the Jews, and He says, “*Search the Scriptures, because in them you think that you have eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.*” The people listening to Jesus held to the religion of their fathers. To them, the Scriptures really were a sacred book. They had the part of our Bible we would call the Old Testament, and that was their Scriptures. What is more, Jesus Christ recognized that His hearers looked for eternal life in the Bible, and that is, of course, the right place to find it.

However, they still couldn't discover eternal life and possess for themselves, because they had not found Jesus in the Bible.

In other words, they had not searched the Scriptures right. If they went about searching them—investigating the Scriptures, probing, examining, asking questions of the text—in this way, so as to find Jesus Christ in them, they would discover and hold fast to life everlasting. That is the meaning Jesus Christ intended to the Jews, and we know that better by reading on, since Jesus goes on to say, *“For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe what I say?”* (45-46)

In a similar way, the New Testament speaks of the Old Testament in many places.

- Luke 24:27 on the way to Emmaus, *“Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.”*
- In Acts 10:43 Peter said to the Gentile Cornelius, *“All the prophets testify about Him, that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*
- In Acts 26:22-23 Paul witnessed before King Agrippa, *“I have had help from God right up to this day, and so I stand testifying to both small and great. I am saying nothing other than what the prophets and Moses said would happen, that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles.”*
- And Romans 15:4, *“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.”*

Now our Christian hope stands in none other than in Jesus Christ. But why multiply quotations? Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, not only of the universe but of the Bible. The whole book is a dissertation, a master thesis, on Him.

Open it up for yourself and find out. From the very first chapters of the Bible, the creation of man and woman, the purpose of human beings, was to be a living soul with dominion over the whole earth. Then people fell into sin and death entered the world, but already in the 3rd chapter of the Bible you come to the precious promise of the woman's seed, the Deliverer. Then the Bible chronicles

this Deliverer's lineage and ministry, foreshadowing and fulfillment, to the very last page. Whatever is said in this book has some reference to the Redeemer promised in paradise.

What about places in the Bible that seem to be about others, faithful men and women? Doesn't the Bible spill ink on the lives of other really great people? Yes, of course. But those passages are also about Jesus Christ, the Messiah in whom they put their faith. These other great people often stood fast in faith, but we get to see their failings, as well. They prefigured and foretold of the Deliverer to come, and by their sins we knew that Jesus Christ was not yet on the scene.

What about the genealogies, whole chapters containing nothing but the names of men, and you ask, "What do these have to do with Jesus Christ, and why are they in the Bible?" But these genealogies demonstrate the authenticity and truthfulness of the book, giving the lineage of Jesus Christ from the beginning and show the fulfillment of the promise. The greatest of sinners' names show up in the genealogies, so that their names could be swallowed up in the grace of the name, Jesus Christ.

What about the 10 commandments? These don't even use the name Jesus Christ. They just tell us what not to do. But for what purpose was the Law given to Moses? Was the Law given to save sinners? No way. No one can fulfill the Law's demands. It "*concluded*" us "*all in sin*" (Galatians 3:22). But the Law also became our custodian and schoolmaster, "*to bring us to Jesus Christ,*" as Paul says (Galatians 3:24). Without the demands of the Law, we might forget to seek out the healing and salvation of the Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

The Bible was never meant to give us a complete history of the world. It only gives a certain line of history, the history of Jesus Christ since the world began leading up to the end of the world. The Bible tells us ...

- how the Son of God was promised;
- how the promised was confirmed to the fathers;
- how the Savior was prefigured in assorted sacrifices;
- how He stepped on scene as true man;
- what He did and taught, and how;
- how He suffered and died;
- and finally how He rose again and ascended to heaven.

And this book ends with the promise that this same Jesus Christ will come again. He will wake the dead and receive His people into His everlasting kingdom of glory.

If we do turn the page to some mystery in the Bible we don't get, we can always apply this fact—that Jesus is the heart and center. What was clouded and distracting then becomes plain and simple.

Remember, you may study the Bible and you may learn many things inside of it. You could stay up chatting about it with your good friends; you could discourse on it for hours; and nevertheless you could miss everlasting life for your own soul. You could learn historical facts, facts about nations, countries, customs, animals, plants, or human relationships. You could learn in the Bible how to behave at home and abroad, towards friends and enemies. You could learn from the Bible how to do right and live the happiest life now. But if you have learned all these things from the Bible and yet have not found Jesus Christ in it, you misunderstood the whole point, and you missed the eternal life intended for you.

Only when you have found Jesus Christ as the Deliverer of your soul, your righteousness, and your life ... will you find the spirit, the tenor, and the testimony of the Scriptures.

So don't forget that even the godless unbelievers of old were searching the Scriptures. Surely you can do what they did.

In fact, you must. Search the Scriptures!

But find in those Scriptures the fact that Jesus is their heart and center.

Then something new will be ***your*** heart and center: with faith alone in this Jesus, you will know the forgiven life; the deliverance of the world; and everlasting joy in heaven with Him. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.