

CREDO 2

God Speaks — The Doctrine of Revelation

This is our second study in a series titled **CREDO** – CREDO = Latin for I BELIEVE. In this series we are following the storyline of the Bible to define the essential doctrines of Christianity

DOCTRINE = WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE.

TONIGHT — we are going to cover the DOCTRINE of REVELATION — God Speaking to Man.

Last week we noted that we live in a world that is OBSESSED with COMMUNICATION! Think about the exponential rate at which communication technology has exploded — all from the hunger of man to speak and be spoken to. The telephone has evolved into Mobile Phones. Mobile phones have evolved from speech to “face time.” Mail evolves to E-Mail, Blogs and Text Messaging. Mass communication moves from radio, television and theaters to the Internet, You Tube and podcasting. Newspapers have evolved into Blogs — Web Sites — Twitter. The THIRST for such communication comes out of the fact that we are made in the image and likeness of God — an issue we will address in great detail in two weeks from tonight when we study the doctrine of Imago Dei.

We have seen already in our first study in this series that God is a TRINITARIAN community: Father, Son, and Spirit. God has within His own essence (immanent Trinity) and nature PERFECT COMMUNICATION.

As we are made in the image and likeness of God — God speaks to us. We — by the Spirit and through the Son — speak to God the Father. ALL of this is built upon the Biblical doctrine that the One True and Living God SPEAKS.

I pray that by the end of tonight you will be adoring Him because He is the God who speaks.

Throughout this study we will answer a number of questions about

REVELATION

QUESTION #1 — WHAT IS REVELATION?

REVELATION is the **MEANS** by which God has chosen to **SPEAK** to us.

In the **FIRST** chapter of the **FIRST** book of the Bible — Genesis — We read no less than ten times — *“God said”*

First chapter of the first book. — last we spoke last week about “First things First.” God wants us to know the most important things about Him. He comes out declaring them at the beginning of the book of Beginnings. No less than ten times in the first chapter of the first book — *“God said”*

WHY do we **NEED** REVELATION? **WHY** does God have to **SPEAK**?

BECAUSE if God did not **DISCLOSE** Himself to us — **REVEAL** to us who He is and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ — we would be left with **SPECULATION** as the only means by which we could find God.

SPECULATION, in contrast to **REVELATION** — is man’s effort to guess at what God is like; how we might know Him, and how God wants us to live. **SPECULATION** is **man GUESSING** — **REVELATION** is **God SPEAKING**.

A couple of sub-questions: WHY is man left to **SPECUALTION**? **WHY** is **SPECULATION** futile?

We were created to know God and experience fellowship with God. From the time sin entered the world man has been alienated from God. Since the fall of man — recorded in Genesis 3 (Which will be the topic of our 5th study in this series) — fallen man has sought to discover God. The problem is that his efforts to describe, define, and know God originate from a place of complete spiritual darkness. Man was not only walking **IN** spiritual darkness, Paul the apostle said of fallen man, **Ephesians 5:8** *for at one time you were darkness*. That is a state of being!

QUOTE: D.M. Lloyd-Jones — *The human mind is too small to span or grasp God and to realize Him. And when you understand that because of the fall all human faculties and powers are affected by sin and by natural enmity, then, again, a knowledge of God by human endeavor becomes a complete impossibility.*¹

Because of that, apart from REVELATION every effort of philosophers and religious leaders to discover God has been mere **SPECULATION**.

The simplest way to picture this is to draw a circle (for earth) and a stick man on top of the globe (fallen man) with his hands reached out (trying to grasp an infinite God.) It is IMPOSSIBLE for FALLEN man, beginning from a FINITE base, and from SPIRITUAL DARKNESS to understand the INFINITE God. The picture is the epitome of philosophical and religious **SPECULATION**.

Paul speaks of this in his first letter to the Thessalonians. There in **1 Thes. 2:3** Paul (by way of contrast) stated that every philosophy and religious system of man has its origin in error. They start from the wrong place and end in the wrong place.

QUOTE: D.M. Lloyd-Jones — *we must start by laying down this postulate: our only hope of knowing God truly is that He should be graciously pleased to reveal Himself to us, and the Christian teaching is that God has done that.*²

The Bible tells us that the One, True and Living God desires to communicate to us WHO HE IS.

The Bible tells us that the One, True and Living God has graciously rescued fallen man from the futility of **HUMAN SPECULATION** and did that by means

¹ Great Doctrines of the Bible: God the Father, God the Son; God the Holy Spirit; The Church and the Last Things (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

² Great Doctrines of the Bible: God the Father, God the Son; God the Holy Spirit; The Church and the Last Things (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

of **REVELATION** — God revealed Himself to us.

REVELATION is God reaching down to **FALLEN** and **FINITE** man, who being in absolute moral and spiritual darkness was hopelessly groping in the dark for after God.

REVELATION is God speaking to humanity with divine clarity to inform man of what was otherwise unknowable to him.

You need to understand that if you are here tonight and you are yearning for God and beginning to reach out to God, you didn't get there by human wisdom. The Bible tells us (**1 Cor. 1:21**) that we would never know God as a result of human wisdom. If you are reaching out to know the true and living God, it's because God has been reaching out to you. God has been making Himself known to you.

The Bible tells us (and this builds on the doctrine of the Trinity) that

God the Father **SPEAKS**

Jesus — God the Son — Came to this earth to **REVEAL** to us the God who speaks to us.

The Holy Spirit has **INSPIRED** the writing of Scripture and **ILLUMINIATES** us — **REVEALS** to us **WHO** Jesus is, and **WHAT** He has done for us in His death and resurrection.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF TWO CATEGORIES OF REVELATION

GENERAL REVELATION and SPECIAL REVELATION

I. GENERAL REVELATION

IT IS CALLED GENERAL in that it is available to **ALL** people in **ALL** cultures in **ALL** circumstances at **ALL** times. **IT IS CALLED GENERAL** because even though it does reveal a great deal about God it **does not** give to us the

specific NAME of God — it does not tell us specifically what God has done for us in the sending of His Son to die in our place for our sins and save us by His resurrection.

KEY INSIGHT: There are three ways in which God has GENERALLY revealed Himself to us.

1.) CREATION –

***Romans 1:19-21** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For 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. ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

God revealing Himself — His invisible attributes and divine nature — in Creation

QUOTE: John Calvin “God...has.... revealed himself and daily discloses himself in the whole creation and preservation of the universe. As a result, humans can not open their eyes without being compelled to see God.” (Inst. I, V, 1)

OTHER REFERENCES that echo this

***Psalm 19:1-4** ¹ The Heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above There is what is 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. ⁴ Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

***Psalm 94:8-10** Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? ⁹ He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? ¹⁰ He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—*

SO — God is CREATOR — and CREATION gives to us much understanding about God.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN argues that the design of the universe **tells us something about** the designer.

CREATION tells us that God must be POWERFUL. CREATION tells us that God must be BEAUTIFUL because creation reflects something of His glory.

CREATION tells us something of the merciful and compassionate and loving care of God.

The Bible tells us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Think about the complexity of the immune system — the ability of the body to fend off disease and restore health. God creating us with such capacity tells us of the compassion and mercy of God.

God created the eye to see — the ear to hear — the hand to touch. I'm so thankful for the gift of sight! Every day I see how beautiful my wife is — see the way she makes our home so beautiful. What a good God He is! I'm so thankful I can hear the sound of her voice — feel the texture of her hair.

All of that tells us of the love of God for us in creating us with the capacity to experience pleasure and joy

1. CREATION

2. PROVIDENCE — This concept of PROVIDENCE declares that God not only MADE the world — but He also continues to be involved with it and rules in it.

This is in contrast to DEISM that says God made the world and left it alone. Christianity says that God is both SOVEREIGN OVER Creation and He is at work IN creation to reveal Himself.

Acts 14:17 Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good

by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

God’s continued involvement in, and His oversight of the world He has created reveals to us truth about God — the truth that He cares for us.

1. CREATION

2. PROVIDENCE

3. CONSCIENCE — While Creation is an EXTERNAL witness that there is a God — CONSCIENCE is an INTERNAL witness that **reveals** to us something of the goodness and holiness and justice of God.

EXAMPLE: Paul — In speaking of unbelievers who did not have the Bible — says

***Romans 2:14-16** ¹⁴For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their **conscience** also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them*

Paul is saying that EVERY human being — even if they are not Christian — experiences General Revelation through the INNER conviction of their conscience.

We see this when someone does not do something — because they innately knew it was wrong

We see this when someone has done something they KNEW was wrong — and then felt badly about it

We see this when someone **apologizes** for something

We see this when someone appeals to a greater moral standard — *“That’s not right — You should NEVER do that — THAT is unacceptable.”*

GRANTED — Man is fallen. He is FAR from that original image and likeness of God. But even in fallen man we witness in our conscience a GENERAL revelation of the justice and righteousness of God. THAT is why even non-Christians will say that you shouldn't take advantage of the poor — you shouldn't rape or murder or steal. **WHERE does this come from?**

QUOTE — *As many thinkers have noted, if one is going to claim there is evil in the world, one must ask by what criteria something is judged to be evil in the first place. How does one judge some things to be evil and other things not to be evil? What is the moral measuring stick by which people and events are morally appraised? By what process is evil distinguished from good and vice versa? The reality is that it is impossible to distinguish evil from good unless one has an infinite reference point that is absolutely good.³*

All of these tell us that there is a Righteous and Holy God who has made us with a sense of justice and right and wrong.

Some ask: What are we to think of those who believe cannibalism to be morally good and that you are immoral for not participating in it? The answer is the downward pull of sin. The Bible speaks of a “seared conscience.” The longer man lives in this fallen world, the stronger the downward pull of sin and the farther they are from hearing the general revelation of God by way of conscience.

SO — God has revealed Himself in GENERAL by way of

CREATION
PROVIDENCE
CONSCIENCE

There is another way by which God reveals Himself to man.

II. SPECIAL REVELATION

³ **Who Made God?** And Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith (Ravi Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler) —

It is **SPECIAL REVELATION** in that the **INFORMATION** about God is **CLEARER** than it is in **GENERAL REVELATION**. The Name of God is revealed. The plans and purposes of God in saving man through the person and work of Jesus Christ are revealed

It's called **SPECIAL REVELATION** in that it is limited to a smaller number of people. It comes to an individual or a group of people or a certain limited number of people.

EXAMPLES: Noah — Abraham — Israel (receiving the Law)

Let's look at **THREE** ways in which God **SPEAKS** in **SPECIAL REVELATION**.

1. THE MIRACULOUS

EXAMPLE: Surrounding the Birth of Jesus —

Joseph was given a **prophetic dream** telling him to not divorce Mary because she had been a faithful woman and had conceived Jesus by a miracle. By the way — many Muslims in the Iran and Iraq are coming to faith in Jesus by way of dreams and visions!

Mary herself — The angel Gabriel came to her and told her that by the power of God she would conceive a child independent of sexual relations

This was **REVELATION** not available to or directed to **ANY** and **ALL** people. It was God speaking in a **SPECIAL** way and to **SPECIFIC** people.

1. THE MIRACULOUS

2. JESUS

Jesus is God the Son — He came into human history

***John 1:18 (NKJV)** No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*

***Hebrews 1:1-3** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..... ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,*

In Jesus we have SPECIAL REVELATION of the person and nature of God. Remember — in general revelation there is revelation of His eternal nature and attributes — but there is nothing of the Name of God or the saving plans of God.

God is revealed IN FULL in Jesus. That is why we read in Colossians —

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God

Hebrews 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature

God speaks in Specific Revelation by

1. THE MIRACULOUS

2. BY JESUS

3.) THE SCRIPTURES

The Bible not only records the life of Jesus — but it also includes the record of God working in human history to bring Jesus into the World to die on a cross for our sins, be raised from the dead for our justification and the promise of the return of Jesus to the earth.

God literally worked through human authors to SPEAK to us. **This leads us to our second question**

QUESTION #2 — WHAT ARE THE SCRIPTURES?

The **New Testament** speaks of the **Old Testament** as *Scripture*. That word “Scripture” comes from the Greek word **graphe**, meaning “writing.” So we are talking about WRITTEN DOCUMENTS.

The word “**Bible**” comes from the Greek word for book. Holy Bible means “Holy Book.” The Bible is a COLLECTION of DIVINELY INSPIRED writings. Again — *all scripture is breathed out (inspired) by God.*

The Bible is actually a LIBRARY of books.

Some people are confused when they first pick up the Bible and start reading it because they were expecting to find a chronological story account. The books of the Bible are not in chronological order. That is because it is a COLLECTION of SIXTY-SIX books. They are not organized in Chronological order. In a very real way — when you pick up the Bible — it is like going to a LIBRARY. And like a library the collections are organized by GENRE of literature.

The LAW (first five books - also known as the Pentateuch)

The HISTORICAL books are together

The POETIC books (Psalms)

The WISDOM literature is together (Proverbs / Ecclesiastes)

The PROPHETIC books are together

The BIOGRAPHIES of the life of Jesus (Gospels) are together

The LETTERS of the apostles are together

If you are interested you can pick up a CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE. You can read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in its chronological order.

As we have noted — The Bible is a Collection of **66** separate books. This collection of 66 books, known as the Holy Bible, is the bestselling book of all time, and is now available in nearly three thousand languages. These 66 books were written over a period of roughly 1,500 years by roughly 40 authors. We know the names of most of the authors of the books of the Bible. Some are undetermined.

The Bible is written in primarily THREE languages — Greek and Hebrew are the predominant languages — with small parts written in Aramaic.

If you have picked up this collection of **66 books** in the Bible you have noticed those books are divided into chapters. There are **1,189 chapters** in the Bible. These chapter divisions were not in the original manuscripts. They are not Divinely inspired. They were inserted in the early 1200s. This was done for much the same reason that our houses have numbers in front of them. These chapters are like ADDRESSES by which we can find the location of particular sections / events / persons or truths.

In the 1500s those 1,189 chapters were further divided into sub-addresses called verses. In our translations of the Bible we now have not just the general address of say, Romans 1 or 2. Now there are sub-addresses like Romans 1:16. So TODAY — We have 1,189 chapters in the Bible. We have 31,173 verses within those 1,189 chapters.

Within the 66 books of the Bible there are TWO PRIMARY DIVISIONS: The Old Testament and the New Testaments

SOME PEOPLE ARE PUT OFF — or struggle with reading the “OLD Testament” because the title suggests that it is OLD — it is outdated and archaic — and as such is irrelevant. The Bible does not use this terminology. The first person to use the terms OLD and NEW Testaments was a man named Origin (2nd and 3rd century). He got the concept from **Jeremiah 31** where God speaks of the NEW Covenant that He would make.

UNFORTUNATELY some look at the terms OLD and NEW and **wrongly** conclude that the NEW Testament is important, while the OLD Testament is unimportant, outdated and therefore irrelevant.

THAT IS UNTRUE. **JESUS LOVED** the Old Testament. **JESUS READ** and **STUDIED** the Old Testament. The Old Testament was the Bible that Jesus used. The Old testament was the Bible by which Jesus (as a man) grew in wisdom and stature and favor with men and with God (**Luke 2:52**). We should love the Old Testament because Jesus loved the Old Testament. And by the way — we should love it because it’s all about Jesus.

***John 5:39 (CSB)** ³⁹You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me.*

Roughly three-quarters of the Christian Bible is the Old Testament. The Old Testament was written on papyrus — a form of paper made out of reeds.

There are 39 books are in the **Old Testament**. Those 39 books contain the record of time from God creating the world, and our first parents Adam and Eve, up until the coming of Jesus Christ into human history. In many ways, the Old Testament is a series of promises that God makes. It is a FORESHADOWING of the coming of Jesus. It contains PROPHECIES and ANTICIPATIONS and EXPECTATIONS of the coming of Jesus. On the day of His resurrection Jesus came along side two of His disciples

***Luke 24:26–27; 44 (CSB)** ²⁶Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things **concerning himself in all the Scriptures....** ⁴⁴He told them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything **written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms** must be fulfilled."*

The Old Testament has 929 chapters and 23,214 verses. The longest book in the Old Testament is the book **Psalms** and the shortest book is **Obadiah**.

The New Testament is the record of the fulfillment of those promises.

It was written on parchments (prepared animal skins). It is the record of the fulfillment of those promises.

The **27** books — **260 chapters** and **7,959 verses** — of the **New Testament** begin with the four gospels, which record the virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, burial and resurrection, and return of Jesus to heaven. It then moves to the record of the early Church and the spread of the Gospel as the first believers were led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It then moves into the explanation of the Gospel. The letters of the New Testament are the EXPLANATION of the biographies of Jesus. They not only explain the Gospels — they are the practical application of the saving work of Jesus to the whole of Christian life. They are instructions to various Christians and to churches about how to think and live in light of Who Jesus is; and what

Jesus has done. How crucial those letters are for our lives! The New Testament closes with the return of Jesus to the earth and the creation of a new heavens and a new earth (the final study in our series).

In the New Testament, the longest book is Acts and the shortest book is 3 John.

WE HAVE SAID THAT the Bible is really more of a **library of books** rather than a single book — And we have noted the primary division of those books into the Old and New Testaments.

BUT WE MUST point out that there is an amazing **unity** and **continuity** between the various books of the Bible and their Old Testament and New Testament groupings. You can't start reading a New Testament book without IMMEDIATELY running into a CONCEPT — an IDEA — a PERSON or a QUOTE that comes from the Old Testament. THAT is because the NEW is the FULFILLMENT of the OLD. The OLD foreshadows and the NEW fulfills.

QUESTION #3 — WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT THEMSELVES?

IF the Bible itself does not claim to originate from God — does not claim to be holy — trustworthy — and good — THEN we should not believe that about the Bible either.

Here is what the Bible has to say about itself

The Bible says that it shouldn't be added to — and nothing should be taken away from it.

Proverbs 30:5-6 Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. ⁶ Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

So right there, the Bible says *“Don't ADD anything to the Scriptures.”*

This is what theologians call the SUFFICIENCY of Scriptures.

The Bible also claims to be EFFECTIVE

Isaiah 55:11 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.

In the language of the New Testament — *the word of God is living and powerful Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV).*

The Bible itself claims to be PERFECT. We are told in **Psalm 19** that God's Word is PERFECT. YOU and I are not perfect. Our WORLD is not perfect. But God's Word is PERFECT.

The Bible itself claims to be a guide for our life. **Psalm 119** is an amazing chapter of the Bible. It is a non-stop declaration of the perfection of the Scriptures — the helpfulness of the Scriptures — and the truthfulness of the Scriptures. In **Psalm 119:105** the Bible claims to be a *lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.* Where would we be without the Scriptures to light our way in a morally and spiritually dark world?

The Bible claims to be TRUE. In **John 17:17** (the high priestly prayer of Jesus — His longest prayer in the Bible) Jesus prays this — *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

The Scriptures declare that they are to be obeyed.

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

So many Christians believe that the Bible is a handy compendium of practical advice to help bring them up to speed on being a better spouse or parent — more successful in business. Advice to take or leave — not truth to be obeyed.

The Scriptures claim to be all that we need to know God. Again — this is

what theologians call the SUFFICIENCY of Scripture

EXAMPLE: In **Luke 16** there is the story of a man who did not know God and died. He is experiencing the torment of Hades and he asks that someone be sent back from the dead to warn his 5 brothers to repent lest they end up in the same torment. Here is the reply he was given.

***Luke 16:28-31** 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'
³⁰And he said, 'No..... but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'
³¹He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"*

They have the Scriptures — the Scriptures are sufficient for man to know God.

Modern church culture is obsessed with trying to be creative in finding ways for men and women to know God. The Scriptures are sufficient. We can always be creative about the vehicle by which we get the Scriptures to people — but the vehicle has to carry the payload of the Scriptures which alone are sufficient for man to know God.

The Scriptures declare that they are the way in which God SPEAKS to us.

***Hebrews 4:12** ¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

CRUCIAL: There are MANY people who claim that they would LOVE to have God speak to them. When we open the Bible — we DO have God speaking to us.

LASTLY — The Scriptures claim to be the standard for doctrine and teaching in the Church and that anything we BELIEVE, anything we DO, or anything we EXAMINE — is to be TESTED by Scripture.

Acts 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Here they were listening to Paul — the author of much of the New Testament — teaching and preaching. They took what he said and they went to their Bible (the OT Scriptures) and they measured what Paul said about Jesus against the Scriptures! They weren't just going to trust a teacher. They weren't going to trust an author. They tested everything against the Scriptures!

By the way — that's why it's so important to have a Bible open when you come to church to make sure that what I'm saying is actually in the Bible.

QUESTION #4 — WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

This is the DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION.

There is a PARTNERSHIP between God — Who is the DIVINE AUTHOR — and men — who were the HUMAN AUTHORS.

This in no way means that these the human authors were in a catatonic state with pen in hand and God moved their hands causing them to write.

It does mean that **God** was **breathing out** His Word **through** their **personalities** — their **education** — their **observations** and **experiences** — and INSPIRED them to PERFECTLY write down an ABSOLUTELY TRUSTWORTHY RECORD of the Word of God.

Sometimes the authors of the OT would sit down and would write on a long scroll. Sometimes they would speak or prophesy and there would be a trained scribe — much like a court stenographer.

EXAMPLE: Jeremiah 36:4 *⁴Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord that he had spoken to him.*

Sometimes they **penned** their own book; while at other times they would **speak** under inspiration of God, and scribes faithfully recorded their words.

CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE: The O.T. prophets were fully aware that they spoke on behalf of God. More than 200 times they would say — *“Thus saith the Lord!”* — and then they would speak and preach the exact Word of God. God would speak TO them and then God would speak THROUGH them. We find constantly — *The Word of the Lord came to me* — *God spoke to me* — *God said to me*. We find phrases like that some 3,800 times in the O.T. alone!

CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE: The New Testament sees itself as the fulfillment of the OT. We find in the NEW Testament **300** explicit **Old Testament quotations** — as well as upwards of **4,000** allusions to

OT People — OT Places — OT Language — OT Imagery — OT concepts.

HERE’S THE POINT — The Bible setting itself forth as UNIFIED REVELATION by God of Himself to man. There are thousands of people who weekly walk through the doors of churches who are clueless as to the nature of the Bible — what it is / where does it come from / how it relates within itself.

Here is how the NEW TESTAMENT speaks concerning the Old Testament.

1 Peter 1:10-12 *“the prophets (O.T. prophets) who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours*

The OT is about the Grace of God because He is the same yesterday today and forever. The God of the OT is not the God of wrath and the God of the NT is the God of grace —

1 Peter 1:10-12 *“the prophets (O.T. prophets) who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.*

So the first thing he says is that the O.T. is about the grace of God that would be poured out on man by God through the death, burial and

resurrection of Jesus Christ — and they were speaking and writing about the coming of Jesus Who would be the giver of Grace — they did this BY THE SPIRIT = Divine Revelation)

It was revealed to them

The Bible is REVELATION — not speculation

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look”

Peter **connects** the Old and New Testament — In the OT they were proclaiming the coming of Jesus, who would be God incarnate giving us grace

THAT was fulfilled when Jesus came, lived, died and rose —

And now we receive Grace from Jesus who is our great God and Savior.

Peter says — NOW — the same Holy Spirit inspired who inspired OT writers inspired the NT Apostles to proclaim the same message of salvation by grace alone and by Jesus alone.

And this is something that angels have desired to look into

HOW was that going to happen?

WHAT was it going to look like?

AGAIN — The New Testament is written by INSPIRATION of the Holy Spirit even as the Old Testament was.

Peter also says in

2 Peter 1:20-21 *“no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own*

interpretation. 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”

Jesus predicted this on two occasions —

John 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

John 16:14 *He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

While Jesus was alive on the earth promised that AFTER He had died, walked out of the tomb, and ascended into heaven, that the Holy Spirit would come to the Apostles and **remind** them of all they heard saw and experienced — and the Holy Spirit would **enable** them to faithfully record the writings of the NT to tell without error the story of Jesus.

So we have human authors of the NT —

Matthew — 28 chapters in NT

Mark — 16 chapters

Luke — 42

John — 50

Paul — 93 (or 106 — debate over whether he wrote Hebrews)

Peter — 8 chapters

James (the brother of Jesus) — 5

Jude (the other brother of Jesus) — 1

Each of these NT authors wrote as they were *carried along by the Holy Spirit*.

Paul says

1 Corinthians 2:13 *And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit —*

I'm not telling you things that I learned or made up — I'm telling you things REVEALED by the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 14:37 *the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.*

He sounds JUST LIKE the OT prophets would say — *Thus saith the Lord!*

Ephesians 3:4-5 *When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets **by the Spirit.***

The Apostles are given the ability to PERFECTLY RECORD the revelation **from God** as to who He is and what He has done through Jesus. **THAT is why** Paul says in Ephesians 2:20 that the Church (you and me) is **built upon the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets.**

SO – The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Old Testament to record the foreshadowing of Jesus and the promises of the coming Jesus — and He inspired the writers of the NT to record the fulfillment of that foreshadowing and those promises in the Virgin birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

ALL OF THIS IS SUMMED UP IN WHAT IS CALLED THE DOCTRINE OF VERBAL – PLENARY INSPIRATION

Some call it the doctrine of Verbal – Plenary Inerrancy.

Metro holds to the doctrine of the **VERBAL** and **PLENARY INSPIRATION** of Scripture. We always **HAVE** and always **WILL**.

By **VERBAL** we mean that the very **WORDS** of the Bible are **INSPIRED** by God. Jesus said this very thing in **Matthew 5:18** where He referenced the smallest markings of Scripture — the dotting of an *i* or the crossing of a *t*.

SIMPLY PUT — God the Holy Spirit inspired not just the thoughts of Scripture, but also the very details and exact words.

By **PLENARY** inspiration we mean that **every part** of the Bible is divinely inspired revelation. This is of tremendous importance.

That means that there are NO parts of the Bible that we don't like. It means that there are NO parts of the Bible that we don't believe. It means that there are NO parts of the Bible that we won't read. It means that there are NO parts of the Bible that we won't teach. It means that there are NO parts of the Bible that we won't reference. We believe that ALL of the Bible is INSPIRED.

Let me give to you a very real and famous example from history of what this does NOT look like. **Thomas Jefferson** (who was a deist)

The deist believes in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. The term is used chiefly of an intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that accepted the existence of a creator on the basis of reason but rejected belief in a supernatural deity who interacts with humankind.

Compare with Theist – Believes in the existence of a god or gods, esp. belief in one god as creator of the universe, intervening in it and sustaining a personal relation to his creatures. Compare with deism.

Jefferson sat down with his copy of the Bible and simply CUT OUT with scissors all the parts he didn't believe were right. He called what remained "The Philosophy of Jesus Christ."

Most are not quite that blatant in regards to their view of Scripture. But in reality, there are many men and women in churches — many who stand in pulpits — who choose to essentially mothball portions of the Bible they think are irrelevant. They avoid — neglect — or totally abandon certain parts of the Bible. They take the liberty of choosing what parts of the Bible they deem as valuable — and those that are not. Jesus called that the *leaven of the Sadducees*.

We do not — and cannot do that — **because** the Word of God is FLAWLESS (Prov.30:5 – every word of God proves true). We do not — and cannot do that **because** *ALL SCRIPTURE is God breathed and profitable.*

So we believe that

The VERY WORDS of Scripture are inspired (verbal inspiration)

That ALL of Scripture is inspired (plenary inspiration)

Which makes THIS book UNLIKE any other book.

HERE ARE SEVERAL KEY VERSES ON THIS DOCTRINE

1. 2 Timothy 3:16:17 is the CLASSIC passage on this doctrine of Verbal – Plenary Inspiration

*All Scripture is **breathed out by God** —*

It is GOD’S WORD to us!

*and **profitable** —*

We LOVE you guys. We want you, as individuals, to have a life that is everything Jesus died for you to have. We want Metro to have the Life Jesus died for us to have. THAT is why we say here at Metro that we have a PASSION FOR THE WORD OF GOD.

The Word of God is **PROFITABLE**. Not profitable merely in the sense that a data base can be profitable because it is filled with accurate information. The Word of God is **PROFITABLE** in the sense of someone who **cares for you** and **converses** with you — **counsels** you and **comforts** — and **confronts** you and **encourages** you. THAT would be God in His Word! It is THAT kind of profitable. The Scriptures are profitable in our relationship with God — He SPEAKS to us in Scripture and we speak back to Him in prayer. (journal — “Please Lord’)

¹⁶ profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction,

That is highly unpopular in church culture! We want to be told how good we are and how fun Christianity can be but God forbid that a pastor would talk to you and reprove you and correct you — because that makes him a bad guy. You need to know that if a pastor reproves you or corrects you from the Scriptures, he's gotten a good spanking long before he got to you.

and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be competent, equipped for **every good work**.

Whatever you need in your life — you NEED the Bible. It speaks to ALL of life — Sexuality; Marriage; Work; relationships; stewardship; service.

It speaks in principle to EVERYONE — It speaks in principle to EVERYTHING. There should be NO part of your life that is disconnected from Scripture — BECAUSE there is NO part of your life that doesn't NEED Scripture.

One of the things that is so disconcerting to me is that people think that they can live their lives disconnected from the Word of God. God has graciously SPOKEN to us because He wants to HELP us in every way.

2. 2 Peter 1:20-21

“no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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”

AGAIN — That is INSPIRATION. The Old Testament prophets **did not** fully understand ALL that they prophesied. Look at some of the prophecies of Ezekiel. I'm sure he didn't understand a lot of what he saw. They didn't understand everything when they prophesied that Jesus would be born of a virgin — in the town of Bethlehem — betrayed for 30 pieces of silver — would be buried in a rich man's tomb.

THOSE kinds of prophecies were NOT things that those men could have made up. They couldn't have known the future. They were mere men. Only

God knows the future. They couldn't have seen the PANORAMA of history and predicted in AMAZING DETAIL what would happen concerning Jesus in His first coming and in His second coming. But the Holy Spirit could because — as we saw last week — He is God! Because He is God — He knows the future. Because He is God He is sovereign over the future — and He told the authors what would happen in the future.

THAT is exactly what Peter is saying — The authors were *carried along by the Holy Spirit*. They held the pen — but WITHOUT the Holy Spirit they know NOTHING about the coming of Jesus — and they would be left to mere SPECULATION instead of REVELATION. BUT — Because of the Holy Spirit they were able to speak of the coming of Jesus in GREAT DETAIL.

3. 2 Peter 3:15-16 —

Here is what Peter said in speaking of Paul — who wrote more chapters of the NT than anyone — nearly TWICE as many chapters as Luke who is the 2nd most prolific author in the NT.

just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote — speaking of the letters Paul had written

just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him — some of your translations might read *according to the wisdom God gave him*

¹⁶*as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*

Peter makes this amazing claim that Paul's writings were MORE THAN letters that got published and distributed. Peter — a contemporary with Paul — claims that Paul is writing SCRIPTURE. Peter is saying that they bear equal weight with Genesis – Exodus – Leviticus — Psalms and Isaiah. God BREATHED the writings of Isaiah — God BREATHED the letters of Paul.

The DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION led to the DOCTRINE OF SOLA SCRIPTURE

Here at Metro we hold to the doctrine of Sola Scriptura. Some call this PRIMA SCRIPTURA.

Sola Scriptura means — that Scripture ALONE is our highest authority. By way of metaphor we might say that the Bible is our Supreme Court as opposed to lesser courts of authority. I'll try to explain this by contrasting SOLA Scriptura to SOLO Scriptura.

PLEASE — follow closely here so that you won't think I'm a heretic.

SOLO Scriptura says that Scripture alone is our **ONLY** authority. We do not believe that. We believe that Scripture alone is our **HIGHEST** authority.

ILLUSTRATION: The Scriptures do not tell us how to perform open-heart surgery. The Scriptures do not tell us how to repair an iPhone. The Scriptures don't tell us how to play guitar. If we want that information we have to go ELSEWHERE to find it. We can look to all kinds of academic and technological or musical disciplines for that information — and we learn. Those are LESSER courts of LOWER authority.

We believe in **SOLA** Scriptura — Which means that we check **whatever we learn** in those lower courts of authority to see if it agrees with Scripture. If it **doesn't DIS**agree with Scripture then we have freedom there.

ILLUSTRATION: You can be a Christian doctor — as Luke was. You can go to medical school — and if they try to teach you that man does not bear the image of God and that man doesn't have a soul and that God can't heal through prayer — you APPEAL that information to the SUPREME COURT of Scripture — and practice medicine accordingly.

LAST QUESTION: WHY SHOULD WE TRUST THE

BIBLE TO BE ACCURATE?

FIRST — The historical reliability of the Bible should be tested by the same criteria by which all historical documents are tested.

THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

This is an examination of the “textual transmission” by which documents reach us. In other words, since we do NOT have the originals documents, how reliable are the copies that we have?

This is based upon two things —

1. How many copies of the original document do we have?
2. How OLD are they — or in other words — how close to the original were those copies made.

Author	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	# Copies
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,000 yrs.	10
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,200 yrs.	7
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	1,000 A.D.	1,400 yrs.	193
Aristotle	348-322 B.C.	1,100 A.D.	1,400 yrs.	49
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643
N.T.	40-100 A.D.	125 A.D.	25 yrs.	24,000+

CRUCIAL: The Variants in the New Testament Manuscripts Are Minimal. In the many thousands of manuscript copies we possess of the New Testament, scholars have discovered that there are some 150,000 "variants." This may seem like a staggering figure to those who don't live in the world of manuscripts. But — a look at the hard evidence shows that the New Testament manuscripts are amazingly accurate and trustworthy. To begin, we must emphasize that out of these 150,000 variants, 99 percent hold virtually no significance whatsoever. Many of these variants simply

involve a missing letter in a word; some involve reversing the order of two words (such as "Christ Jesus" instead of "Jesus Christ"); some may involve the absence of one or more insignificant words.

Let's suppose we have five manuscript copies of an original document that no longer exists. Each of the manuscript copies is different. Our goal is to compare the manuscript copies and ascertain what the original must have said. Here are the five copies:

Manuscript #1: Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole worl.

Manuscript #2: Christ Jesus is the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript #3: Jesus Christ s the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript #4: Jesus Christ is th Savior of the whle world.

Manuscript #5: Jesus Christ is the Savor of the whole wrld.

HERE'S THE POINT — By comparing the manuscript copies, we can ascertain what the original document said with an incredibly high degree of certainty that we are correct. This illustration may be extremely simplistic — but a great majority of the 150,000 variants are solved by that very methodology. By comparing the various manuscripts, all of which contain very minor differences — like those above — it becomes fairly clear what the original must have said.

Most of the manuscript variations concern matters of spelling, word order, tenses, and the like; no single doctrine is affected by them in any way.

We must also emphasize that the sheer volume of manuscripts we possess radically narrows the margin of doubt regarding what the original biblical document said. If the number of [manuscripts] increases the number of scribal errors, it increases proportionately the means of correcting such errors, so that the margin of doubt left in the process of recovering the exact original wording is not so large as might be feared; it is in truth

remarkably small.⁴

THE LAST, LAST QUESTION: WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL LIFE?

It is a life that RECEIVES Jesus Christ as Lord.

It is a life that REPENTS of sin when the Bible points it out — and we rejoice that the Blood of Jesus takes away our sin.

It's a life that doesn't go to the Bible just for INFORMATION — but rather goes to the Bible for TRANSFORMATION — So that we can have a life IN JESUS.

Everything good in my life — my family, this fellowship — is the result of THIS BOOK being used by God the Holy Spirit to change my life and other peoples lives so that we can look more like Jesus Christ.

THAT is what I want for MY life — my WIFE'S life — my kids lives —ALL OF YOU!

We want to Jesus in your hearts and the Bible in your hands

⁴ Manuscript Evidence for the New Testament by Ron Rhodes

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

What is the canon of Scripture?

The English word canon goes back to the Greek word *kanon* and then to the Hebrew word *qaneh*.

According to Neil R. Lightfoot, “Its basic meaning is ‘reed,’ and our English word ‘cane’ being derived from it. Since a reed was sometimes used as a measuring rod, the word *kanon* came to mean a standard or rule. It was also used to refer to a list or index and when so applied to the Bible denotes the list of books which are received as Holy Scripture. Thus if one speaks of the ‘canonical’ writings, one is speaking of those books which are regarded as having divine authority and which comprise our Bible.” (*How We Got the Bible*, p. 152).

CRUCIAL — A distinction needs to be made between canonizing and collecting. No man or council can pronounce a work canonical or scriptural, yet man was responsible for collecting and preserving such works. F. F. Bruce writes: “One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct or indirect. The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the canonical books were both held in North Africa—at Hippo Regius in 393 and at Carthage in 397—but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of these communities” (F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, p. 27).

The word appears to have been first used in this sense by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, in a letter circulated in AD 367. Wayne Grudem uses the following definition: “The canon of Scripture is the list of all the books that belong in the Bible” (*Systematic Theology*, p. 54).

When we speak of the “canon of Scripture,” we are referring to those books that the church has recognized as the authoritative Word of God. Thus, although a formal distinction can be made between canon and authority,

they are closely related. Specifically, books that the church has recognized as canonical are those that are recognized as having divine authority (F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 95).

It is unclear exactly when what we now recognize as the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were clearly recognized as a closed canon (in the Hebrew Old Testament, these books are divided and arranged differently, making only twenty-two books). In earlier generations, it was thought that a council of rabbis in Jamnia (modern Yavne, Israel) formally recognized the Old Testament canon in the late first century AD. Most scholars now doubt this view; the recognition of the Old Testament canon was probably a more gradual process (see D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 727–28).

Good evidence exists in the New Testament that shows that by the time of Jesus, the canon of the Old Testament had been fixed. It cannot be questioned that Jesus and his apostles time after time quoted from a distinctive body of authoritative writings. They designated them as “the Scripture” ([John 7:38](#); [Acts 8:32](#); [Rom. 4:3](#)), “the Scriptures” ([Matt. 21:42](#); [John 5:39](#); [Acts 17:11](#)), “the holy Scriptures” ([Rom. 1:2](#)), “the sacred writings” ([2 Tim. 3:15](#)), and so forth. They often introduced their quotations with “it is written,” that is, it stands firmly written.

How did the church know which books ought to be recognized as canonical? What were the criteria for canonicity? There were three primary criteria used by the church in discussing which books were canonical:

Conformity to “the rule of faith.” In other words, did the book in question conform with orthodoxy, that is, Christian truth recognized as normative in the churches?

Apostolicity. Was the writer of the book an apostle or did the writer of the book have immediate contact with the apostles? Mark’s gospel was tied to Peter and Luke’s to Paul. “The Fathers universally rejected pseudonymity as an acceptable literary category for documents bearing the authority of Scripture. . . . That any pseudonymity was knowingly accepted into the New Testament is denied by the evidence” (Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 737).

Catholicity. For a document to be considered canonical it must have had widespread and continuous acceptance and usage by churches everywhere. “The fact that substantially the whole church came to recognize the same twenty-seven books as canonical is remarkable when it is remembered that the result was not contrived. All that the several churches throughout the Empire could do was to witness to their own experience with the documents and share whatever knowledge they might have about their origin and character. When consideration is given to the diversity in cultural backgrounds and in orientation to the essentials of the Christian faith within the churches, their common agreement about which books belonged to the New Testament serves to suggest that this final decision did not originate solely at the human level.” (Barker, Lane, and Michaels, *The New Testament Speaks*, p. 29; qtd. in Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 736).

The concept we have today of a completed Bible was formulated early in the history of the church. By the end of the second century all but seven books (Hebrews, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude, James, and Revelation) were recognized as apostolic, and by the end of the fourth century all twenty-seven books in our present canon were recognized by all the churches of the West. After the Damasine Council of Rome in AD 332 and the third Council of Carthage in AD 397, the question of the canon was closed in the West. By the year 500 the entire Greek-speaking church had accepted all the books in our present New

For Further Reading on Bible Translations

[“Pastoral Reflections on Bible Translations”](#) by Mark Driscoll

[The Indestructible Book](#) by W. Kenneth Connolly

[The Word of God in English](#) by Leland Ryken

[Choosing a Bible](#) by Leland Ryken

[The Bible in Translation](#) by Bruce M. Metzger

How We Got the Bible by John H. Sailhamer

A General Introduction to the Bible by Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix

For Further Reading on How to Study Scripture

Reading the Bible With Heart and Mind by Tremper Longman III

Getting the Message by Daniel M. Doriani

On the Old Testament by Mark Driscoll

On the New Testament by Mark Driscoll

For Further Reading on Apparent Bible Contradictions

When Critics Ask by Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe

For Further Reading on Miscellaneous Bible Issues

The Origin of the Bible, edited by Philip Comfort, is a good introduction to the authority and perfection of Scripture from a team of theologians.

Christ and the Bible, by John Wenham, is a very helpful survey of how Jesus Christ viewed the Old Testament.

The Canon of Scripture, by F. F. Bruce, is a thorough book on how the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon came to be.

The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?, by F. F. Bruce, is a good survey of the accuracy and credibility of the New Testament.

The Indestructible Book, by W. Kenneth Connolly, is a fascinating historical look at how the Scriptures have been both opposed and adored over the ages.