

December 18, 2005 by Steve Brandon



All Scripture

2 Timothy 3:16-17

- 1. The Whole Bible is Inspired (verse 16a).**
- 2. The Whole Bible is Profitable (verse 16b).**
- 3. The Whole Bible is Capable (verse 17).**

Our text this morning is 2 Timothy 3:16-17. These are well known verses, and if you have children who are involved in the AWANA program, it is likely that you have heard them recite these verses from memory. Paul writes, ...

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

If you have been around Rock Valley Bible Church for any time, you know that we are planning to preach through the entire Bible next year. In your bulletin this morning, we have provided a Bible-reading chart that will set the course for RVBC in 2006. You can also find this chart on the back table and on the church website. We will be encouraging each and every one of you to be reading through the Bible on your own. For those in our congregation who are too young to read, we would encourage parents to read through the Bible out loud with them in a time of family worship that you have with your family. Please don't underestimate the profitability of this exercise. It will do you and your family a world of good.

Every Sunday morning, our sermons will be based on the reading that was scheduled for the previous week. Furthermore, we will use the time during our Flock Bible studies to discuss the previous week's reading. At times, this might be a response and application to the sermon on Sunday. At other times, this might be a supplement to what could not be covered on Sunday morning.

I have had some people come up to me and say, "Do you really think that you can do all of this?" I believe that we can. Here's why: We will keep to the schedule that we have provided to all of you. Though we certainly won't be able to look at everything in the whole Bible in detail, we will cover some key things in the passage and continue on the next week. For instance, you will find a Bible reading schedule in your bulletin this morning. If you look at Sunday, January 1st, you will see that the assigned reading for that day is Genesis 1-3. Come the first of January, my text is going to be Genesis 1-3. In that sermon, I will talk about the creation, the fall, the curse, and God's incredible promise to provide a redeemer. The reading from January 2nd through the next Sunday, January 8th, takes us from Genesis 4 through Genesis 27. If you know anything about the book of Genesis, you know that this passage speaks about the flood and then spends much time talking about Abraham. In that sermon, I will speak a bit about the flood, but will focus my attention upon God's choice of Abraham and the incredible blessings that have come to us through him. The reading from January 9th through the next Sunday, January 15th, takes us from Genesis 28 through Genesis 48. This week, we will focus our attention upon Joseph, whom God used to preserve His chosen people. We will continue each week until finally, we have walked through the entire Bible by the end of the year. The schedule will press us on to the next passage. There won't be time to allow a "Part 2" of a passage. Lord willing, we will be able to go through the entire Bible in a year.

I have also been asked by some of you, "Aren't we a church that teaches through the Bible, verse by verse? Is the church now headed in a different direction?" Let me begin by affirming that we are a church that normally preaches through books of the Bible, verse-by-verse. We have established that since the earliest gatherings of our church where we began with an expositional study of 1 Timothy, followed by 1 Thessalonians, and finally Matthew. Our plan is that the year 2007 will find us expositing through a book of the Bible again, just like we have been doing for the past. But this year alone, we will take a different approach, as we go through the entire Bible.

As we have seen in Matthew, verse-by-verse, phrase-by-phrase exposition is very rewarding and has many benefits. But we must also see that it has some limitations. If we were to exposit the entire Bible at the same pace that we spent in Matthew, it would take us 135 years to complete! In other words, at the pace that we are going, we will never finish the entire Bible in our lifetime! It just can't be done at the pace that we are going. If we continue on with such a plan, there will be major portions of the Scriptures which will be neglected in the process. Preaching through the entire Bible will at least be an attempt to touch on subjects that might easily be neglected in our years together as a church.

One of the things that I wish to communicate with all of you is that biblical exposition doesn't necessarily have to be verse-by-verse, phrase-by-phrase exposition as we did through Matthew. Expositing larger chunks of the Bible can still qualify for "expositional preaching." Indeed, some of my sermons in Matthew covered rather large passages. For instance, I covered the entire chapter of Matthew 14 in just three sermons. On the other hand, Paul's epistles tend to be filled with logical deductions and reasoning, which compel us to go slower through the his epistles in order to understand his message. However, some of the narrative portions of the Old Testament Scriptures naturally call for us to go a bit faster, to be able to catch the entire story that is being told. Consider the story of Joseph. It covers 13 entire chapters in Genesis, but yet it is a single story that is appropriate to be covered in one sermon. As we go through the entire Scripture this next year, it will help us to see the whole picture. This is my goal for us as a church: to get a better grasp of the big picture of the Bible.

So, why preach through the whole Bible? I want to give you three answers to that question, which come straight from the Bible. Each of the answers come out of 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

1. The Whole Bible is Inspired (verse 16a).

In verse 16, Paul writes, "All Scripture is inspired by God." Now, when Paul is referring here to the Scripture, you need to understand that He is primarily speaking about the Scripture of his day, which was the Old Testament Scripture. When Paul wrote this, the New Testament was not yet fully written. In actuality, Paul was writing it at the time. When Paul wrote, "All Scripture," he was talking about books in the Bible like Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus. He was talking about historical books like 1st and 2nd Kings, and 1st and 2nd Chronicles. He was talking about prophetic books like Psalms and the Proverbs. He was talking about prophetic books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Hosea. Perhaps when Paul was writing these things, he also had in mind the four gospel accounts. You can read in 1 Timothy 5:18, when he refers to the words of Jesus as "Scripture." Perhaps Paul also considered the book of Acts to be included in the Scripture; we don't know for sure. Certainly, by extension, we believe that Paul's statement here of the Old Testament is true of the New Testament as well, which we believe is no less inspired than the Old Testament. But specifically, Paul's mind was focused upon the Old Testament.

Up to this point in the life of our church, we have neglected much of the Old Testament. I did some other math this week. I searched to see how many of our Sunday morning sermons were based in the Old Testament. I found out that about 10% of our sermons were based in the Old Testament, even though the Old Testament comprises about 75% of the entire Bible. Teaching through the entire Bible will help force us to balance our emphasis. It will be October before we reach the New Testament. I'm not saying that we won't mention or examine New Testament passages until then. We must turn to the New Testament to help interpret the Old Testament. The New Testament reveals where the Old Testament Scriptures were headed. Jesus said that the Scriptures spoke about Him (John 5:39). We will find in the Old Testament many opportunities to land in the New Testament. But we won't focus our time in the New Testament until October. These things will help use to keep in mind that "All Scripture" is inspired by God.

Now, please notice carefully what Paul wrote. He didn't say that the "whole Bible is inspiring." It is true, we find many stories to be inspiring. The story of the boy born in the crime-infested ghettos of the city, who overcame the odds and made it big in professional athletics is what we consider an inspiring story. The story of the blind woman, who graduates from law school and becomes the mayor of her hometown is inspiring. The inspirational poem, which sentimentally touches our hearts is inspiring. The musical number that especially stirs the heart is inspiring to us. But Paul did not write that the Bible was inspiring. That's not his point here, although I have no objection to saying that this book is indeed "inspiring." In fact, the Bible is the only book in the world that will give us the true inspiration needed to live a God-honoring life. However, there are those who read the Bible looking only for a little boost to help them face another day with happiness, as if the Bible is some self-help book. But, this isn't what Paul says.

Paul says that the Scriptures are "inspired by God." Literally, this means that the words of Scripture have been "breathed out" by God. That is, the words of Scripture are divinely produced. The words of Scripture were first formulated in the mind of God, before they were ever transmitted through the hand of man. We believe in the plenary inspiration of Scriptures which means that God fully and equally inspired each passage of Scripture. No portion is more inspired than another.

You might ask, "Well, how did God inspire these writers?" Peter gives us as good an answer as any. He says, "Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The picture that Peter paints for us here is that men were writing, but the Holy Spirit was moving them as they were writing so as to ensure that they wrote what God was "breathing out." Peter doesn't deny the human element in the process of writing down the Scripture, "men ... spoke." And yet, Peter says that it was the Spirit who so moved on them that the words that they wrote were the very words of God!

On several occasions, the New Testament writers often say it like this: The word "was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" (Matt. 1:22; 2:15). What we have is known as human agency, and yet, divine authorship. The 66 books of the Bible was written by 40 different human writers, but there was only one divine Author. The human authors came and left, but the divine Author has outlived them all. From the first author, Moses, to the last author, John the disciple whom Jesus loved, we have a time span of about 1,500 years. The human authors wrote in three different languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Most of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew. There are a handful of chapters written in Aramaic. The New Testament is written entirely in Greek. God inspired the writing of each of these languages. You might say that God is multi-lingual.

I believe that this divine author accounts for the remarkable unity that the Scriptures have. The Scripture tells one story, from many different perspectives. It really is quite remarkable that these writers, from different eras, cultures, and languages come together to tell the story of God and His redemption of man. The story is told in many different ways. Early on in Genesis, God pictures a struggle between a serpent and a man. Eventually, a man would come and be bruised by the serpent, but He eventually would kill the serpent. In Exodus, the picture is given of a Passover lamb. The death of a lamb and the sprinkling of blood upon the door post would protect the firstborn of the house from the angel, Death. In Numbers, the people simply needed to look to a raised bronze serpent and their wounds would be healed. In Hosea, we see the prophet himself purchasing his unfaithful wife with a price from the slave market. Of course, all of these pictures are a picture of what Jesus has accomplished for us. The same story is told by different people in different ways. And yet they all agree.

Why preach through the whole Bible? Because "The Whole Bible is Inspired by God." I have a second reason. We plan on preaching through the entire Bible because ...

2. The Whole Bible is Profitable (verse 16b).

Look at verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." In other words, the whole Bible is profitable to teach us what we need to know and what we need to do. The larger catechism of the

Westminster Confession of faith asks this question: "What do the scriptures principally teach?" The answer is this: "The scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man" (question #5). This is what 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us.

It is the Scriptures that teach us what we are to believe and how we are to live. But, again, you need to remember that Paul is primarily talking about the Old Testament with these words. The Old Testament is profitable for our spiritual lives! In fact, look at how profitable the Old Testament Scriptures were for Timothy. Look at verses 14 and 15, ...

2 Timothy 3:14-15

You [Timothy] ... continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned [them]; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

When Timothy was a little boy, he was trained in the Scriptures. His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois taught them to him (2 Tim 1:5). Please realize that Timothy's father was an unbeliever (Acts 16:1). But that didn't stop his mother and his grandmother from training him in the Scriptures. It would have taken a bit of effort. I'm not sure that they had their own copy of the Bible. But should they have had a copy (or access to one), it isn't too much to imagine that they systematically read through the Bible with him, just as we are encouraging all of you families to do in your families. And so, mothers, if your husband isn't taking the lead to say, "This year, we are going to read through the Scriptures together as a family," may I encourage you to be like Lois and Eunice and read through the Scriptures with your children with or without your husband. Be like Lois and Eunice. They are heroes of the faith!

Personally, I believe that your reading through the Bible with your children will have far more effect than anything that the church can do to train your children in the Scriptures. It will be more effective than listening to my preaching. It will be more effective than sending your children to Sunday school or to AWANA. It's moms and dads reading the Bible with their children that will make the biggest difference in the lives of your children. I know of several families in our congregation who are committed to reading through the Bible each year in their families. They can give you great testimonies of what it has taught all involved.

Please remember that Paul is talking here about the Old Testament Scriptures. It was the Old Testament that was able to lead Timothy to faith in Jesus, even though they never specifically mentioned His name. The Old Testament Scriptures abound in their teaching about God and about His requirement of us. The Old Testament Scriptures demonstrate again and again and again how all of us fail to follow God in one way or another. Even the great men of God, like Abraham, Moses, and David, are filled with sinfulness in their souls. The Scriptures cry out for another to come, who would be perfect, who would ultimately redeem Israel from her sins!

But, even more than the simple hope for another to come and redeem us from our sins, the Scriptures teach us how to live in our daily lives. It is through the Scriptures that we come to know what we are to believe. It is through the Scriptures that we learn where our behavior is wrong and where we are trained to live righteous, God-honoring lives. The Scriptures are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (verse 16).

Let's spend a few moments unpacking each of those words.

1. **Teaching.** If you are going to be a Christ-follower, there are some things that you simply need to know! This term, "teaching," is primarily talking about the imparting of knowledge. Knowing God and His ways is foundational to everything that we do as His followers.

2. **Reproof.** If you are going to be a Christ-follower, there are some things in your life that you need to change. This term, "reproof" is talking about the identification of those things that you need to change. It may be in your doctrine. It may be in your conduct. The Scriptures have a wonderful way of confronting us in our sin.

3. **Correction.** This word is talking about the positive side of "reproof." It's the "reproof" that will expose your sin, but it is the "correction" that will lead you in the right way. Reproof is like a stop sign. Correction is like a street sign. The Scriptures are able to help us with these things.

4. **Training.** This is talking about the overall process of sanctification. This word is commonly used of a parents' discipline of his children. It's not always pleasant, but in the end, it is good. The Writer to the Hebrews says it like this: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). This discipline is talking about the training that comes to us through the word and applied to our souls by God, which ends in righteous living.

For us this morning, we need to realize that these things take place through the usage of "all Scripture," not simply the New Testament. As we travel through the entire Scripture together as a church body, surely there will be certain admonitions and applications that the Lord will use to train us in righteousness.

Listen to what Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:6. After talking about Israel's sinful desires after being delivered from slavery, Paul writes, "These things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things as they also craved." (1 Cor. 10:6.) A few more verses later, Paul describes the complaining attitude of the Israelites. Paul observed, "These things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages have come." (1 Cor. 10:11). These are things that we will learn through the examples of those in the Old Testament. They are things that we would never have the chance to learn if we were always bunkered down in one book of the Bible for a long period of time.

This will especially take place for each of you who decide to take up the challenge and read through the entire Bible this next year. This will only be enhanced further as you attend a flock, where the teaching, reproof, correction, and training of the word will also come.

It is so easy for us to focus our attention merely upon the New Testament. This is only natural, as the New Testament is often directly applicable for us. It was written after Christ was crucified, buried, and was resurrected. It is often directed toward churches, or church leaders, which allow us to take the words and apply them directly to use today. But, application of the Old Testament is a bit more difficult. After all, the Old Testament was written to an ancient nation. Many of the things written to them have no direct application for us, for they are talking about times and dates and locations, which we couldn't apply if we tried. Also, many of the commands given in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Christ and we no longer need to obey them, because Christ has obeyed them for us. For instance, time and time again, the people are told to offer up literal animal sacrifices for their sins. But, Christ has become the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. We no longer need to offer up animal sacrifices. Now, we need to believe in the cross of Christ as sufficient to atone for our sins. For this reason, it is only natural to focus upon the New Testament. And yet, as we saw in our first point, the Old Testament is equally inspired and equally worthy of our attention. And with this point here, the Old Testament is profitable for our spiritual growth.

In order to fully understand the New Testament, we need first to grasp the Old Testament. It is the Old Testament that anticipates the New Testament. The New Testament explains how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Likewise, it is necessary to understand the Old Testament in light of the New Testament teaching. Both the Old and the New Testament work together to explain God's message to us. The Old Testament establishes a proper framework of thought about God, and what He is like. It shows us His holiness, our sinfulness, and the punishment that is due us. The Old Testament demonstrates the immense sinfulness of all of us. Even the most righteous men in the Bible are filled with wrong actions and attitudes. The Old Testament anticipates the perfect One who will come to keep the law and redeem Israel. The New Testament shows how the Old Testament was fulfilled in Christ. It shows how faithful God is to His promises. To understand the Old Testament, you need to understand the New Testament. To understand the New Testament, you need to understand the Old Testament. The Old and the New Testaments help to explain each other! One of my goals in going through the entire Bible is to help us to see how the Old Testament and the New Testament teach us the message of the whole Bible.

As you read through the whole Bible, keep in mind that the three most important rules of Bible interpretation are these: (1) Context. (2) Context. (3) Context. In other words, whenever you seek to interpret a passage of Scripture, the most important thing to do is to take the context of the passage into account. You cannot interpret a passage to mean one thing if the context of the passage contradicts your interpretation.

There are several layers to context. There is the context of the surrounding verses. There is the context of the immediate chapter. There is the context of the book in which the words were written. And finally, there is an entire Biblical context to help inform you where this particular passage falls in God's redemptive history of man. It is easy in our Bible interpretation to miss the overall purposes of what is being accomplished by any particular text. But, as we work through the entire Bible, all of which is inspired and profitable for us, it will help us to put the whole of the Scriptures together in our minds, that we might interpret each individual part correctly.

3. The Whole Bible is Capable (verse 17).

When I say that the whole Bible is "capable," I simply mean that the Scriptures alone are sufficient for us. They are capable of doing their work in us. Verse 17 reads, "that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The man of God is able to be equipped for every good work through the work of the Scriptures alone.

This verse is a great verse to help show us the great need for a thorough understanding of the Old Testament. Upon first reading of this passage, we might simply come to the conclusion that Paul is describing the effect that the Scriptures have on all of us. The Scriptures are capable for equipping all of us for good works. While this is true by extension, Paul's intent was probably a bit more specific than this. Throughout the Old Testament this word was often used to describe the great servants of God: Moses (Deut. 33:1), Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6, 7), Elijah (1 Kings 17:18), Elisha (2 Kings 4:16), and David (2 Chron. 8:14). I should also include several other lesser known prophets like Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:22), Igdaliah (Jer. 35:4), and a few others who aren't even named (1 Sam. 2:27; 1 Kings 25:7). Every single one of these men are called a "man of God." They speak on God's behalf. This word used to refer to these men is always used of those who are speaking on behalf of God. It is never used to refer to the ordinary man in the congregation.

With the background of the Old Testament, you can see and understand that Paul is probably talking here about one who speaks for God. In this case, it refers to a pastor, who leads a congregation in God's ways. Paul was telling Timothy, "You are a man of God!" The only other time in which this phrase, "man of God" is used in the New Testament comes in 1 Timothy 6:11, when Paul again used this word to describe Timothy as a "man of God," who follows in the ways of God and fights the fight of faith. It's when you read through the entire Bible that you begin to hear this type of phrase come up again and again and again, the "man of God." And then, you realize that Paul is giving Timothy assurance that he simply needs to Scriptures to prepare him and make him adequate for his pastoral ministry.

The truth has come fresh to me again this week: as a pastor, the Scriptures are sufficient for my pastoral training. I don't need this seminar. I don't need that seminar. I don't need this conference. I don't need that book. Don't be me wrong, all of the seminars, books and CD's are helpful, especially as they focus their attention upon helping to make the Scriptures clearer. But, fundamentally, the training manual for every pastor is the Scripture. And this isn't including only the pastoral epistles (1 & Timothy and Titus) which direct their focus upon pastors. It includes "All Scripture."

"All Scripture" includes Genesis, which teaches us that God is the sovereign creator of the universe, but that in Adam's sin, the entire human race was plunged into sin. It teaches us that in God's grace, He promises of a redeemer who would come. It teaches us how He begins to fulfill His promise in choosing Abraham to be the father of His people, which He would choose to bless.

"All Scripture" includes Exodus, which teaches us that God is a saving God, who will deliver His people from their distress, in accordance with His promises. It also teaches us of His holy standard for living.

"All Scripture" includes Leviticus, which teaches us that when we fail to live in accordance with God's law, we need to offer a sacrifice to appease the wrath of God. Ultimately, these sacrifices all point to Jesus, who became the "propitiation" for our sins. This means that Jesus satisfied God's righteous anger which was directed toward us because of our sin.

"All Scripture" includes Numbers, which teaches us of how rebellious we can be. The children of Israel witnessed God's amazing power in redeeming His people from slavery, and yet, they were ungrateful and unfaithful.

"All Scripture" includes Deuteronomy, which gives us a great exposition of what it means to love and follow God and the blessings or cursings that follow our choice in doing so or not.

"All Scripture" includes Joshua, which teaches us of the ways to have true Godly success through trust and obedience in God's word.

"All Scripture" includes Judges, which teaches us of how great a deliverer God is. Throughout many generations, God raised up men to help Israel in her distress.

"All Scripture" includes Ruth, which gives us an insight into how a kinsman can redeem one of his own people with a price.

"All Scripture" includes 1 Samuel, which puts forth the might king Saul, who had everything going for him from a worldly perspective, but through unbelief, God cast him off. "

All Scripture" includes 2 Samuel, which highlights the life of king David, who had a man after God's own heart. And even though David failed the LORD, God was gracious to forgive him, because of David's repentance. 2 Samuel also includes the great promise that God makes to David of the Messiah who is to come from His line.

"All Scripture" includes 1 Kings, which tells us of the life of Solomon, the wisest man ever to walk the planet. And yet, His following after the world caused his life to end in disaster. Both books, 1&2 Kings tells us of the effects of the disaster of division, as the people of God were split in two after a civil war.

"All Scripture" includes 1 & 2 Chronicles, which contain many historical stories of God's working with people, which teach us that our faith is grounded in history. Our faith isn't a fairy tale! Our faith is history! "

All Scripture" includes Ezra and Nehemiah, which tell us of God's incredible working among the people of God to bring them back into the land after their exile to Babylon. God is faithful to His people!

"All Scripture" includes Esther and Job, which teach us of God's amazing sovereignty to turn very, very difficult circumstances into opportunities for His name to be praised among the nations! It shows us that God is faithful to His people.

"All Scripture" includes the Psalms, which trace an entire range of emotions that the people of God have always faced. At times, nothing but praise comes from the mouth of the Psalmist. At other times, the Psalmist is crushed in his sin and mourning the difficulties that he has to endure.

"All Scripture" includes the Proverbs, which gives us great wisdom for living, written by the wisest man who ever lived.

"All Scripture" includes Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon, which deal with the pleasures of life and teaches how we ought to view earthly pleasures.

"All Scripture" includes the prophets, like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who give us one simple message, "Repent!" told in many, many different ways, using many different words and illustrations. These prophets confront our sin.

"All Scripture" includes Daniel, who teaches us of God's sovereign rule over the universe and His bringing in of an everlasting kingdom.

"All Scripture" includes Hosea, who teaches us of God's abounding love to a disobedient people.

"All Scripture" includes Joel and Amos, and Obadiah, which speak of God's judgment that will come upon those who are disobedient to the Lord.

"All Scripture" includes the prophet Jonah, who teaches us of God's kindness in forgiving an abundantly wicked people who repent.

"All Scripture" includes Nahum and Habakkuk, which speak of God's judgment upon Assyria as well as upon Judah.

"All Scripture" includes Zephaniah, and Haggai, who both describe God's work in restoring His people.

All Scripture" includes Zechariah, who anticipates the coming Messiah.

"All Scripture" includes Malachi, who denounces the self-righteous worship of Israel, and anticipates the coming of John the Baptist.

These Scriptures were Timothy's pastoral training manuals. These Scriptures were adequate to train him in the work that he needed to do as a pastor. This is to say nothing of the books of the New Testament, which talks much of the pastoral role. "All Scripture ... [is] adequate to equip [the man of God] for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). This is likely what Paul is specifically saying in verse 17.

Now, although verse 17 is primarily directed at Timothy, the pastor, you can make the jump from the pastor to the pew. If the entire Bible is sufficient and capable to train pastors in their prophetic and pastoral role, would they not also be sufficient for those in the pew as well? Of course, the resounding answer must be, "Yes!"

Do you want to be equipped for good works of service? Let "All Scripture" have its effect in your life. And in 2006, you are going to have an opportunity to allow the totality of Scripture have this effect upon your life. I encourage you to take up the challenge and be involved in 2006 in allowing "All Scripture" to do its work in your life. Read through the Bible as a family and thus, come prepared to learn on Sunday morning. Attend a Flock, where all of these things will be reinforced and discussed in more detail.

I want to finish this morning by taking a quick look at Christmas. Christmas is only a week away. Certainly, our minds are on Christmas. What is great about Christmas is that it pulls together many portions of both the Old Testament and New Testament, bringing it all into focus. It was prophesied that the Messiah would come from the line of Judah (Genesis 49:10). More specifically, it was prophesied that He would come from the line of David (2 Samuel 7). We are told that a child would be born to us, who would become a great ruler and king (Isaiah 9:6). This child would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The Messiah would arrive 483 years after the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24-27). At His coming, he would be fully grown, so this would have put His birth some 450 years after this decree. This all happened exactly according to the plan!

Not only was He born according to the prophecies, but he also lived in accordance with the prophecies as well. The Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would come as a suffering servant (Isaiah 42; 53). Jesus said that indeed, He came to be a servant who gave His life, rather than demanding others to serve Him (Mark 10:45). The Scriptures said that the Spirit would come upon the Messiah to anoint him for proclaiming the good news. This said that this happened to Him (Luke 4:16-21). The Scriptures prophesied that the Messiah would come to the Jews, riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9), which took place exactly as prophesied (see Matthew 21:1-10). Messiah would be crucified (Psalm 22). Messiah would be the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12; John 1:29). Messiah would be raised from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31). All of these things happened in accordance with the Old Testament predictions.

The prophets in the Old Testament promised of a New Covenant that was coming (Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 36). With the coming of Christ, these things took place. In fact, during the Passover meal, Jesus spoke of the New Covenant that would come into effect in His blood (Luke 22:20). With the New Covenant was a new priesthood (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7). With the new priesthood comes a new law (Hebrews 7; Galatians 6:2). Christ claimed to be the king, who would come to reign (2 Samuel 7; Rom. 1:3). His coming would bring salvation to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:47). The entire story of the Bible centers on the coming of Jesus at Christmas time.

As we study through the entire Bible next year, all of these thoughts should come together a bit more for you. May the LORD bless our study.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 18, 2005 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
