

Text: Jn 1.45

Proposition: The Bible centers around Christ; you should too.

Today is our communion message. I want to take a bit different tack than I have been taking recently. I have a little book in my library that I have never read before.

- It is called *This is That*, by F. F. Bruce, an English conservative Bible scholar (relatively conservative!).
- The title comes from Peter's sermon in Acts 2 where Peter begins to explain the phenomenon of Pentecost, referring back to the Old Testament, explaining a New Testament event in light of the Old.
- This is the theme of the book: *The New Testament development of some Old Testament themes*. It comes from a series of lectures Bruce did at Fuller Seminary (*not* a conservative school).

There are some problems with Bruce, but the book is suggestive of biblical themes and I'd like to use it as an inspiration for communion sermons in the next little while.

Today our text is John 1.45.

Read Jn 1.45: "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'"

Our title:

We Have Found Him

The thesis of this passage is that Jesus is the subject of the Old Testament — He is the One **of whom** "Moses in the Law" and "the Prophets" (shorthand for the OT) wrote about.

One of the things Bible scholars do, often in very boring ways, is try to discern the theme of the Bible or, if they are specialists in the OT, the theme of the Old Testament.

- The idea is that there is some kind of unifying theme that the Bible or the OT is all about.

You might think this is a somewhat fruitless exercise since verses like our text seem to answer any questions before the scholars get started.

You would be right!

Nevertheless, scholars persist at what they do, driven by motivations that only they possess. Their efforts *occasionally* make interesting reading.

In this case their efforts will provide us with something to think about concerning our Lord Jesus Christ and God's revelation, both Old and New Testaments.

Proposition: The Bible centers around Christ; you should too.

I. The themes of the Old Testament

A. "The Exodus motif:"¹

1. Describes God's mighty acts in saving his people from Egypt
2. Recalled in many psalms and prophets
3. Paralleled with personal salvation
4. Compared with the return from exile
5. Anticipates ultimate Messianic salvation

B. The prequel to Christ

"The principle purpose to which the plan of the Old Covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming both of Christ, the universal Redeemer, and of the messianic kingdom, to announce this coming by prophecy (*cf.* Lk 24.44; Jn 5.39; 1 Pt 1.10), and to indicate its meaning through various types (*cf.* 1 Cor10.11). ... God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New."²

Bruce comments: "These paragraphs express eloquently the traditional Christian assessment of the Old Testament."³

C. Other themes discerned in the Old Testament

1. The Covenant Principle: the OT seen as the development of the covenants between God and man (Israel)
 - a. Noahic

¹ F. F. Bruce, *This Is That* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1972), 12.

² English translation from *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbott and J. Gallagher (London, 1966), quoted by *ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 13.

- b. Abrahamic
 - c. Mosaic
 - d. Davidic
 - e. New
2. The “history of salvation” – the proclamation of the themes of redemption in
- a. The foundation of Jewish religion (Moses)
 - b. The history of Jewish religion (writings)
 - c. The exhortations concerning Jewish religion (prophets)

We can discern these themes in the OT, but to make them the unifying principle of the OT leaves out important aspects of OT revelation:

- e.g., The wisdom literature is largely left out of the ‘covenant’ and ‘history of salvation’ themes

3. The Creation Theme
- a. Wisdom literature often recalls this theme (Job, Proverbs)
 - b. God glorified as Creator of the world
 - c. Creator of the nation
 - d. Creator of the King
 - e. Creator of the new age to come

But this theme leaves out much that is taught by the other themes.

II. The theme of the New Testament

A. The one theme of the New Testament

1. Jesus Christ is the focus of the gospels (a firm grasp of the obvious)
2. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the epistles; their exhortation is the expression of his life in the life of the disciple
3. Jesus Christ is the focus of the future (Revelation) and the ruler of all that is to come

B. The theme of the New Testament fulfills (fills up) the themes of the Old Testament

“No one image or pattern, no one of the motifs or themes which have been reviewed is adequate in itself for the New Testament presentation of the Old. Covenant is here, and so pre-eminently is the history of salvation, but what is emphasized throughout the New Testament is that these and other themes, and all the images and motifs of revelation and response, are fulfilled in Jesus. ‘We have found him’, say the Evangelists and apostolic writers, echoing Philip; this is He. This note of fulfilment is struck throughout, yet not so much one note as a harmony of notes. In Jesus the promise is confirmed, the covenant is renewed, the law is vindicated, salvation is brought near, sacred history has reached its climax, the perfect sacrifice has been offered and accepted, the great priest over the household of God has taken his seat at God’s right hand, the Prophet like Moses has been raised up, the Son of David reigns, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, the Son of Man has received dominion from the Ancient of Days, the Servant of the Lord, having been smitten to death for his people’s transgression and born the sin of many, has accomplished the divine purpose, has seen light after the travail of his soul and is now exalted and extolled and made very high.”⁴

III. The obligation of the Christian

- A. Hear him
- B. Obey him
- C. Worship him!

Conclusion:

When Philip came to Nathaniel with his message, the message implied a call: “Come and see, come and serve, come and worship.”

When we consider our Bible, in its whole, the message is the same.

Jesus Christ is our Lord of lords and saviour of our souls.

⁴ Ibid., 20–21.