

The Symphony of Scripture: Making Sense of the Bible's Many Themes
by Mark Strom. P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, New Jersey,
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Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

"Better than any other source, the Scripture points us to the things which are of God. It is to Scripture we must turn in the hour of our greatest distress," wrote the seventeenth century Blaise Pascal. He didn't mean, of course, that we should turn to the Bible only when we are trouble. He was a diligent student of the Scripture. Every Christian should have a sure knowledge of the Word of God. But how does the serious student master it?

Our generation has a proliferation of Bible study helps. They range from Bibles with copious study notes to "How to Study the Bible" guides. If this is so, why did Mark Strom, director of Interpretive Consulting Ltd. in Australia, spend his time and effort to write another book on a seemingly redundant subject? And why do I warmly recommend it? Because Strom provides the necessary tools to gain an efficient mastery of the Word of God. At the same time, his approach helps one to see that our doctrines are born out of the Scripture. Strom traces, like golden threads, the story of redemption and the vital doctrine of the covenant.

When one turns to the Scripture, at first glance it seems filled with a bewildering diversity of topics - historical accounts, laws, poetry, wisdom books, private letters written by people in various languages. One reads about the exodus, judges, priests, sacrifices, prophets, and kings. What possible connection do they have with the Gospel of grace? What, for example, is the relationship between the exodus, Sinai and Pentecost? Strom shows that the Biblical story provides a sense of coherence in our fragmented world. It has a remarkable unity in diversity. Although it tells about many people and events across different cultures and thousands of years, it all fits together as God's record of the unfolding of His plan and intentions for His people. Strom observes: "The Bible is not a collection of isolated stories and good advice, but the record of God's plan to exalt his Son over all and to create a unique people through his death and resurrection." Therefore, Jesus Christ is the key to understanding the unity in diversity from Genesis to Revelation.

Each chapter of Strom's remarkable book is a self-contained section. For example, the first chapter, "The Beginnings: Genesis 1-11," traces the identity of the Israelites, explains the pattern of these chapters, and their wider significance. It deals also with the theme of the new creation, and the beginning of the Gospel. It ends with two discussion questions and two exercises for further Bible study.

Strom's outstanding book is an accessible resource and study guide for all who want to gain a bird's eye view of the grand theme of Scripture - creation, fall, redemption, and Christ's coming again.