

**Discipleship Night Lecture #2**  
*What is the Bible?: Doctrine of Scripture*

**Modes of Revelation**

God's revelation takes two major forms:

\_\_\_\_\_ Revelation and \_\_\_\_\_ Revelation

**1. God's General Revelation**

It is general in two primary ways:

#1. It is \_\_\_\_\_ to all people generally rather than to a select group.

#2. Its content is \_\_\_\_\_ rather than specific.

God's general revelation is found in creation, both in nature and in human beings created in the image of God. The content of general revelation is only broad truths about God: He exists, He's powerful, and He's Creator and Judge.

**The Belgic Confession** (Article 2 of the confession):

We know (God) by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to *see clearly the invisible things of God, even his everlasting power and divinity*, as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse.

**Turn to Romans 1:18-23**

**Psalm 19:1** - *"The heavens declare the glory of God."*

**John Calvin** described this in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

"There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty...a sense of Deity is inscribed on every heart."

## 2. Special Revelation.

Millard Erickson, in his systematic theology, defines Special Revelation as "*God's manifestation of Himself at certain times and places, enabling people to enter into a redemptive relationship with Himself.*"

Going back to the Belgic Confession...it speaks of Special Revelation in this way...

*(God) makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.*

**So, where do we find special revelation? Two primary sources:**

**#1.** \_\_\_\_\_

*What does Scripture tell us? It's a detailed and comprehensive account of:*

1) God's \_\_\_\_\_ with His people and the world.

2) His redemptive plan for us through \_\_\_\_\_ **AND...**

3) How we are to \_\_\_\_\_ in light of that redemption.

**#2. The person of** \_\_\_\_\_

*Look up Hebrews 1:1-2*

*In Colossians 2:9 we read that "in Him (Jesus) the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."*

## **Subordinate Revelation**

Anything that would fall under this category must be analyzed and governed by the Scriptures. "Subordinate revelation" is generally situationally specific....it might include things **like:**

1. I\_\_\_\_\_ experiences – "God speaking directly to people" or speaking to a person through a dream or vision.
2. T\_\_\_\_\_ – Temporary manifestations of God experienced by one of our senses (These are external).
  - E.G. Moses and the burning bush is a theophany.
3. A\_\_\_\_\_ bringing messages to people.

<b>The Nature of Scripture</b>
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So, what exactly is the Bible? In other words, what is the nature of Scripture.

#1. The Bible is a \_\_\_\_\_ **book.**

#2. The Bible is a \_\_\_\_\_ **book.**

### 6 Key Characteristics of Scripture

**#1. I**\_\_\_\_\_

Inspiration means that all the words of Scripture are God's words written through different writers, in different ways, in different cultures by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**John Frame:** "*Inspiration means that God takes words of human beings and makes them his own.... [It] is a divine act creating an identity between a divine word and a human word.*"

**2 Timothy 3:16** - *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...*

In **2 Peter 1:21**, speaking of the Old Testament, Peter says none of it came "by the impulse of man," but that "men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

**Plenary, Verbal Inspiration** – "Plenary" means full or complete and asserts that God's inspiration extends to ALL of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. "Verbal" refers to the words of Scripture and refers to God inspiring the very words the writers chose.

Plenary, Verbal Inspiration affirms the extending of God's superintendence of the writing of Scripture down to the very choice of words, not merely to overarching themes or concepts; that is, the whole of Scripture and all of its parts, down to the very words, were inspired.

**2 Timothy 3:16** - *All Scripture is breathed out by God...*

## #2. I \_\_\_\_\_

**Inerrancy:** The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not err or say anything false or untrue. In other words, the Bible always tells the truth regarding everything it talks about. To err is human. But Proverbs 30:5 states, "*Every word of God proves true.*" Though the Bible was written by fallen men, God so ordained its inspiration that they did not make any mistakes. This is how Jesus treated the Bible – he said that Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).

We should apply this doctrine of inerrancy by trusting in the Bible! Practically speaking, this means when you come across things in scripture that are hard to stomach or difficult to understand, give yourself to figuring them out. God doesn't lie. He has put this in his Word for a reason and you can benefit from every verse of it.

The Scriptures are truthful:

**1. God \_\_\_\_\_ or speak falsely.**

**Titus 1:1-2** - *"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began..."*

**Joshua 23:14** - *And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you..."*

**Numbers 23:19** - *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

**Wayne Grudem** - *To disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God himself.*

**2. God's words are the ultimate \_\_\_\_\_ of truth.**

**John 17:17** - *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

**#3. A \_\_\_\_\_**

**Authority:** *Because Scripture is God's Word, it is authoritative. It carries the weight of God's command as ruler over all creation. The Westminster Confession of Faith says that Scripture is "given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life."*

**Titus 1:9** - *He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*

**Kevin DeYoung** - "The written word of God was their authority. It had the last word. It was the final word, after which no other word would be necessary, and contrary to which no other word would be believed."

#### #4. P \_\_\_\_\_

**Perspicuity** - *The clarity of the Bible. In brief, Christians can make sense of Scripture and God wants us to make sense of it! That which is necessary to know and believe regarding life and salvation can be understood.*

**Psalms 19:7** - *"The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."*

#### #5. N \_\_\_\_\_

**Necessity** refers to mankind's need for God's special revelation in the Scriptures in order to obtain knowledge of the gospel and the plan of salvation, which cannot be learned through the general revelation of nature and conscience. The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will. It's not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.

**Acts 4:12** - *There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.*

**Romans 10:13-17** - <sup>13</sup> *For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* <sup>14</sup> *How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?* <sup>15</sup> *And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.* <sup>16</sup> *But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message?* <sup>17</sup> *So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.*

## #6. S \_\_\_\_\_

**Sufficiency:** All that is needed to know and believe regarding salvation and what pleases God is found in the Bible.

**John Frame** - "Scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life."

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** - "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

### How Did Jesus View Scripture?

**Article:** "What did Jesus believe about the Bible?"

**Group Exercise** - *What was Jesus' View of the Bible?*

Break up into groups, look up a few passages and ask the question: How did Jesus view the Bible? At least, how did Jesus view the Old Testament?

Group - John 5:30-39, esp vs 39; Luke 24:44

Group 2 - Matthew, 4:1-11,

Group 3 - Lk 4:1-13

Group 4 - Matt 5:17-18, Lk 16:17

Group 5 - Matt. 12:39-41

Group 6 - Matt 19:3-6

Group 7 - Matt 21:42

Group 8 - Matt 22:41-45

## How The Bible Was Put Together

### ***Why do we have the 66 books that we do in the Bible?***

**Canon:** The authoritative list of inspired biblical books.

#### **Four criteria for accepting books into the canon:**

**The first criterion was \_\_\_\_\_.** Was the document written by an apostle or someone with immediate contact to an apostle (A prophet in the Old Testament)? Only those who knew Jesus or were intimate companions of his disciples could credibly write about Christ.

**The second was \_\_\_\_\_** Even if somebody tried to slap an apostle's name on a book, the book had to be known to originate from the time of the apostles. This is what eliminated so many of the later "gospels" and writings.

**The third was \_\_\_\_\_ *to the rule of faith (orthodoxy)*.** A book had to ring consistent and conform to the truth already given, either that which was passed down orally or in the Biblical books that had begun to spread.

**The fourth was \_\_\_\_\_** – that is, widespread and continuous usage by the churches across the known world. What's remarkable (from a human perspective) is that there was so much agreement on so many books so quickly.

A couple *important implications* of all this. First, the church didn't create the Bible by its authority, as Roman Catholicism teaches. It's the other way around! The Bible possessed its inherent authority as God's word, and it's that word that brought life to the church. So the church merely recognized what God already inspired.

Second, we're not surprised that the canon closed with the passing of Christ and the apostles. In the same way it closed with the end of the OT prophetic era in anticipation of Christ, so it closed with the passing of Christ as we now await his return. The OT, in passages like Malachi 4 and Deuteronomy 18, indicated that there was more prophecy to come. But the NT now doesn't give us any expectation of more revelation. Paul says in Ephesians 2 the church is built on the foundation of the apostles (NT) and prophets

(OT). We need no more and should expect no more. We can trust the Word that we've received, and we should praise God for how he has shined his light into our darkness and brought us this Word that we hadn't deserved to know!

### **5 Ways to deal with objections to the Bible**

1. Ask " \_\_\_\_\_ is the error?"
2. In most cases, a \_\_\_\_\_ provides the answer to problem passages.
3. Sometimes you need to look at the \_\_\_\_\_ languages for clarity.
4. Lean on the church throughout \_\_\_\_\_.
5. It may be that we just don't have enough \_\_\_\_\_ at this point in time to know the answer (but that doesn't mean its untrue).

**Hand out Articles : "The Reliability of the Bible: 4 Quick Thoughts" AND "4 Tips for Defending Your Trust in the Bible"**

### **How to rightly understand the Bible**

**Hermeneutics:**

***Rick Cornish:*** "We should approach God's Word honestly, letting it form our opinions rather than making it fit our opinions."

### **Seven Principles for Interpreting the Bible**

**1. Recognize and account for the \_\_\_\_\_ authorship of Scripture.**

Jesus was fully God and fully Man; he had a divine nature and a human one. In an analogous way, we can understand the authorship of the Bible. It was written by humans in particular times and places, addressing specific issues. Yet the final author of the Bible is God – the human authors were inspired to write with a transcending purpose for all time.

- Given the human authorship of Scripture, we must take seriously the historical context, theological perspective, and literal style of each author in our interpretation.
- Given the divine authorship of Scripture, we must take seriously its authority (it is the Word of God), necessity (it is essential for salvation and life), and sufficiency (it contains all we need to be right with God and live for him). (See Acts 1:16, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 1:20-21.)

## **2. Scripture is the best \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture.**

While we should not minimize the hard work of biblical interpretation, we also must maintain the principle of Scripture's clarity. All believers can read and understand the Word of God.

The message of the Bible is clear to those who have an open heart. However, we should also recognize that not all passages of the Bible are equally clear, and so less clear passages of Scripture should be interpreted by relying on more clear passages of Scripture. **Individual parts of the Bible should always be understood in relation to the whole.** (See Psalm 119:130, Matthew 13:9-16, and 2 Peter 3:15-16.)

## **3. Follow the basic hermeneutic method of observe, interpret, apply.**

The basic principles of hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) are 1) Observation: What does the text say? 2) Interpretation: What does the text mean? 3) Application: How should it affect my life?

In our excitement to bring the Bible's power to our personal life, we should never skip over the critical steps of observation and interpretation. In observation, we need to slow down and read it again for the first time. Notice how the passage is organized. Look for repeated words or themes.

- **Thoughtfully.** Be a detective.
- **Repeatedly.** Read passages over and over....use different translations.
- **Patiently.** Spend quality time in each book you study.
- **Selectively.** Decipher the who, what, where, when and how in the text.
- **Prayerfully.** Don't copy others; ask God to reveal things to you.
- **Meditatively.** Reflect on the words.
- **Purposefully.** Understand that the author used structure to send a message.

- **Telescopically.** Understand the significance of the text in light of the entire Bible.

As we unpack the meaning with our interpretation, we need to take into account both the literary context and the historical context. Then, we are ready to see how the original meaning relates to our contemporary context, and we can make powerful application of God’s Word to our lives.

**Application is about what the text means to you.** Before we can be certain our application is correct, Howard Hendricks says that each person “needs to know the text, relate it to life, meditate on its meaning, and then practice it.” Hendricks has created nine application questions to consider:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an error to mark?
- Is there a challenge to face?

**4. Passages must be understood within their \_\_\_\_\_.**

Context is essential when it comes to biblical interpretation. We should be very careful of using a single verse to defend a point without understanding the original context. The best way to determine the meaning of a word in the Bible is to see how it is used in the sentence.

We should also consider that different authors may use words differently. Each sentence must be interpreted in the context of its paragraph; after that, each paragraph must be understood in the whole book’s larger framework and overall purpose.

**5. Different literary \_\_\_\_\_ must be interpreted differently.**

As with any piece of literature, the genre must affect how it is read and interpreted. The books of the Bible fall into four main categories:

- **History:** The historical books are not just recording facts of history, they are telling the story with a purpose – to teach something about God and his redemption. Be careful to discern what in the story is descriptive (i.e. describing what happened) and in what way it is prescriptive (i.e. prescribing how we should live).
- **Poetry:** When reading poetry, we must consider how the frequent use of imagery, repetition, and parallelism affects the meaning.
- **Prophecy:** Old Testament prophecies may have an initial fulfillment in the historical setting, but also a future, final fulfillment in the work of the Messiah. Understanding this *progressive* nature of prophetic fulfillment means that all prophecy is in some sense Messianic.
- **Epistle:** When reading the epistles, we must remember that these letters were written to specific audiences dealing with specific circumstances. In a real sense, we are simultaneously reading someone else's mail and God's Word to us!

## **6. The Old Testament must be interpreted in light of fulfillment in**

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We cannot fully understand the New Testament without the Old Testament. Furthermore, the Old Testament is not just interesting history with some good moral lessons thrown in. It is the story of God's people that reaches its climax in the death and resurrection of the Messiah. We should follow the instruction and example of the New Testament authors and read the entire Old Testament in light of Christ.

To do this, we must first identify the meaning behind the central themes, characters, and symbols of the Old Testament. Then, we must discover how they are fulfilled in Christ. Finally, we can unpack how these truths relate to us because we are in Christ. We should not take a shortcut from the passage to our lives without going through Christ! (See Luke 24:25-27, 24:44-47; Acts 3:22-24, 26:22-23; Romans 15:4; 2 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15; and 1 Peter 1:10-12.)

**7. Scripture must be interpreted under the Spirit's \_\_\_\_\_ in the context of Christian \_\_\_\_\_.**

The Bible must be studied with an open heart, eager for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, we should not try to interpret and apply the Bible in isolation. We should seek to humbly learn from the generations of believers that have come before us and those in our own community. When, by God's grace, we properly read, study, interpret, and apply the Word of God, it can change our lives! (See Luke 24:45; John 16:13; Acts 8:30-31, 18:26; 1 Corinthians 2:11-13; and Hebrews 4:12.)

**Sources:**

*Matthew Boffey, 7 Key Elements of the Doctrine of Scripture*

*Capitol Hill Seminar on the Doctrine of Scripture*

*Tim Dance, Seven Principles for Interpreting the Bible*

*Grudem, Systematic Theology*

*Additional articles referenced in outline*