

The dynamism of growth can be seen more clearly in the modern era because things change so rapidly that the next generation does not experience the same things as the preceding generation. In previous ages the rate of social change and technology was much slower, and then the succeeding generations did actually experience much the same kinds of things. Children could learn from their parents, because they had the same kinds of experiences, they experienced the same kinds of situations. Today, the life experiences of my parents were radically different than my own, and my children will experience things that I cannot imagine. Life unfolds today so quickly that the present threatens to overwhelm the past, and in the future the rate of change will threaten to swallow both the past and the present.

Consequently, in order for humanity to persist, for culture to be sustainable in the ensuing tsunami of change we are now experiencing, two things are needed. Two stable points of reference are necessary to plot a faithful path forward. Those two points are located in time, one in the past and one in the future. We must know where we as a people have been, and we must know where we are going. Without these two points of reference, humanity—the current expression of human culture—will be lost. We will languish without direction. How did we come about? Of what are we made? We are explorers, on a journey of exploration, and for the journey to be sustainable we must maintain our biblical supply chain, the resources we need for the journey. We must know what sustained our great grandparents and project what will sustain our children's children as best we are able. The clearest and most consistent sustenance of those who have preceded us is God's Word, God's history. His story, the story of His people (Matthew 4:4). God has known this all along and has unfolded His story in such a way as to provide these two points of reference for His people in every generation. The record of that story is the story of the Bible.

It's not a pretty story, not a sweet story of ease and plenty with sappy endings. Rather, it is a real story cut from the rough and tumble of life in a hostile world among belligerent people. Don't get me wrong, God's story has projected an endpoint of great peace, joy, and satisfaction when He will eliminate evil and "wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

But the question of *our* day is: how do we get there? Quickly or slowly? Magically or meticulously? All at once or little by little? What is the next step forward? That is the question, this book endeavors to address, but because the answer must be real it must also be tough enough to last long enough to actually work. Simple answers cannot address hard questions. The hard questions deserve solid answers.

The most important story of the Bible is about the relationship between God and humanity. That story is reconciled by the story about its two testaments, about the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Old Testament, and about His enduring relationship with His people. It is not a story that is found *in* the Bible, but is a metastory *about* the Bible. It is metabiblical like metaphysics, only biblical. The point of the story is not *in* the Bible, but in human history, not on the page, but in the moment, not in the telling, but in the living. The point *of* applying the Old Testament teaches this story through various symbols that are full of meaning, connection, and purpose. And the history of the Old Testament reveals that there are two phases to the process. First, people must learn about God, and that is what the Old Testament symbolism is about. But learning is not enough, people must also put that learning into practice—and that is what the New Testament is about.

SYMBOL & REALITY

Law is about learning how to be a good person, and how not to be a bad person. In general, good people obey the law. Ancient Israel failed this lesson. But again, their failure was not about them being inferior, rather it was about the whole of humanity being caught in the grip of something they could not control—something that we still cannot control. The biblical name for that something is *sin*, defined as an *offense* to God. The dictionary defines *offense* as "1. a lack of politeness; a failure to show regard for others; wounding the feelings of others..." While the biblical definition of sin is much more serious than this, we are nonetheless offensive to God. We treat God shallowly, lightly, casually—and worse!

The resolution of the sin problem comes from knowing who we are and whose we are, knowing our proper place in this world, our proper relationship with God in Christ, and with one another. This is the grand historical project of the Bible, which endeavors to both teach this through the stories and symbolism of the Bible, *and* to actually manifest it through Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit. Both the teaching and the manifesting are necessary.

"The coming of Christ brings a reality and an accomplishment that supersedes Old Testament symbols in depth and finality. Old Testa-