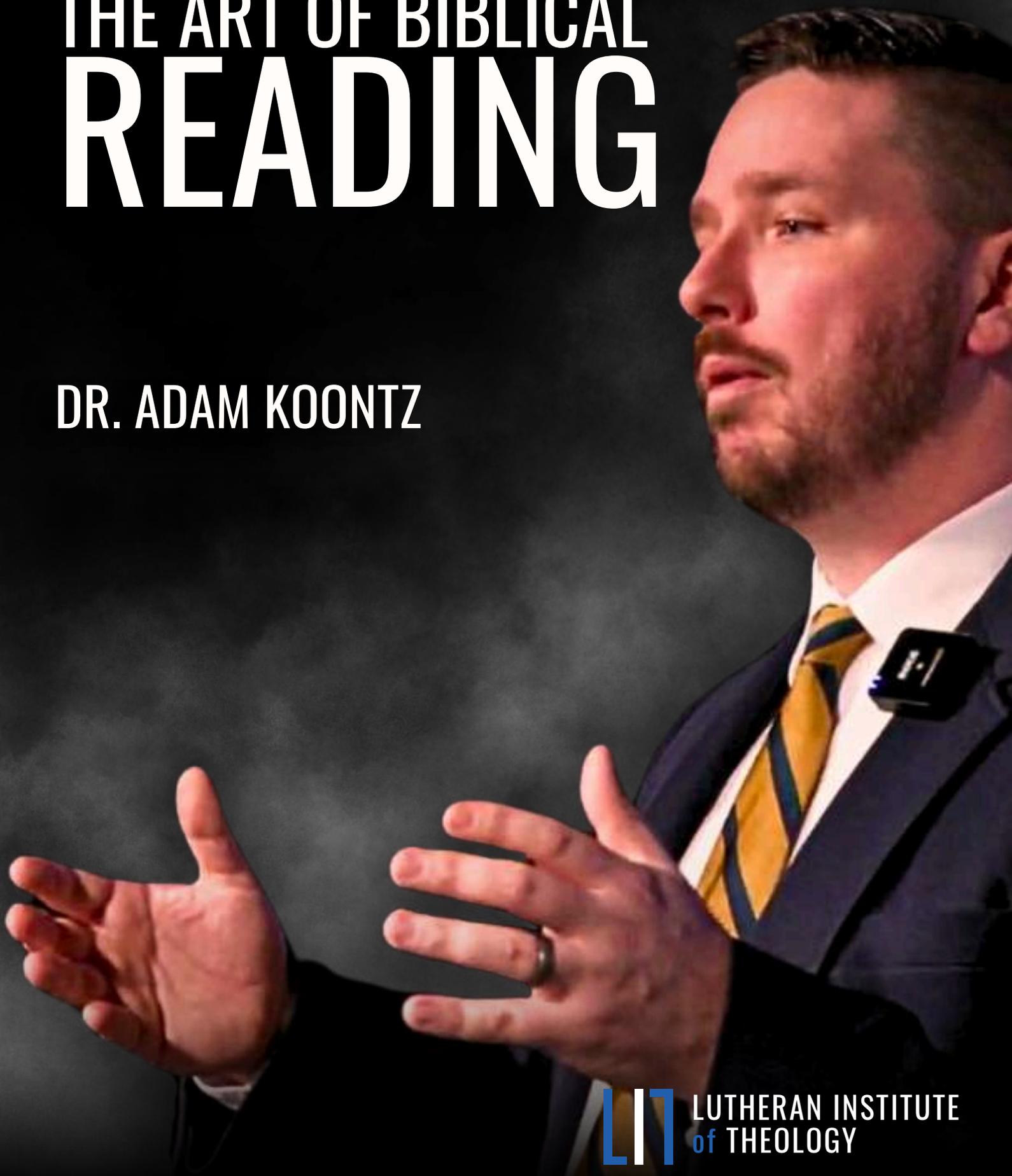


THE ART OF BIBLICAL READING

DR. ADAM KOONTZ



LUTHERAN INSTITUTE
of THEOLOGY

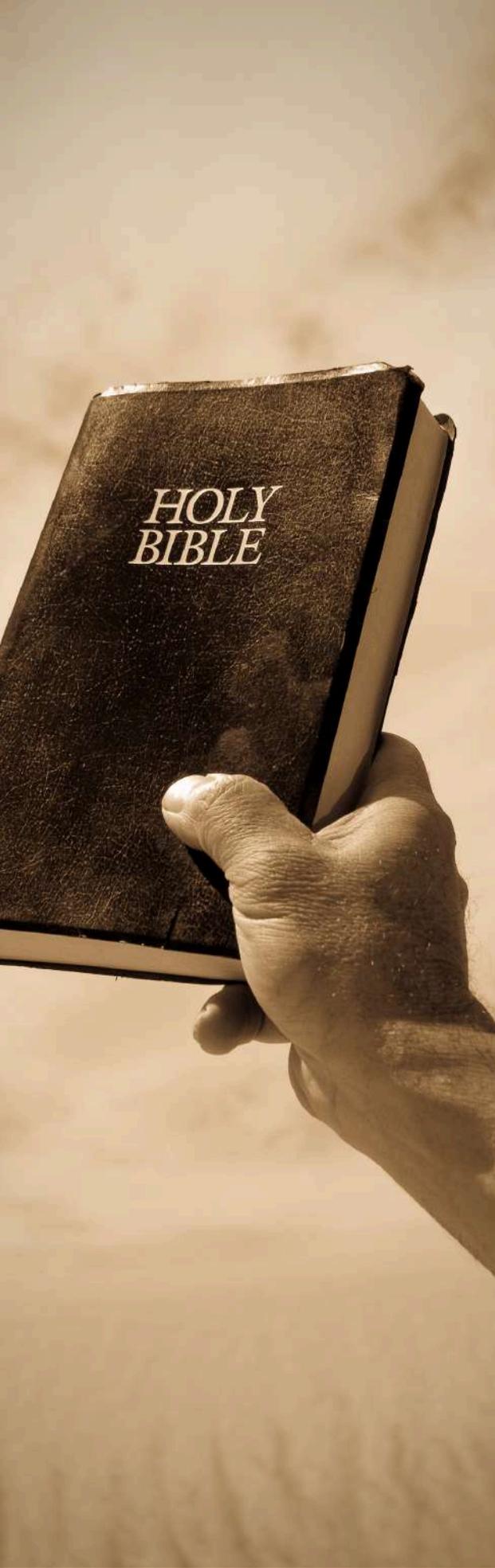


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COURSE INTRODUCTION

The Bible is unlike any other book. It is not only the Word of God written but also the means by which God speaks, changes, and shapes His people. Yet many Christians struggle with how to read Scripture: is it simply a historical record, a moral guide, or a collection of inspiring stories? How do its many parts—law and gospel, Old Testament and New Testament, history and poetry—fit together? And how should we approach its types, allegories, and connections without losing sight of Christ?

In this course, Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz leads you through a rich and practical exploration of how Christians can read the Bible faithfully. Rooted in Lutheran theology and drawing on the Church’s history of interpretation, Dr. Koontz emphasizes that Scripture is clear, purposeful, and centered in Christ. You will see how the Bible interprets itself, how Jesus and the apostles read the Old Testament, and how the Spirit uses the Word to change its readers.

This is not simply a course in “Bible knowledge.” It is an invitation to enter the living Word with reverence, confidence, and joy. By learning the art of biblical reading, you will grow in your ability to discern God’s voice, understand the unity of Scripture, and read with the depth and imagination that Christians throughout the ages have practiced.



Topics Covered in the Course

- What the Bible is: God's Word written, inspired by the Spirit, and centered in Christ.
- How the Bible changes us, not just informing but transforming those who hear it.
- Why Scripture is clear and meant to be understood by the Church.
- The purpose of the Bible as God's revelation of salvation and instruction for life.
- How the whole Bible fits together, from Genesis to Revelation, with Christ at the center.
- How Jesus and the apostles interpreted the Scriptures of Israel.
- The role of types, allegories, and deeper readings in understanding God's Word.

Let's Get Started

The art of biblical reading is not only a skill but a calling for every Christian. The Word of God is living and active, and it has been given to the Church for faith and life. As you begin this course, you are invited to hear the Scriptures afresh, to see how Christ is at the center of every page, and to grow in the joy of reading God's Word with depth and confidence. It starts now.



SESSION 1:

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

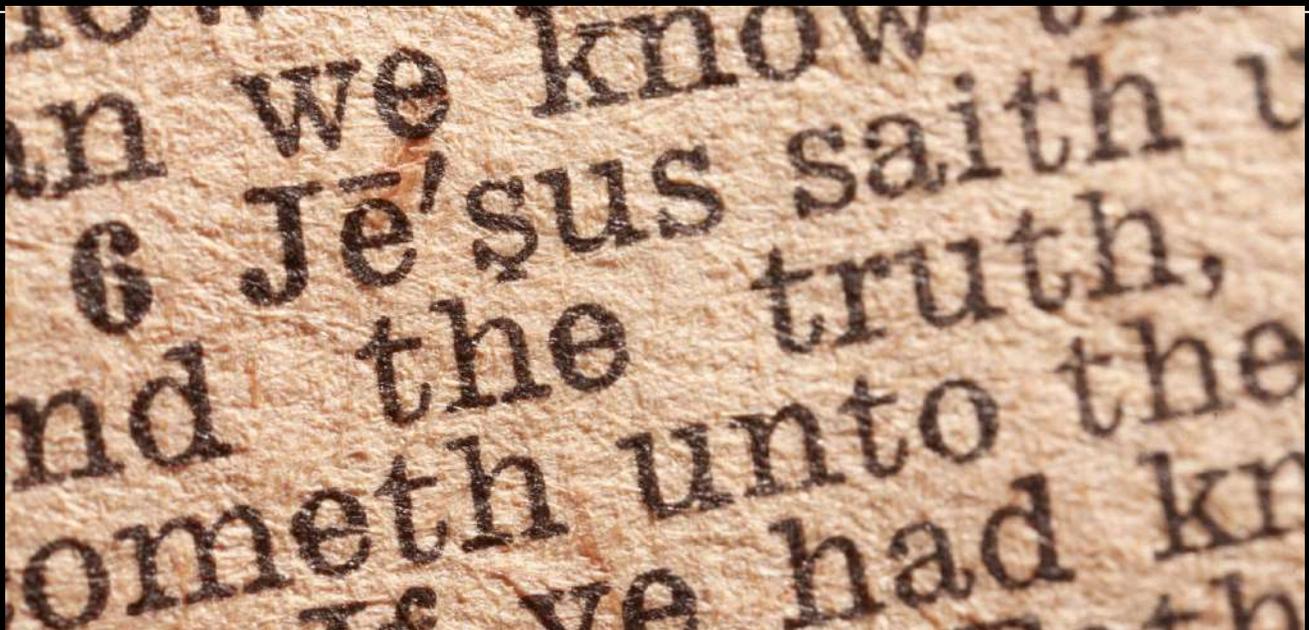
Introduction

Christians call the Bible the Word of God, but what does that really mean? Is the Bible just a human collection of writings, a history book, or a religious manual? Or is it something more—God’s living Word given for His people? In this first session, Dr. Adam Koontz sets the foundation for the entire course by exploring what the Bible is and how it should be understood.

The Bible is both divine and human, written by prophets and apostles yet inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is not one book but a library of sixty-six books, composed over centuries, yet unified in its testimony to Christ. To grasp the art of biblical reading, we must begin here: with the recognition that the Bible is God’s Word, written for the Church, and meant to be read, heard, and believed.

The Bible as God’s Word

At its core, the Bible is not simply a record of religious experiences but the very Word of God. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “all Scripture is breathed out by God,” emphasizing its divine origin. The prophets did not speak on their own authority but as moved by the Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). This means that when we read Scripture, we are not merely hearing human voices but the voice of God Himself. The Bible is unique: fully human in authorship, fully divine in authority.



The Bible as a Library of Books

The word “Bible” comes from the Greek *biblia*, meaning “books.” Scripture is not one continuous text but a collection of writings—law, prophets, psalms, gospels, letters, and more. These diverse books were written in different times and contexts, yet together they form one canon. This diversity is part of its richness: God speaks through narrative and poetry, law and prophecy, wisdom and epistle. Recognizing this variety helps us read each part according to its purpose, while also seeing how all of it fits together in Christ.

The Unity of the Bible

Despite its diversity, the Bible has a profound unity. From Genesis to Revelation, it tells one story: God’s work of creation, redemption, and restoration. The Old Testament prepares the way for Christ, and the New Testament proclaims His fulfillment. Jesus Himself teaches that “the Scriptures...bear witness about me” (John 5:39). This unity does not erase differences of genre or perspective but shows that behind many voices there is one divine Author. Reading the Bible well means learning to see this overarching narrative.

The Bible in the Life of the Church

The Bible is not simply a text to be studied in isolation; it is the book of the Church. From the beginning, Christians gathered to hear the Scriptures read aloud in worship. The Bible was preserved, copied, and transmitted within the Church. The creeds and confessions of the faith arose from close engagement with the Scriptures. To read the Bible rightly, then, is to read it not as a private possession but as part of the community of faith. The Church receives the Bible as God’s Word, and through it, God continues to address His people.

Law and Gospel in the Bible

One of the keys to Lutheran biblical reading is the distinction between law and gospel. The law reveals God’s commands, exposes sin, and shows our need for salvation. The gospel proclaims Christ’s finished work and offers forgiveness and life. Both law and gospel are God’s Word, and both are necessary. Without law, the gospel would be meaningless; without the gospel, the law would be crushing. Recognizing this distinction keeps us from misusing Scripture and helps us hear it as God intends.

The Bible as Living and Active

Finally, the Bible is not only a historical record but a living Word. Hebrews 4:12 describes it as “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.” The same Spirit who inspired the text also works through it today. This means that reading Scripture is never a neutral exercise. It confronts us, convicts us, comforts us, and changes us. The Bible is God’s instrument to create and sustain faith, not just an object of study but a means of grace.

Key Terms to Understand

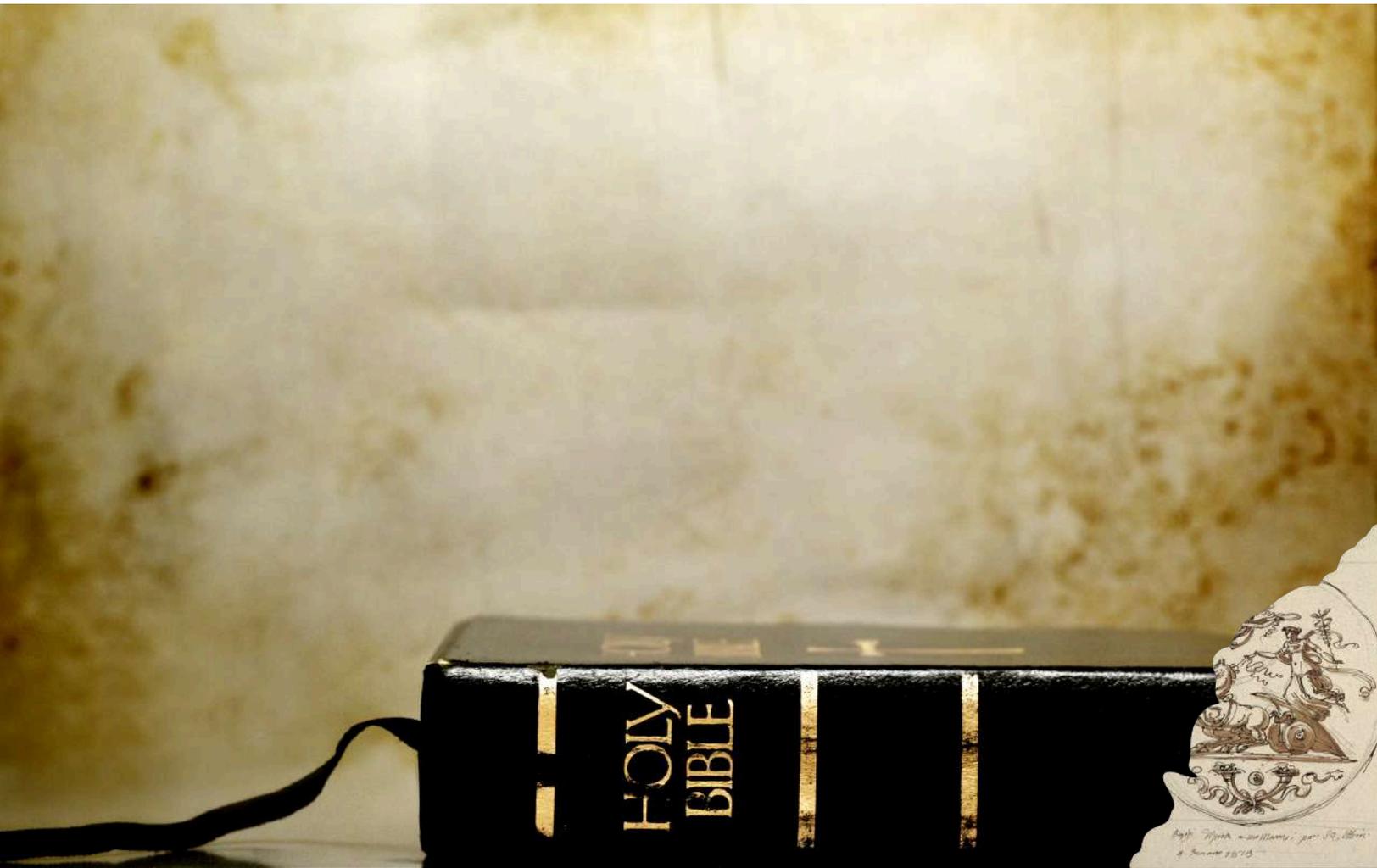
- **Inspiration:** The Spirit’s work in producing Scripture through human authors.
- **Canon:** The official collection of books recognized as Scripture.
- **Law and Gospel:** The twofold Word of God—law convicts, gospel saves.
- **Unity of Scripture:** The coherence of the Bible’s message across many books and authors.
- **Means of Grace:** The ways God delivers forgiveness and life, including His Word.

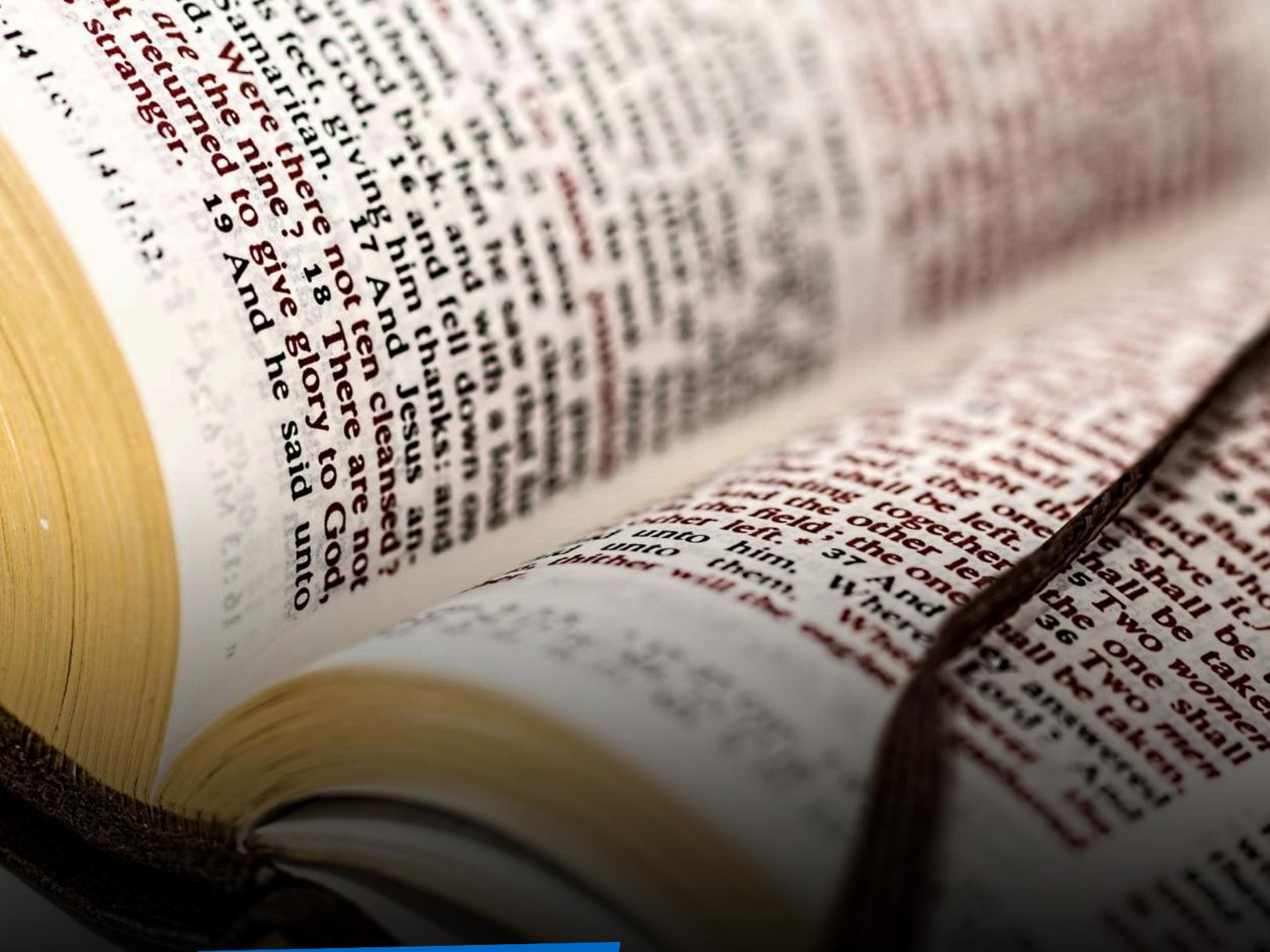
Key Takeaways

- The Bible is both divine and human: God’s Word through human authors.
- Scripture is a diverse library of books, yet unified in Christ.
- The Church is the proper home and reader of the Bible.
- Law and gospel are essential keys for faithful interpretation.
- The Bible is living and active, not just historical but present and powerful.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to say the Bible is both divine and human?
2. How does viewing the Bible as a library of books help us read it better?
3. In what ways does the Bible show its unity across Old and New Testaments?
4. Why is it important to remember that the Bible belongs to the Church?
5. How does the distinction between law and gospel help us avoid misusing Scripture?
6. What does it mean for you personally that the Bible is living and active today?





SESSION 2:

WHY THE BIBLE CHANGES YOU

Introduction

The Bible is not just information. It is transformation. Unlike any other book, the Scriptures do not merely inform our minds but remake our hearts, our desires, and our lives. Christians confess that God’s Word is “living and active,” and in this session, Dr. Adam Koontz explains why the Bible has such power.

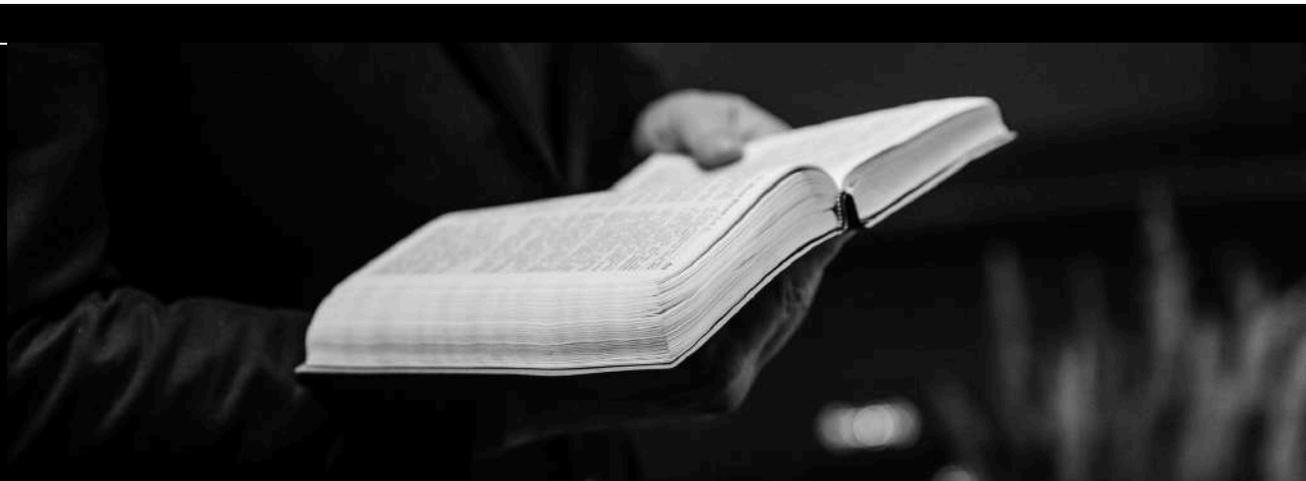
Through the Spirit, Scripture kills and makes alive, convicts and comforts, humbles and strengthens. It is never neutral. The same Word that spoke creation into being continues to shape God’s people today. Understanding why and how the Bible changes us helps us approach it not only with intellectual curiosity but with reverence and expectation.

The Word as Creative Power

From the beginning, God’s Word has been the instrument of creation: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). The Word does not merely describe reality—it creates it. That same power is at work in Scripture today. When we hear the gospel, it does not only offer us information about salvation; it creates faith in our hearts. The Bible changes us because God Himself speaks through it with creative authority.

The Word that Kills and Makes Alive

The Bible’s power is not always comfortable. The law exposes sin and brings death to our illusions of righteousness. Yet this “killing” prepares us for life. The gospel then speaks forgiveness, raises the sinner, and makes alive in Christ. This rhythm of law and gospel means that every encounter with Scripture is transformative: it tears down false confidence and builds up faith in Christ. The Word changes us by putting to death the old Adam and bringing forth the new.



The Spirit Working Through the Word

The Bible's transformative power is not automatic, as if the text itself were magical. Rather, the Spirit works through the Word to bring about change. Paul reminds us that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). This is why Scripture is called a "means of grace." The Spirit uses the Word to deliver forgiveness, create faith, and sustain the Church. We cannot read the Bible as if it were merely ancient literature; we must recognize it as the Spirit's living instrument

The Word in the Life of the Church

The Bible changes not only individuals but also communities. From Pentecost onward, the apostles' teaching was central to the Church's life (Acts 2:42). Wherever the Word is read and preached, the Spirit creates fellowship, repentance, hope, and endurance. This is why Scripture has always been read in the context of worship. It is not a private book for isolated reflection but a communal Word that shapes the life of God's people together.

The Word in Personal Transformation

At the same time, the Bible speaks to each believer personally. Stories of saints, psalms of lament, parables of Jesus—these words meet us in our particular struggles. Scripture convicts us where we are proud, comforts us when we despair, and directs us when we are confused. Its transformation is not abstract but deeply personal, addressing our hearts, our consciences, and our daily lives.

The Word in Daily Habits

The Bible changes us not only in dramatic moments but also through steady, daily reading and hearing. Like food sustains the body, the Word sustains the soul. Its transforming power is often quiet and gradual, reshaping our thinking, redirecting our desires, and forming our character over time. Just as Israel was fed with manna day by day, so Christians are nourished by the daily bread of Scripture.

The Word That Endures

Finally, the Bible changes us because it is eternal. “The word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:25). Unlike trends, philosophies, or opinions, God’s Word does not fade. Each generation is confronted and renewed by the same living voice. To read the Bible is to be caught up into God’s enduring story—a story that remakes us, our churches, and our world until Christ comes again

Key Terms to Understand

- **Means of Grace:** The ways God delivers forgiveness and life—Word and Sacrament.
- **Law and Gospel:** God’s twofold Word: the law convicts, the gospel saves.
- **Old Adam/New Man:** The biblical image of sin destroyed and new life created in Christ.
- **Pentecost:** The outpouring of the Spirit, marking the Church as a community shaped by the Word.
- **Creative Word:** God’s Word that not only describes but brings into being.

Key Takeaways

- God’s Word creates reality, both in the world and in our hearts.
- The Bible kills through the law and makes alive through the gospel.
- The Spirit works through the Word as a means of grace.
- Scripture shapes both the community of the Church and the life of the individual believer.
- Daily reading and hearing of the Bible gradually reshape the believer’s life.
- The Word is eternal and continues to transform every generation.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the Bible's role in creation (Genesis 1) help us understand its power today?
2. What does it mean that the Word "kills and makes alive"?
3. Why is it important to say the Spirit works through the Word rather than apart from it?
4. How has Scripture shaped the life of the Church historically and today?
5. In what ways has the Bible personally convicted, comforted, or changed you?
6. Why does the enduring nature of God's Word give hope in an unstable world?





SESSION 3:

THE CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE

Introduction

One of the most important truths about the Bible is also one of the most contested: the Scriptures are clear. Christians confess that God’s Word is not hidden in mystery, locked away for the educated elite, or dependent on a secret key of interpretation. Instead, the Bible’s saving message is plain. It was written to be read, heard, and understood by the people of God.

In this session, Dr. Adam Koontz explores what the Church means by the “clarity” of Scripture. This teaching does not deny that parts of the Bible are difficult, nor does it suggest that every verse can be understood without study. Rather, it means that the central truths of salvation— law, gospel, Christ crucified and risen—are clear and accessible. The clarity of Scripture both humbles the pride of experts and comforts ordinary Christians, assuring them that God has spoken to them in words they can hear and believe.

What Clarity Means

When the Reformers spoke of the clarity of Scripture (*claritas Scripturae*), they did not mean that the Bible is easy. They meant that God’s Word communicates what He intends in a straightforward way. The Bible is written in human language, using real words, grammar, and history. This clarity assures us that God did not give His Word to confuse or to hide, but to reveal Himself. What is necessary for salvation can be grasped by all who hear the Word in faith.



Scripture's Clarity and Human Sin

If the Bible is clear, why do so many misunderstand it? The problem lies not in Scripture but in the human heart. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4 that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers.” Sin resists God’s Word, twisting it or closing ears to it. Even Christians, still battling sin, can obscure the Word by imposing personal desires, traditions, or philosophies upon it. Thus, lack of clarity is not due to Scripture’s deficiency but to our rebellion.

The Reformers and the Plain Word of God

In the sixteenth century, debates about authority often turned on this very issue. Rome insisted that the Bible required the Church’s magisterium to interpret its meaning. Luther and the Reformers responded that the Word itself is clear. The role of the preacher and the Church is not to add secret keys but to proclaim what Scripture plainly says. The Reformation stood or fell on this conviction: ordinary Christians could hear the Word and understand the gospel without a clerical filter.

Clarity Does Not Mean Simplicity

Affirming clarity does not mean denying difficulty. Peter himself admits that Paul’s writings contain “some things hard to understand” (2 Peter 3:16). Poetry, prophecy, and apocalyptic visions often stretch our imagination. But these challenges exist within a framework where the central message—Christ as Savior—is unmistakable. The Bible’s difficulties drive us deeper into study and dependence on the Spirit, but they never erase its core clarity.

Clarity for the Church and the Individual

The clarity of Scripture matters both communally and personally. In the Church, clarity means that the Word can be read in worship, taught in catechesis, and preached to all ages with confidence. For the individual believer, clarity means that you do not need to be a scholar to understand God’s promises. The Word of God is for you. Children can hear the gospel and believe; the uneducated can confess Christ as Lord; the sick and dying can grasp the comfort of forgiveness.

The Comfort of Clarity

Finally, the clarity of Scripture is not just a doctrine but a comfort. It assures us that God has not left us guessing about who He is or what He has done. In a world of confusion and competing voices, the Bible speaks with a clear and certain voice: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Clarity means God truly wants to be known, and He has made Himself known in Christ through His Word.

Key Terms to Understand

- **Clarity of Scripture (Claritas Scripturae):** The teaching that the Bible’s saving message is plain and accessible.
- **Magisterium:** The teaching authority of the Roman Church, which claimed to be necessary for interpreting Scripture.
- **Reformation Principle:** The conviction that Scripture interprets itself and can be heard plainly by believers.
- **Blindness of Sin:** The spiritual condition that obscures God’s Word, not because of Scripture’s fault but because of human rebellion.
- **Perspicuity:** Another term for clarity, emphasizing that the essential truths of salvation are not hidden.

Key Takeaways

- The Bible is clear: God speaks in human words so His people can understand.
- Difficulty in understanding arises from human sin, not from the Word itself.
- The Reformers insisted that Scripture is plain and does not require hidden keys.
- Clarity does not mean every passage is simple, but the gospel is unmistakable.
- Scripture’s clarity comforts believers, assuring them of God’s will and promises

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to say the Bible is clear but not always easy?
2. How does sin distort the way people hear and read Scripture?
3. Why was the doctrine of clarity so important during the Reformation?
4. How can we distinguish between difficult passages and the clear message of salvation?
5. What role does the Church play in preserving and proclaiming the clarity of Scripture?
6. How does the clarity of the Bible give you confidence and comfort in your own faith?



The Ten Commandments

1 - I AM THE LORD THY GOD.
THOU SHALT NOT HAVE
STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME.

2 - THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE
NAME OF THE LORD THY
GOD IN VAIN.

3 - REMEMBER THAT THOU KEEP
HOLY THE SABBATH DAY.



4 - HONOR THY FATHER AND
THY MOTHER.

5 - THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

6 - THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT
ADULTERY.

7 - THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

8 - THOU SHALT NOT BEAR
FALSE WITNESS AGAINST
THY NEIGHBOR.

9 - THOU SHALT NOT COVET
THY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

10 - THOU SHALT NOT COVET
THY NEIGHBOR'S GOODS.

SESSION 4:

THE PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE

Introduction

Why did God give us the Bible? This question goes beyond identifying what the Bible is to asking what it is for. Many approach Scripture as a source of rules, a manual for life, or a book of inspiring stories. But the Church has always confessed that the Bible's purpose is greater: it is God's chosen means of revealing Himself in Christ, making people wise for salvation, and equipping them for every good work.

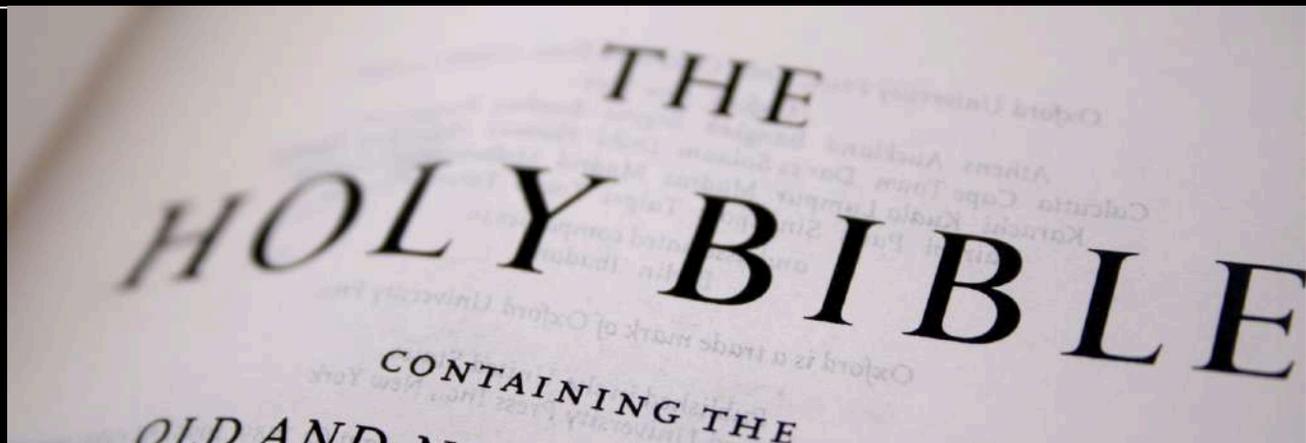
In this session, Dr. Adam Koontz unfolds the purpose of Scripture. The Bible was given not for speculation or entertainment but for proclamation, faith, and life. It makes Christ known, delivers His promises, and instructs His people. Understanding its purpose helps us avoid misusing the Bible and receive it for what it truly is: God's gift for the salvation and sanctification of His people.

Scripture's Purpose: To Reveal Christ

Jesus Himself declares that the Scriptures testify about Him (John 5:39). The Bible's central purpose is not to provide abstract knowledge but to reveal the person and work of Christ. The Old Testament points forward to Him through prophecy and type; the New Testament proclaims His fulfillment. To miss Christ in Scripture is to miss its very purpose.

Scripture's Purpose: To Give Salvation

Paul writes to Timothy that the "sacred writings...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). The Bible's goal is not simply to teach morality or history but to deliver salvation. By presenting the gospel, it brings faith, forgiveness, and life. Its purpose is not primarily to instruct unbelievers in ethics but to create believers who trust in Christ.





Scripture's Purpose: To Teach and Equip

The same passage continues: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible shapes believers into disciples, equipping them for every good work. This does not reduce Scripture to a rulebook; rather, it shows that the Word forms Christian life after it gives Christian faith. Purpose flows from gospel into vocation.

The Danger of Misusing Scripture

When the Bible is read apart from its true purpose, distortions arise. Treating Scripture as only a moral handbook turns it into law without gospel. Treating it as only a history book drains it of its divine authority. Treating it as only a source of inspirational sayings trivializes its power. These misuses miss the living voice of God and turn the Bible into a tool for human agendas rather than God's purposes.

Scripture's Purpose in the Church

The Bible is not given to individuals in isolation but to the Church. Its purpose is to be read in worship, preached by pastors, and confessed by congregations. In the liturgy, catechism, and hymns, Scripture does its work of teaching and comforting. The Word builds up the Body of Christ, uniting believers around the truth. To separate the Bible from the Church is to ignore the very context in which it was given and in which its purpose is fulfilled.

The Purpose that Endures

Finally, Scripture's purpose is enduring. Generations rise and fall, cultures change, but the Bible continues to reveal Christ, give salvation, and equip the saints. Its aim is not temporary relevance but eternal truth. In every age, Scripture has the same goal: to call people from darkness to light, from death to life, and to keep them steadfast until Christ returns.

Key Terms to Understand

- **Wise for Salvation:** Scripture's ability to bring people to saving faith in Christ (2 Tim. 3:15).
- **Equipping for Good Works:** The role of Scripture in shaping Christian life after faith.
- **Law without Gospel:** A misuse of Scripture that makes it only rules, without Christ.
- **Church's Scripture:** The truth that the Bible belongs to the community of faith, not private speculation.
- **Enduring Word:** The recognition that God's Word always remains and always fulfills its saving purpose.

Key Takeaways

- Scripture's central purpose is to reveal Christ.
- The Bible makes us wise for salvation through faith in Him.
- Scripture teaches, reproves, and equips believers for life in their vocations.
- Misusing Scripture (as only law, history, or inspiration) distorts its purpose.
- The Bible is given to the Church to be read, preached, and confessed.
- Scripture's purpose endures across all ages and cultures.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it essential to say that Scripture's main purpose is to reveal Christ?
2. How does 2 Timothy 3:15–16 summarize the purpose of the Bible?
3. What dangers arise when the Bible is used only as law, history, or inspiration?
4. How does the Church's public reading and preaching of Scripture fulfill its purpose?
5. How do you see the Bible equipping believers for good works in daily vocations?
6. How does knowing the Bible's purpose give confidence for its continued relevance today?



GREEK-ENGLISH
NEW TESTAMENT

HOLY
BIBLE

SESSION 5:

HOW THE BIBLE FITS TOGETHER

Introduction

The Bible is a vast collection of writings—sixty-six books spanning centuries, written by many authors, in multiple languages, across diverse cultures. At first glance, it may seem disjointed: laws and genealogies, psalms and prophecies, gospels and letters. Yet Christians confess that the Bible is not a random assortment of texts but one unified Word of God.

In this session, Dr. Adam Koontz explains how the Bible fits together. The unity of Scripture is not artificial or imposed; it arises from God Himself as the true Author. The Old and New Testaments form one story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Law and gospel work together to show sin and to give salvation. The voices of prophets and apostles harmonize in one testimony. And above all, the Scriptures converge on Christ, who is the center and key to the entire Bible.

One Story, Many Books

Though written by dozens of human authors, the Bible tells one overarching story: God's work to redeem His people. Genesis begins with creation and the fall; Revelation ends with the new creation. Everything in between unfolds God's plan of salvation. Each book contributes to this drama, and while the genres differ, the story is coherent because the same Spirit inspired them all. From the garden of Eden to the heavenly city, Scripture presents one divine narrative: God with His people.



The Old and New Testaments

The two parts of the Bible are distinct but inseparable. The Old Testament prepares; the New Testament fulfills. The promises to Abraham, the covenant at Sinai, the psalms of David, and the prophecies of Isaiah all find their “Yes” in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). The gospels proclaim His life, death, and resurrection; the epistles unfold His work for the Church. Reading either Testament apart from the other leads to distortion: the Old without the New leaves promises unfulfilled; the New without the Old loses its foundation. Together, they reveal God’s one plan of salvation across time.

Law and Gospel as Unifying Keys

One of the clearest threads holding Scripture together is the distinction between law and gospel. The law reveals God’s holy will and exposes sin. The gospel proclaims forgiveness and life in Christ. Both are God’s Word; both are necessary. This pattern runs through the entire Bible. The law in the Old Testament prepares for Christ; the gospel fulfills what the law demands. Jesus embodies this unity: He does not abolish the law but fulfills it (Matt. 5:17), and His cross brings the gospel to completion. Law and gospel provide coherence across the many books of Scripture

The Covenantal Structure of the Bible

Another way the Bible fits together is through God’s covenants. With Noah, Abraham, Israel at Sinai, and David, God establishes promises and structures for His people. Each covenant builds upon the last, pointing forward to the new covenant in Christ’s blood. The unity of Scripture can be traced through this covenantal progression: God binds Himself to His people, culminating in Jesus, who is the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 9:15). To read the Bible rightly is to see how each covenant moves the story of salvation forward toward fulfillment in Christ.

Christ as the Center of Scripture

Jesus taught His disciples that “everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). Christ is not one theme among many but the very center of the Bible. Typology, prophecy, gospel, and epistle all converge in Him. The key to fitting the Bible together is not to find a system but to see Christ. As Augustine said, “The New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.” All Scripture bears witness to Him (John 5:39).

Prophecy and Fulfillment

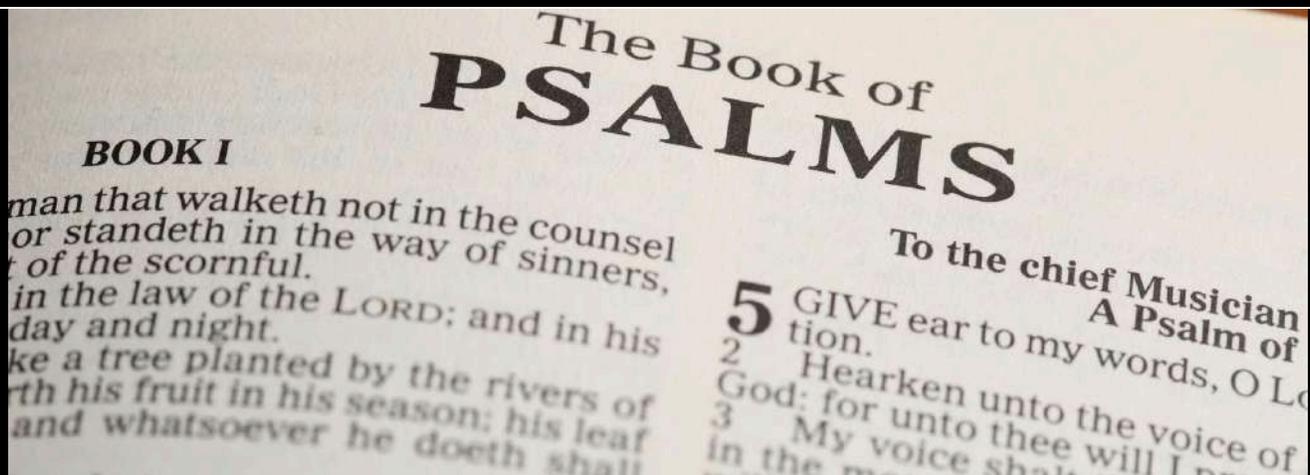
The harmony of Scripture is also seen in how prophecy is fulfilled. Promises of a Messiah, visions of suffering and glory, and images of restoration all come to completion in Jesus. Micah's prophecy of a ruler born in Bethlehem, Isaiah's vision of the suffering servant, and Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant all fit seamlessly into the gospel story. Fulfillment shows that the Bible is not fragmented but consistent, with one divine Author weaving the story across centuries.

The Church's Reading of the Whole Bible

Because the Bible is unified, the Church reads all of it. The lectionary, combining Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel readings, reflects this unity in worship. Catechesis weaves together commandments, creed, and prayer, showing the coherence of doctrine. Preaching connects psalms with Christ's passion, Israel's history with the Church's present life, and prophetic visions with gospel promises. The Church's liturgical and teaching life testifies to the unity of Scripture as one Word for God's people.

Unity in the Midst of Diversity

Finally, the unity of the Bible does not erase its diversity. The poetry of the psalms, the visions of Ezekiel, the parables of Jesus, and the arguments of Paul each have their own voice. Yet all speak the one Word of God. Diversity enriches unity, giving the Bible depth and texture. To see how it all fits together is to recognize the Spirit's orchestration of many voices into one song of salvation.



Key Terms to Understand

- **Canon:** The collected books of the Bible, recognized as Scripture.
- **Old and New Testaments:** The two parts of Scripture, distinct but unified in Christ.
- **Law and Gospel:** The pattern of God's Word, uniting its message.
- **Covenant:** God's binding promises with His people, culminating in Christ.
- **Typology:** The way persons or events in the Old Testament foreshadow Christ.
- **Unity of Scripture:** The teaching that the Bible is one coherent Word of God.

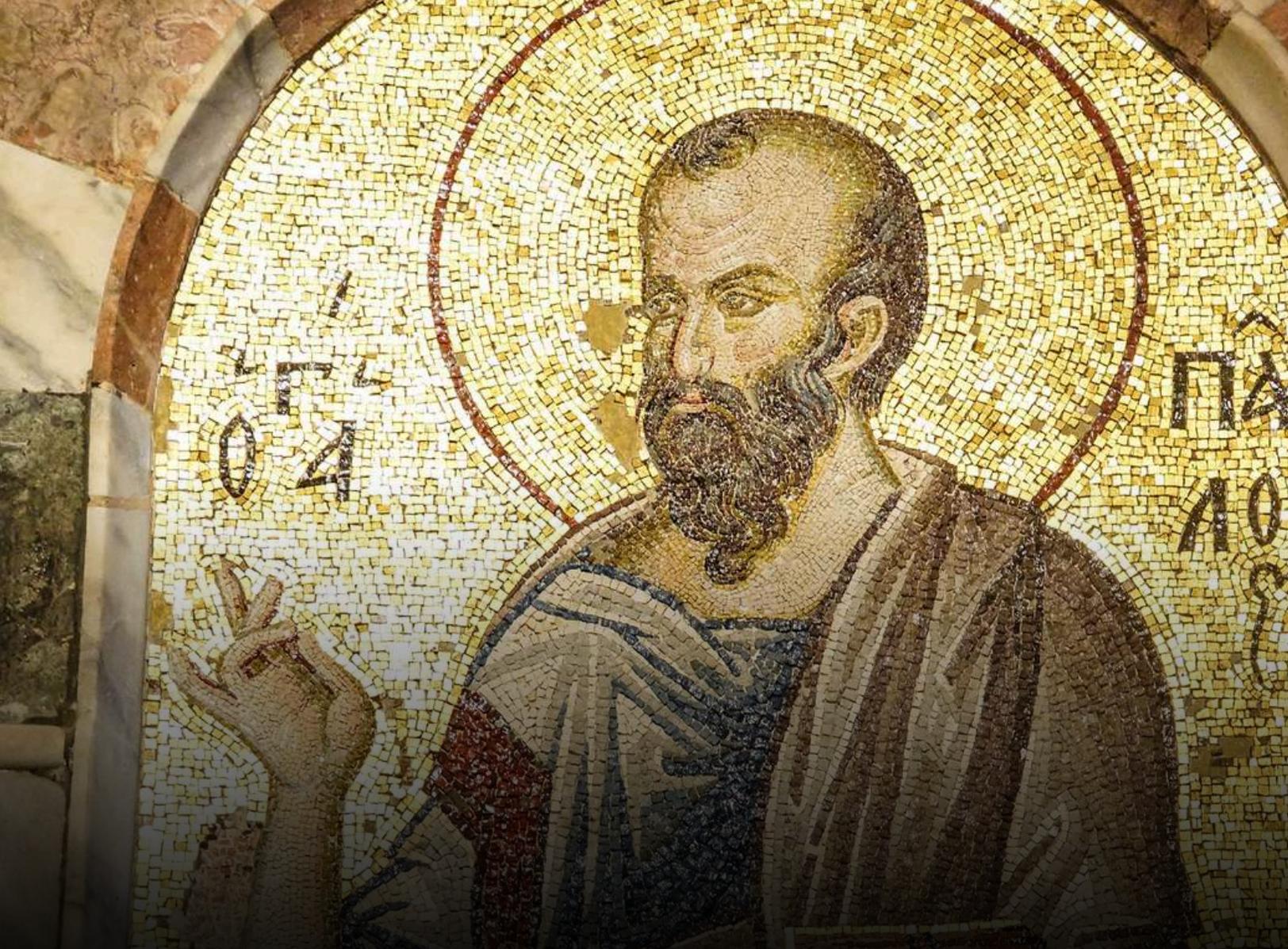
Key Takeaways

- The Bible is one story told through many books and authors.
- The Old and New Testaments are distinct but inseparably connected.
- Law and gospel provide a unifying thread across the whole Bible.
- God's covenants show continuity, fulfilled in the new covenant in Christ.
- Prophecy and fulfillment reveal God's consistency and purpose.
- The Church's worship and teaching reflect the Bible's unity.
- Diversity enriches the Bible's unity, not undermines it.

Discussion Questions

1. How does seeing the Bible as one story help you read it more faithfully?
2. Why must the Old and New Testaments always be read together?
3. How does the law/gospel distinction provide unity to the Bible's message?
4. What role do the covenants play in showing Scripture's coherence?
5. How does prophecy fulfilled in Christ demonstrate the Bible's reliability and unity?
6. How does the Church's use of Scripture in worship display its unity across books and genres?





SESSION 6:

HOW JESUS INTERPRETS THE BIBLE

Introduction

If the whole Bible points to Christ, then the best interpreter of Scripture is Christ Himself. Jesus does not only fulfill the Scriptures; He also shows us how to read them. From His temptations in the wilderness to His teaching in the synagogue, from His parables to His post-resurrection conversations with the disciples, Jesus consistently reads the Scriptures as God's living Word centered on Him.

In this session, Dr. Adam Koontz explores how Jesus interprets the Bible. We will see how He quotes, fulfills, and applies the Old Testament, how He distinguishes law and gospel, and how He teaches His followers to read the Word with Him at the center. To learn how to read the Bible well, we begin by listening to how Jesus Himself reads it.

Jesus and the Authority of Scripture

Again and again in the gospels, Jesus affirms the authority of Scripture. "It is written" becomes His refrain in the wilderness (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). He resists the devil not with His own divine power but with the Word of God. For Jesus, Scripture is decisive, trustworthy, and sufficient. This demonstrates not only His obedience but also His model: Christians, too, are to cling to what is written as God's clear voice



Jesus and the Fulfillment of Scripture

Jesus interprets the Bible as that which is fulfilled in Himself. In Luke 4, He reads Isaiah 61 and declares, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” His life, death, and resurrection are not accidents but the culmination of promises long foretold. To interpret the Bible with Jesus is to see prophecy and fulfillment united. The Scriptures are not simply background; they are the unfolding drama that reaches its climax in Him.

Jesus Interprets by Law and Gospel

Jesus reads the Scriptures with a perfect distinction between law and gospel. In the Sermon on the Mount, He expounds the law in its fullest depth, showing that anger is murder and lust is adultery (Matt. 5). Yet He also proclaims the gospel: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). His interpretation is not moral reduction but divine clarity: the law shows our need, the gospel gives His gift.

Jesus and the Typology of the Old Testament

Jesus interprets Old Testament events and figures as types of Himself. He identifies Jonah’s three days in the fish as a foreshadowing of His own resurrection (Matt. 12:40). He points to the manna in the wilderness and declares Himself the bread of life (John 6:32–35). He invokes the bronze serpent lifted by Moses to describe His own lifting on the cross (John 3:14–15). In this way, Jesus teaches His disciples to read Scripture typologically: not merely as history, but as history fulfilled in Him.

Jesus on the Road to Emmaus

Perhaps the most profound moment of biblical interpretation comes in Luke 24, on the road to Emmaus. The risen Jesus explains to the disciples “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets” how the Scriptures point to Him. Their hearts burn as He opens the Word. Here we see Jesus as the great teacher of Scripture, unveiling its unity and its Christ-centered meaning. Emmaus shows us not only what to believe about the Bible but how to read it: with Christ as its center and fulfillment.

Jesus Against Misinterpretation

Jesus also demonstrates how not to read the Bible. He confronts the Pharisees for searching the Scriptures but missing Him (John 5:39–40). He condemns traditions that nullify the Word of God (Mark 7:13). He resists Satan’s twisting of Scripture in the wilderness. These episodes remind us that Scripture can be misused—but Jesus sets the standard for its faithful interpretation. Reading with Jesus means refusing to twist the Word to suit ourselves and instead submitting to its testimony about Him.

The Church Reads with Jesus

Finally, Jesus entrusts His disciples to carry His interpretation forward. He opens their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45) and sends them to preach repentance and forgiveness in His name. The apostles read the Old Testament as fulfilled in Christ, as seen in Peter’s Pentecost sermon or Paul’s letters. The Church continues this Christ-centered reading today, proclaiming the Scriptures as Jesus taught: law and gospel, promise and fulfillment, all pointing to Him.

Key Terms to Understand

- **“It is Written”:** Jesus’ affirmation of Scripture’s authority.
- **Fulfillment:** The completion of Old Testament prophecy in Christ.
- **Law and Gospel:** Jesus’ distinction between command and promise.
- **Typology:** Reading Old Testament events as foreshadowings of Christ.
- **Emmaus Road:** The post-resurrection teaching of Jesus that all Scripture points to Him

Key Takeaways

- Jesus Himself interprets Scripture as God’s authoritative Word.
- He fulfills the Old Testament promises in His life, death, and resurrection.
- Jesus reads with perfect clarity between law and gospel.
- He interprets Old Testament types as pointing to Himself.
- The Emmaus road shows the unity of the Bible centered in Christ.
- Misuse of Scripture distorts its witness, but Jesus models faithful reading.
- The Church continues to read Scripture in the way Jesus taught.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Jesus’ use of “It is written” matter for how we see Scripture today?
2. How does Jesus show that the Old Testament is fulfilled in Him?
3. What does Jesus’ distinction between law and gospel teach us about interpreting the Bible?
4. How does Jesus’ use of Jonah, manna, or the bronze serpent model typological reading?
5. What makes the road to Emmaus such a powerful lesson in biblical interpretation?
6. How does Jesus’ confrontation with misinterpretation (Pharisees, Satan) guide us in avoiding error?



SESSION 7:

TYPES, ALLEGORIES, AND READING WITH DEPTH

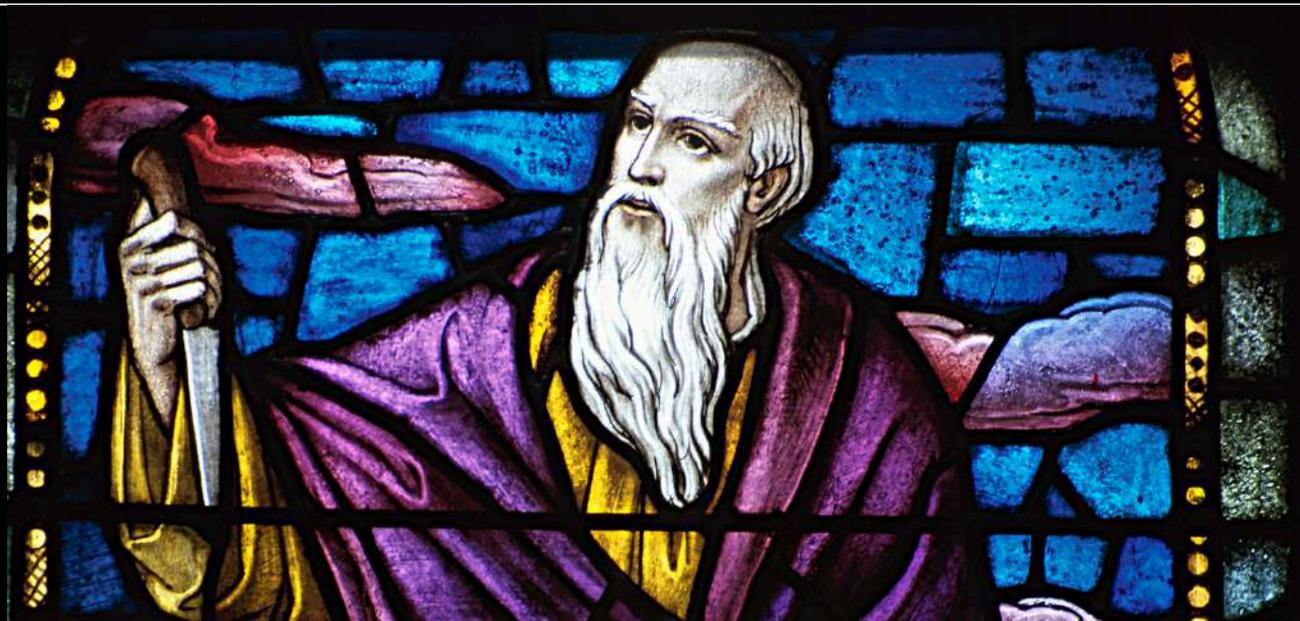
Introduction

The Bible's meaning is not exhausted by surface reading. From the beginning, Christians have recognized that God's Word contains depths that invite reflection, meditation, and spiritual discernment. The Old Testament is filled with types—events, persons, and institutions that foreshadow Christ. The Church has also used allegory carefully, discerning deeper symbolic meaning within the text. Such readings, when centered on Christ, enrich our understanding of the Scriptures.

In this final session, Dr. Adam Koontz explores the role of typology and allegory in biblical interpretation. While modern readers sometimes fear these methods as fanciful, they are part of the Church's inheritance and are grounded in the way Scripture interprets itself. This session shows how we can read with depth: neither flattening the Bible into mere history nor inventing meaning, but receiving it as God's Word filled with riches for faith.

What Is Typology?

Typology refers to the way God's earlier works foreshadow His greater fulfillment in Christ. A type is a person, event, or institution in the Old Testament that prefigures Christ or His work. Examples include Adam as a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14), Israel's exodus prefiguring baptism (1 Cor. 10:1-4), and David as a foreshadowing of the greater Son of David. Typology highlights the unity of God's plan, showing how earlier acts of salvation anticipate and prepare for Christ.



What Is Allegory?

Allegory goes beyond typology, seeking symbolic or spiritual meaning in details of the text. Paul himself uses allegory when interpreting Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4. The Church Fathers frequently employed allegory to draw out deeper insights—for example, interpreting the crossing of the Red Sea as a picture of baptism, or the Song of Songs as Christ’s love for the Church. Allegory is not a license for imagination to run wild; it must be tethered to Christ and the rule of faith.

Biblical Foundations for Deeper Reading

The Bible itself invites us to read with depth. Jesus interprets Jonah, manna, and the bronze serpent typologically. Hebrews interprets the tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices as shadows pointing to Christ. Paul declares that “these things happened...as examples” (1 Cor. 10:11). Such passages show that Scripture is layered: its historical meaning is true, but so is its deeper, Christ-centered significance.

The Church’s Use of Types and Allegories

The early Church eagerly embraced typology and allegory as ways of plumbing Scripture’s depths. Augustine described Scripture as “a river in which a lamb may wade and an elephant may swim.” Medieval Christians preserved this sense of richness, though sometimes it drifted into excess. The Reformers, while rejecting uncontrolled allegory, did not abandon depth. Luther himself preached allegorically at times, always pointing back to Christ. Proper use means honoring both the literal and the spiritual sense, united in Christ.

The Dangers of Misuse

When allegory or typology is detached from Christ, the result is distortion. Over-allegorizing can turn the Bible into a playground for imagination rather than God’s Word. Likewise, moralizing types without pointing to Christ empties them of their purpose. The Reformers warned against “freakish” interpretations that multiplied meanings without anchor. The safeguard is always Christ: the Scriptures testify to Him, and any deeper reading must magnify His gospel.

Reading with Depth Today

Christians today can still benefit from typology and allegory when practiced faithfully. Seeing baptism in the Red Sea, or Christ in Joseph's betrayal, enriches faith. Recognizing the Church in the imagery of the Bride strengthens devotion. Such readings remind us that Scripture is inexhaustible. Reading with depth means not stopping at the surface but listening with the Church, guided by law and gospel, to discern how the whole Bible reveals Christ.

Key Terms to Understand

- **Typology:** Old Testament persons or events prefiguring Christ.
- **Allegory:** A symbolic or spiritual reading of Scripture.
- **Rule of Faith:** The Church's core confession of Christ that anchors interpretation.
- **Literal Sense:** The historical meaning of the text, never to be denied.
- **Fullness of Meaning:** The recognition that Scripture carries multiple layers of Christcentered truth.

Key Takeaways

- Typology shows how the Old Testament foreshadows Christ.
- Allegory seeks symbolic meaning but must be tethered to Christ.
- Scripture itself demonstrates layers of meaning beyond the literal.
- The Church Fathers and Reformers used deeper readings to enrich faith.
- Misuse comes when allegory is untethered from Christ or becomes fanciful.
- Reading with depth today helps us see the inexhaustible riches of Scripture.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between typology and allegory in biblical interpretation?
2. How does the Bible itself provide a foundation for deeper readings?
3. What examples of typology most clearly point to Christ for you?
4. How did the Church Fathers and Reformers approach allegory differently?
5. What risks come with overusing or misusing allegory?
6. How can you practice reading Scripture with depth while keeping Christ at the center?

