

# WHAT IS THE BIBLE

5.5.21

Good evening, friends! Over the next four weeks we will be discussing a topic of trusting God's Word. We will look at what the Bible is, why it is worthy of our trust, what it's actually about, and how we can study it!

So, tonight, we are going to be answering the question: What is the Bible?

A little quiz time tonight

- Does anyone know how many total books are in the Bible? **66**
- What are the two sections the Bible is broken up into? **The Old Testament & New Testament**
- How many books are in the OT? **39**
- How many books are in the NT? **27**
- What does the word "Bible" mean? **Book** -- It is a Book of books

Before we really get into anything, let's break down this quote: "The Bible boldly claims to unveil the heart of the human condition and the very meaning of life. It claims to introduce us to the God who made us and who is at the heart of the universe. In fact, it claims to be a direct message of self-revelation from the God who made us, and who longs to relate to us personally."

- What are some truths in this quote?
  - **The Bible tells us about the heart of mankind: what we think, say, and do.**
  - **The Bible tells us about the meaning of life: our purpose.**
  - **The Bible tells us about the God who made us and everything else.**
  - **The Bible tells us that it is the very words of God.**
  - **The Bible tells us that this God wants to be in relationship with us.**

So, to put it this way, the Bible is a self-revelation from God.

- God has made Himself known through the Bible!

## GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION

Because of God's Word, we know God reveals Himself through two ways. The first way of revealing Himself is called General Revelation.

Will a few of you help me read three different passages:

- Genesis 1:1 | **"1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."**
  - What does this passage tell us?
    - God made everything

- God eternally existed
- Psalm 19:1-3 | **“1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.”**
  - What does this passage tell us?
    - All that has been created is proclaiming God’s glory and His handiwork through creation.
- Romans 1:18-20 | **“18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”**
  - What does this passage tell us?
    - God’s eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen through all that He has created.
    - God reveals Himself to us through creation; therefore, mankind cannot say, “I do not know God.”

This kind of revelation is General Revelation. J.I. Packer says, “General revelation is so called because everyone receives it, just by virtue of being alive in God’s world.”

So, is there anyone, anywhere that has not received God’s general revelation of Himself?

- No! No one is without excuse in regards to knowing God is real.
  - It’s important here to understand two things:
    - God’s general revelation of Himself reveals His gracious character. Out of His love and grace for His creation, God reveals Himself to everyone. We don’t even deserve that. Yet, we serve a gracious God who makes Himself known to everyone.
    - There is a problem with just general revelation -- it is not sufficient to save someone from their sin. Someone cannot just know God exists and be saved from their sin. And that is why the next way God reveals Himself is so important.

The second way God reveals Himself is called Special Revelation.

Let’s read a few more passages:

- Exodus 32:16 | **“16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.”**
  - God wrote the Ten Commandments
- Galatians 1:11-12 | **“11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

- The Gospel Paul proclaimed was received directly from God -- not man.
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 | “**16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”
  - Every verse in Scripture is from God.
  - Therefore, it is useful for all of life.
- 2 Peter 1:16-21 | “**16** For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17** For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," **18** we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. **19** And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, **20** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21** For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
  - The Bible was written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit.
  - They wrote what God told them to write.

J.I. Packer says, “The church calls these writings the Word of God because their authorship and contents are both divine.”

### THE BIBLE (SPECIAL REVELATION) CONTAINS THE POWER OF GOD TO SAVE

So, when we talk about the Bible being God’s Special Revelation. We need to understand what it is beyond just a collection of books. It is God’s solution to the problem we would all have if God’s Word did not exist.

Yes, we all are without excuse in regards to knowing God. But listen to what the Westminster Confession of Faith says about that problem: “**1.** Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable;(a) yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation.”

- So, the conclusion for us is this: general revelation is inferior to special revelation. People need to read/hear God’s special revelation to have a knowledge of salvation.

“**14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” -2 Timothy 3:14-15

- Did you catch that? Paul says to Timothy, “The sacred writings (Scripture) are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

- Why does it have that power? Because the Bible is a supernatural Book that has the power to save unbelievers because it points people to Jesus!

## WHAT MAKES THE BIBLE SUPERNATURAL?

We will briefly highlight these things because we will get into it a little deeper next week. But three things that Chase actually showed us when he taught on Sola Scriptura.

- The Bible is Inspired
  - While there are many authors (forty authors over approximately fifteen hundred years), we would say because of the words of Scripture that they were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So, in essence, there was really only one Author of the Bible, God.
  - **“21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” -2 Peter 1:21**
  - **“16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” -2 Timothy 3:16-17**
  - So, yes when we read the words of Moses, David, Isaiah, Hosea, Matthew, Luke, John, Paul, and more; we understand they penned those words. But these were the words of God!
  - Kevin DeYoung shares a story in one of his books about an article in Christianity Today entitled “My Conversation with God.”
    - “Does God still speak? I grew up hearing testimonies about it, but until October 2005, I couldn’t say it had ever happened to me. I’m a middle-aged professor of theology at a well-known Christian university. I’ve written award-winning books. My name is on Christianity Today’s masthead. For years I’ve taught that God still speaks, but I couldn’t testify to it personally. I can only do so now anonymously, for reasons I hope will be clear. A year after hearing God’s voice, I still can’t talk or even think about my conversation with God without being overcome by emotion.”
    - DeYoung says, “The anonymous professor went on to talk about an experience where God supernaturally gave him a book outline and a book title and then directed him to use the money from the book to help a young man go to school and prepare for ministry. He finished the article by saying how strengthened his faith has been to finally have God personally speak to him. It’s a fine story in many ways, except in this crucial way: it gives the impression that God does not normally speak to us personally. The article leaves us feeling as though God speaking to us through the Scriptures is an inferior, less exciting, less edifying means of communication. We can’t help but conclude, “Yes, the Bible is important, but oh, what a treasure it would be if I could experience God really speaking to me! If only I could hear from the sure and infallible voice of God.” DeYoung goes on to say, **“Sounds amazing, doesn’t it? Can you imagine God speaking to you--personally, certainly authoritatively? Well, the good news (which the article seems to have missed) is that every single one of us can hear from God today, right now, at this very moment. God still speaks. And He has a word for us that is sure, steady, and unerring.”**

○ **Every time we read the Bible we are reading the words of God!**

● The Bible is Inerrant

○ **“33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. 36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! 37 Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. 38 Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared. 39 Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. 40 Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!” -Psalm 119:33-40**

■ Think about this, if the Psalmist believed the Word of God was errant, even in the slightest, would he desire to be:

- Taught from the Word (statutes)
- Obedient to the Word (law)
- Led by the Word
- Delighted by the Word

○ **“Inerrancy means the word of God always stands over us and we never stand over the word of God. When we reject inerrancy we put ourselves in judgment over God’s Word...When we deny the complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures...then we are forced to accept one of two conclusions: either Scripture is not all from God, or God is not always dependable.” -Kevin DeYoung**

● The Bible is Infallible

○ Infallibility means -- “The characteristic of being incapable of failing to accomplish a predetermined purpose...The Bible will not fail in its ultimate purpose of revealing God and the way of salvation to humans.” -Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms

○ **“8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” -Isaiah 55:8-11**

○ **“8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.” -Isaiah 40:8**

○ **“22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever."And this word is the good news that was preached to you.” -1 Peter 1:22-24**

○ The Word of God cannot fail!

## **APPLICATION**

So, if the Bible is inspired, inerrant, and infallible, the best thing we can say when someone asks, “What is the Bible,” is: **The ultimate authority for the Christian.**