The Unity of the Bible
Understanding the arch of Scripture from beginning to end
The Unity of the Bible
purposes for the course

❖ to discover and understand the central them of the Bible
❖ to note God’s redemptive acts throughout history
❖ to equip you to explain God’s unfolding purpose for humanity
❖ to worship God through Jesus

I have four purposes in mind:

• Is there one theme that runs throughout Scripture from beginning to end? Or is the OT plan A and NT plan B?

• The Bible records God’s actions throughout history. What do his actions reveal to us about who he is and his will for the world?

• If there is a central theme to God’s actions and his word, then we not only need to know this, but we need to be able to explain this and act upon it.

• to worship God through Jesus… to adore him, to stand in awe of him, to see his beauty, to be moved in our affections toward him

The book that I will be using as an outline will be…
### what is the Bible?

- 66 different “books” (i.e. letters, scrolls, collection of writings)
- 39 books in Old Testament (OT)
- 27 books in New Testament (NT)
- over 40 different authors
- written over 1600 years
- written in over 13 different countries on 3 different continents
- written by shepherds, kings, soldiers, princes, priests, scribes, historians, prophets, physicians, & simple fishermen
- written in three different languages

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This is very different from the Koran & Buddhist Scriptures...
“The Koran, for instance, is a miscellany of disjointed pieces, out of which it is impossible to extract any order, progress, or arrangement. The 114 Suras or chapters of which it is composed are arranged chiefly according to length—the longer in general preceding the shorter.

It is not otherwise with the Zoroastrian and Buddhist Scriptures. These are equally destitute of beginning, middle or end. They are, for the most part, collections of heterogeneous materials, loosely placed together.”


Let’s look at some evidence for the unity of the Bible. We’ll start with the apostle Paul…
Paul said this to the elders from the church in Ephesus as he bid them farewell, knowing he was going to Rome to die.

The Greek word translated “council” is boulé. It means…
Evidence for the Bible’s unity

- βουλή denotes “deliberation” and “taking counsel” in all its stages and effects up to “resolve” and “decree.” (Theological Dictionary of the NT (Eerdmans, 1964) p.633)

- βουλή, ‘to purpose, to plan, to intend,’ that which has been purposed and planned, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 356.

“The Greek word for “purpose” (boule, “will” in the NIV) in this phrase implies the deliberate choice to pursue a certain goal step-by-step, in a methodical way.


so this verse could be translated...
evidence for the Bible’s unity

♦ “I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole purpose of God”
Acts 20:27 (NASB)

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

This one word describes Paul’s quick summary of the whole of Scripture. This is a strong clue that there is a unified goal toward which all of Scripture points.

Let’s look at other places where this word is used…
evidence for the Bible’s unity

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:23)
evidence for the Bible’s unity

❖ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (Acts 4:28)
evidence for the Bible’s unity

• but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him. (Luke 7:3)
For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption. (Acts 13:36)

notice that the word ‘purpose’ describes a unifying aim of God for the whole of David's life.

God was doing something during David's life, moving his people along towards his ultimate goal, and David cooperated with him in this purpose, advancing the steps of God’s great plan
‘Purpose’ in this verse is Greek *prothesis*, which means “a plan or purpose made in advance.”

This points us to the reality that God had a plan & purpose before he ever even created the world, and he “works all things according to that plan.”

This means that Christ (his holy life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection) were all part of God’s unfolding plan which he had in the beginning.

The NT is not plan B. It is the fulfillment of Plan A, which was set out in the OT.

Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem? Because it was God’s plan, revealed in OT, which he spoke beforehand through Micah (5:2)

Why was Jesus born of a virgin? Because is was part of God’s plan, revealed in OT, which he spoke beforehand by the prophet Isaiah (7:14) “a virgin will conceive and give birth to a son.”

Why did Joseph get up in the middle of the night and flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt? (Mt 2:13-15) Because it was part of God’s plan, revealed in OT, which he spoke beforehand by the prophet Hosea (1:1) “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

Why did Jesus choose to live in Capernaum by the sea before he began his ministry (Mt 4:12-16)? Because it was part of God’s plan, revealed in OT, which he spoke beforehand by the prophet Isaiah (9:1-2) “The people of Zebulun & Naphtali, who dwell by the sea… the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.”

Why did the soldiers pluck out Jesus’ beard and spit on him and pierce his side? Because it was all part of God’s plan, revealed in the OT, which he spoke beforehand
speaking about the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms, is another way of speaking about the whole OT.

In summarizing the gospel of Jesus and the work of God in his life, Paul says to king Agrippa,
To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” Acts 26:22-23 (ESV)

Paul understands that everything that unfolded through the life and ministry of Jesus is nothing more than the fulfilling of God’s plan which he laid out in OT.

Even the Gentiles are included in this plan. Remember what God said to Abraham…
God intended to bless all nations, not just Israel. Gentile nations were to be included in God’s great plan.

He says so through Isaiah...
Paul quotes this passage (Acts 13:47) when he explained why he was going to preach to the Gentiles. Taking the gospel to Gentiles was always part of God’s plan.

Also part of the plan was that this blessing was to come through faith, even as far back as Abraham…
Paul used this passage to teach that Salvation comes by faith (Romans 4) and later Luther quoted Paul (Rom 1:17) to recover this forgotten truth, while Paul was quoting Habakkuk (2:4).

The OT does not teach that righteousness comes through keeping the law, because no one can keep it. The OT teaches that righteousness comes by faith because that’s the only way we have to please the Lord since no one perfectly obeys the law. “There is none righteous, no not one” (Rom. 3:10)

Faith is the only way to please God.

Jude summarizes the whole gospel with this one word…
Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Jude 1:3 (ESV)

Jude wrote at the close of the apostolic age, somewhere around AD 65-80.

The faith was set. not law, or command, but faith. The content of the gospel was already fixed among the NT apostles. They were agreed on the content and teaching of the gospel.

Paul even made sure that what he was preaching was consistent with what the other apostles were teaching...
evidence for the Bible’s unity

❖ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas... and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. Galatians 2:1-2 (ESV)

❖ when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised... and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Galatians 2:7-9 (ESV)

So we see that there was unity among all the apostles in the message they were preaching and they viewed what they were preaching as the fulfillment of all that God prophesied in the OT.
evidence for the Bible’s unity

❖ Paul summarized all of Scripture as “the whole council/purpose of God”
❖ all the events of Jesus’ life were clearly part of God’s plan revealed through the prophets of the OT
❖ Jesus viewed his own life as fulfilling everything written about him in OT
❖ Paul testified to Agrippa that he preached nothing but what the prophets and Moses wrote
❖ The gospel of faith was part of God’s original plan (eg. Abraham)
❖ The Gentiles were always part of God’s plan (Gen. 22:18 “all nations blessed…”)

council/purpose = predetermined deliberate steps toward a specific goal or end
How’d we get the books that are in the Old Testament?