

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

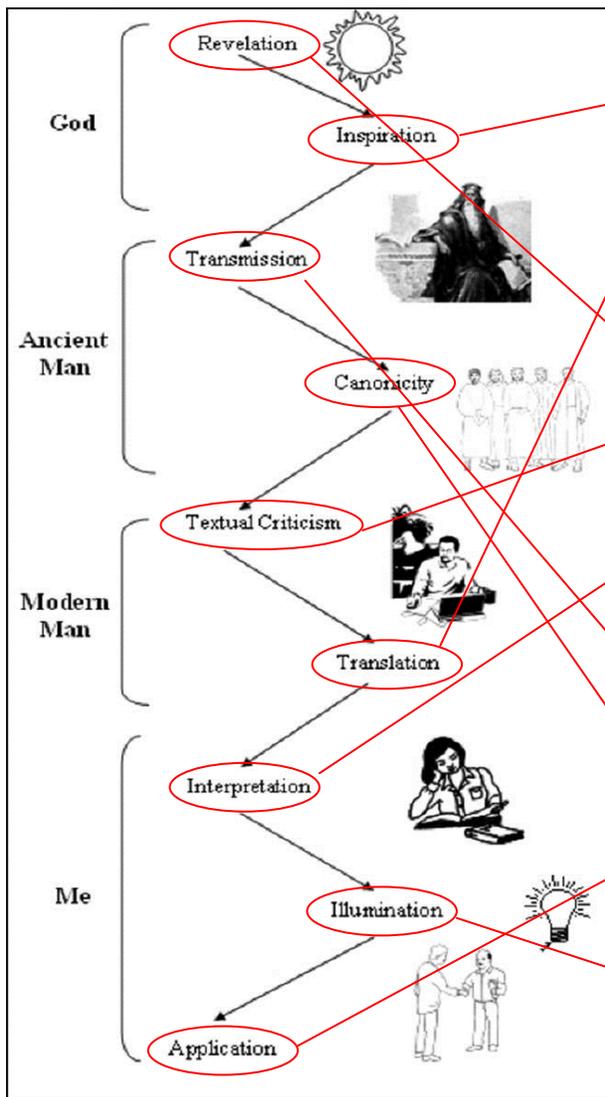
Wednesday, January 28, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

ALL ABOUT THE BIBLE

How We Got the Bible - Revelation

2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:19-20

JUST FOR FUN Just for review see if you can match the definition on the right hand side of the page to the proper word in the diagram to the left. Circle the word in the diagram and draw a line to the right definition.



9 Key Terms To Understanding How the Bible Come from God to Man:

1. **Inspiration** – God superintending human writers to compose and record His revelation to mankind (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21) **hint...this one rhymes with perspiration*
2. **Translation** – The process of translating the Bible from the original Hebrew and Green into a modern language. **hint... if you go to Mexico you might need someone to do this for you*
3. **Revelation** – God communicating to man what He wants us to know (Hebrews 1:1) **hint... last book of the Bible*
4. **Textual Criticism** – The modern process of comparing existing Hebrew and Greek manuscripts to determine what is original. **hint... I didn't like how he worded that!*
5. **Interpretation** – The process of a reader studying to understand what God's Word means (2 Timothy 2:15) **hint... that is just how I understood what was said*
6. **Transmission** – The ancient process of accurately copying Hebrew and Greek scriptures for successive generations. **hint... your car has one*
7. **Canonicity** – God guiding the early church to recognize what books are inspired. **hint... you can shoot the messenger with this big gun*
8. **Application** – The process of putting into practice what the reader has learned (James 1:22). **hint... you have these on your iPhone in a shortened version*
9. **Illumination** – The process of the Holy Spirit helping the reader understand and apply the Bible (John 16:13). **hint... somebody turn on the lamp*

The Bible is the foundation of Christianity. In it we learn about the human condition, our need for salvation, God's plan through Christ, the everlasting joy that awaits those who trust in Jesus, and more. We've centered this study around the important question, "How did we get the Bible?" To really answer that question we must examine some key areas regarding the Bible: (mentioned above) revelation, inspiration, canonization, transmission and translation, etc. This study will center on the first of these, revelation. But before we get in to that, let's look at some misconceptions about how we got the Bible.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

There are many misconceptions that people have about the Bible. We looked at several of these misconceptions in our study last week, but here are few of the more common misconceptions that need to be cleared up from the beginning.

3 Common Misconceptions About the Bible:

1. **Misconception about how the Bible was written down** - Some people think the Bible was all written down about the same time, copied and distributed. But the Bible is not "instant" Scripture and it wasn't all written down around the same time. Instead, the books of the Bible were written over a lengthy period of time (1,500 years) as we have previously stated. by different people (at least 40 different authors) inspired by God. **Why would this misconception be important to clear up?** *The fact that it was written over a period of about 1,500 years by at least 40 different authors from different background, yet it is not contradictory in content but rather complementary and in agreement is an evidence of it's divine origin. We couldn't get 5 people to agree on a happening right now in this service if the event just happen, must less let that much time lapse and get that kind of agreement (Ex. Bank robbery experience)*
2. **Misconception about the motivation behind the writing of the Bible** - Another misconception about the Bible is that it was merely created by a select few in order to consolidate, gain or maintain power and prestige. Given the adversity faced by the Hebrew people and, later, the persecution suffered by Christians, this explanation is far from plausible. For instance, rather than gaining power or prestige, the early Christians were severely oppressed, while many others were killed – martyred for believing the message of the gospel. **Why would this misconception be important to clear up?** *The fact of the integrity of the Bible is at stake here... the Bible is honest and transparent truth and make us aware of God's presence with all people through times of pain and suffering, good times and bad. It communicate a message of truth that many have staked their lives on, and even given their lives for... further proof of its diving origin and life changing power.*
3. **Misconception about the trustworthyness and reliability of the Bible we have** - Another misconception says there are many different "Bibles" so how can one be sure the Christian version is the right one? This misconception can take different forms. One form sets forth many different "gospels" as proof that the New Testament record of Jesus is not necessarily the true version. What about the Gospel of Thomas? Keep in mind that there are dozens of writings claiming to be Christian gospels along the lines of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But very few copies of these rival "gospels" exist. The Gospel of Thomas, of which there are references to more than one version, has distinctly Gnostic influences. In short, the Gnostics, a cult like group, believed that the flesh is bad, but the spirit is good. As a result, they denied that Jesus truly came in the flesh, a position the early church countered by writings such as 1

John. The Gospel of Thomas also presents Jesus doing some things very much out of character. In one passage, for example, Jesus causes a boy to wither (die). It's also important to keep in mind that these additional "gospels" appear in the historical record long after the New Testament manuscripts, making these "lost" gospels highly suspect not only in reference to their content, but their reliability. **Why would this misconception be important to clear up?** *The fact that the canon is closed and how it came to be is called into question by this misconception. There are others books and writings, manuscripts and fragments that have come into play in the recent past that are known as Pseudepigraphical writings, variant gospels, the Apocrypha (found in Catholic Bibles), and other ancient text other than what we have in the canon. Why were these not included in the Bible? Why does the Catholic Church include some of them and exclude others? If there are other comparative writings how do we know the ones we have are true and these are not? Questions of the authority of Scripture begin to emerge? We will discuss this in further detail with we talk about canonicity.*

If it truly is “God’s” Word, then somehow He must have given it to us. We certainly could not know God unless He chose to reveal Himself to us. So that raises another question, “How does God show us Himself... reveal Himself to us?” And that is the question of the subject of “revelation,” and the place to begin in this journey to understand how we got the Bible, the Word of God. We must understand something of how God has chosen to reveal Himself to us.

Is the Bible the revelation of God? How? _____

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE... REVELATION

Look up Isaiah 55:8-9, ⁸ ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. ⁹ ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”

Some questions about Isaiah 55:8-9:

1. **Who is speaking in these verses?** _____
2. **Who is being spoken to?** _____
3. **What does God reveal about Himself in these verses?** _____
4. **What do these verses reveal to us about ourselves... man?** _____
5. **What do these verses say to us about God’s revelation of Himself to us, if anything?** _____

By definition, God is beyond human understanding. How do I know that? God says so Himself in the passage we just read... Isaiah 55:8-9. However, to the extent that God has revealed things about himself, we can indeed describe the nature of God affirmatively. Therefore all we can know about God is what He has revealed to us. This is what we call God’s revelation.

Defining Revelation: In the context of receive the Bible, the Word of God, we have defined “revelation” as...

“God communicating to man what he would otherwise not know”

According to Hebrews 1:1, God is the source of all revelation. Hebrews 1:1 says, “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways.”

Now, there are two primary categories of God's revelation of Himself to man. Stated another way, the ways God reveals Himself to us (mankind) are broken down into two categories.

2 Categories of God’s Revelation:

1. **General Revelation**
2. **Special Revelation**

We want to take some time to examine each of these, and how God’s Word (the Bible) fits into this. It is important for us to know not only that God can be known, but that He desires to be known and makes Himself known. But how?

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF THROUGH GENERAL REVELATION

What is “General Revelation”: Simply stated, General Revelation is how God reveals Himself generally to all humanity. A good definition of General Revelation is:

“General Revelation is God communicating to man His existence and His character through nature and reasoning, apart from any words or language.”

There are three primary areas of General Revelation:

1. **Nature** – God reveals His character through creation
2. **History** – God is involved in human history. He has preserved Israel. He has entered history himself as a human in the person of Jesus Christ.
3. **Human Constitution** – All humanity has an understanding of morality and an understanding of the supernatural.

There are some arguments put forth by Biblical scholars and theologians throughout history that support the existence of God as seen through general revelation...

4 Arguments for the Existence of God from General Revelation:

1. **Cosmological argument** – This argument basically says, “The world didn’t just happen. Some ‘Uncaused Being’ must have caused it to be” Paul said in Romans 1:20, ²⁰ *For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”*
2. **Moral argument** – This argument says, “Our innate sense of right and wrong points to a moral Law-Giver” Once again, Paul supports this argument when he writes in Romans 2:14-15, ¹⁴ *Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing*

witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.”

3. **Ontological argument** – This argument says, “Why would people have a concept of a Perfect Being unless there was one... God Himself” Here is what Paul says in Romans 1:19, “*Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.*” And listen to Acts 17:27, “*God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out to him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.*” (READ: Acts 17:24-28)
4. **Teleological** (*relating to the study of ultimate causes in nature*) **argument** – This argument basically says, “Design in the world points to a Designer” I want to spend some time on this one, because I think it is one we can most see and grasp. Look at Psalm 19:1-6 (turn there), “*¹The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ²Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. ³They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. ⁴Yet their voice^[h] goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. ⁶It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.*”

Okay, so here are some good questions... “To what extent has God revealed Himself generally? And is God's general revelation and humanity's pursuit of logic sufficient to reach a saving faith outside of specific revelation from the church or Scripture?” What do you think? _____

In Psalm 19, the Psalmist explains that the heavens tell of God's glory and God's creativity. And listen to it again in Romans 1:19-20, “*¹⁹Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*” Paul explains that the truth has been made evident and has been revealed in creation to the point where there is no excuse (1:19b, 20b). Through this natural revelation, God's power and nature have been revealed. His invisible attributes, his eternal power, his divine nature have all been evident to the nations (1:20).

These two passages indicate that God has indeed shown Himself through His creation. While Romans 1 seems to indicate that even a fallen humanity can see God in creation, and as such they are without excuse. However Romans also states that humanity rejects this general revelation and instead worships the creation rather than the creator.

It is therefore unclear from Scripture whether or not a saving faith is possible outside of specific revelation. In fact, Romans 10 seems to indicate that without specific revelation, one cannot be saved (“how will they believe if they have not heard.”)

KEY TAKE AWAY: What we can state affirmatively is that the truth about God is actually present within creation and that even a fallen humanity can recognize God through creation

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF THROUGH SPECIAL REVELATION

The second category of revelation is what we called “Special Revelation.” God does not limit His self-revelation to nature or what we called “General Revelation.” He has also provided “Special Revelation.” God has revealed himself through the Word of God. The term *word* in the Greek is *logos*, and it carries with it an expansive idea of not just language, but rationality and reason. God's self-revelation, His Word, was with God at the beginning and was indeed God from the very beginning. Notice it in **John 1:1-4 and 14**, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*”² *He was with God in the beginning.*³ *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*⁴ *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.*⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^[a] it...*¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” In other words, Jesus, Himself, embodied the Word of God and gave evidence of the Word of God... confirmed it... lived it... exhibited it... authenticated it... was it!

What is “Special Revelation”:

“Special Revelation is God communicating to man using words and other (special) supernatural means.”

Basically, special revelation comes in two ways:

There are two primary areas of Special Revelation:

- 1. Special Revelation with Supernatural Means** – In other words, God has exhibited special ways of revealing Himself by special or supernatural means. These are special ways that God reveals Himself at special moments in time. We see examples of these in the Bible.

4 Examples of Special Revelation By Supernatural Means as Seen in Scripture:

- (1) Casting the lot** (*Proverbs 16:33; Acts 1:21-26*)
- (2) The Urim and Thummim** (*Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; 1 Samuel 28:6; Ezra 2:63*) - Two stones in the high priest's breastplate that revealed God's will
- (3) Dreams and Vision** (*Genesis 20:3,6; 31:11-13, 24; 40-41, etc.*)
- (4) Miraculous Events** (*The Exodus, Jesus' miracles – John 2:11, etc.*)

Observation: *This raises the question, “Does God still speak this way and reveal Himself this way today?” First of all, this is a whole other study in itself, and time here does not lend itself to getting into all the issues surrounding miracles, healings, and dreams. Second, suffice it to say that God is God and He can reveal Himself and speak anyway He chooses. Far be it from us to limit God. Does God still perform miracles? Yes, I believe that He does. Does God reveal Himself today to us in supernatural means? Yes, I believe He does. But let me qualify this... when He does it is not new revelation outside of how He reveals Himself in Scripture. In other words, it will not contradict the Bible and what Scripture says and teaches. Very important!*

- 2. Special Revelation with Words** - Simply stated God's Word, the Bible is God's most unique mode of Special Revelation of Himself to us. It you think about it... it is even in

God's Word, the Bible, that we see how He reveals Himself by either general or special means.

4 Examples of Special Revelation By Word as Seen in Scripture: Words were spoken by God to someone (who verbally communicated to others on behalf of God speaks directly to them)

- (1) **God spoke through angels (Daniel 9:20,21; Luke 2:10,11; Revelation 1:1)**
- (2) **God spoke through the Prophets (2 Samuel 23:2; Zechariah 1:1; Ephesians 3:5; Hebrews 1:1, etc.)**
- (3) **God spoke through Jesus Christ (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:2; 2:3)**
- (4) **God spoke through the Apostles (2 Peter 3:2)**

Observation: *We know God spoke through these because basically this is who we received God's Word. God revealed to men what He wanted to be recorded as Scripture.*

3 Important Characteristics of the Word of God: The special revelation through God's word has unique characteristics (Erickson 177ff).

1. **Special Revelation is Personal** - God's revelation is not a set of theological truths primarily, but a personal God presenting himself to persons.
2. **Special Revelation is Anthropic** (*pertaining to humans or human experience*) - God's revelation comes in forms that are part of the ordinary, everyday human experience. Humans do not need to learn the language of God, for God has revealed himself in the language of humans.
3. **Special Revelation is Analogical** - God's revelation uses language which is qualitatively the same as the underlying truth, but is limited by finite human understanding. In other more simple terms... God's revelation uses analogies, symbols and metaphors in order for us to understand his nature.

3 Manifestations of the Word of God: God has revealed his Word in three ways...

1. **God reveals Himself by History** - It is not that God is revealed in history or through history, but that historical events actually are His revelation. John 14:9, *"Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*
2. **God reveals Himself through divine speech** - God has communicated directly with prophets and apostles through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
3. **God reveals Himself through the incarnation** - Jesus Christ's birth, life, words, death and resurrection are the most complete revelation of God. Hebrews 1:1-2, *"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe."* At a point in time and space, the Word was revealed in flesh and dwelt among us. As a result, humanity was able to see the glory, the grace and the truth of God himself (John 1:14). The ultimate revelation of God is found in the person of Jesus.

THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL REVELATION

The Bible is indeed the very word of God. However, God chose to reveal His Word through human authors who wrote to specific audiences in specific times and places. The Scriptures are not written as a series of timeless principles and commandments that can be read and understood

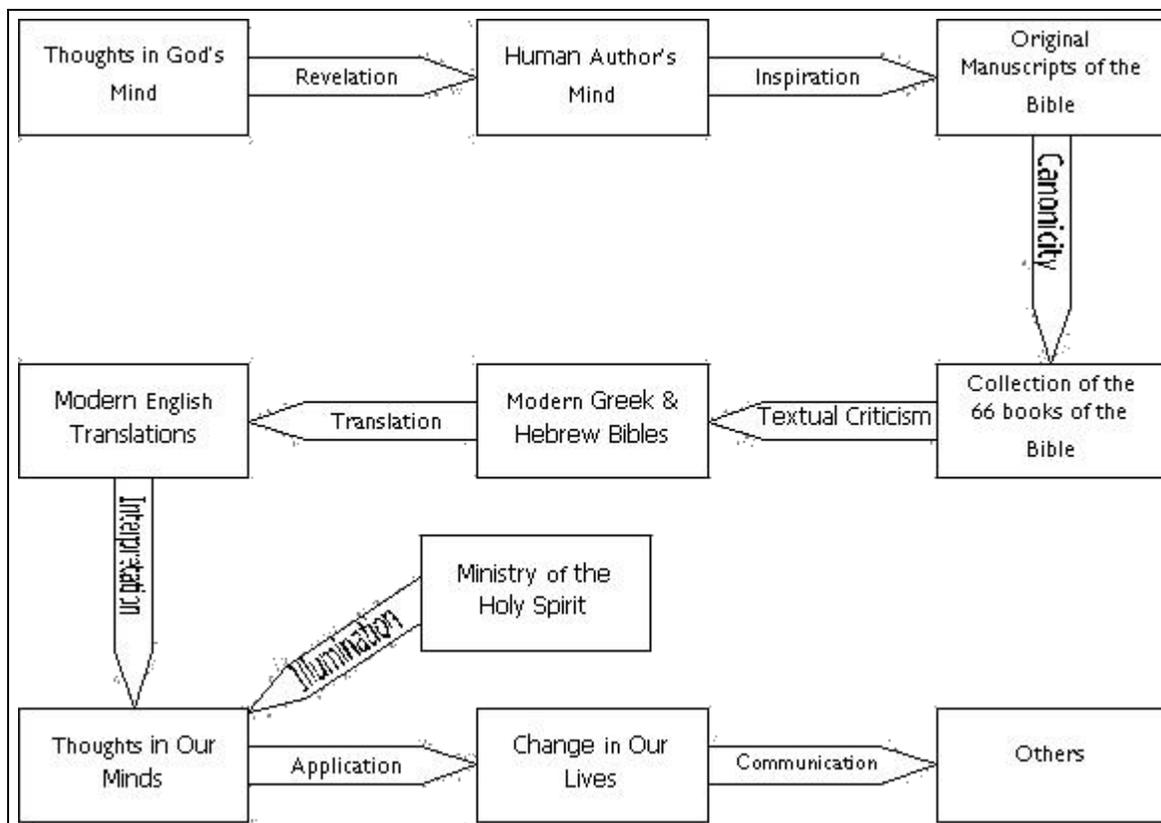
simply. If God has chosen to reveal His Word to us this way, it might have made our bible study easier.

Because God chose to communicate His Word through His interactions and relationships with humans, it gives us comfort and an understanding that God still desires to be involved personally with us and is not merely impersonally dropping commandments on us from on high (Stuart 22).
Necessity of Bible Study

This is what also makes bible study necessary.

THE PROCESS OF REVELATION

The process of Bible Study will mirror the process of God's revelation. The chart below illustrates how God's thoughts are transferred to our thoughts through the process of revelation (Ryrie 117).



“The Bible is written in a number of different literary genres, to a number of different cultures, in 3 different languages, through dozens of different human authors to people throughout a 1,500 year span of time. The primary reason why we need to study the bible, rather than just read it, is that we must read and hear God's Word as the original recipients would have heard and read the scripture Bible study requires that we have a solid understanding of biblical cultures, languages, history, and geography. Bible study is essential so we can hear the message in the context originally given. One has to hear the Word they heard; you must try to understand what was said to them back then and there” – Douglas Stuart