



CAPITOL COMMISSION

A Word About The Word

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The Bible is consistently a best-selling book every year. It has been translated from its original languages into thousands of written languages on the earth. It is one of the most loved, as well as, one of the most hated books on earth. Its impact on the history of the world is undisputed (whether that impact is positive or negative all depends on who answers). The number of articles, books, discussions, and debates that surround this book and its contents are innumerable.

Over the last several years, a number of items have emerged that cast, or attempted to cast, a shadow of doubt upon this book. Things like “The DiVinci Code” and the discovery of “The Gospel of Judas,” along with various religions and philosophies have sought to undermine the Bible’s truth and authority. Even the incorrect ideas of people, pastors and scholars in the church have been subversive. Some of these arguments are decades and centuries old, but they are gaining in popularity today—even among those who are considered “conservative” and “evangelical.”

Our studies over the next several weeks will be a discussion concerning the Bible. We will be striving for several goals in these sessions:

- To gain an understanding of what the Bible has to say about itself; its truth, its sufficiency, its message.
- To study the history of the Bible texts to see the providence of God in preserving the texts.
- To learn the process of properly studying the Bible so that we may find the author’s intended meaning.

We pray that through this investigation and study our confidence in the truth and reliability of the Bible will be enhanced and therefore, our faith in God and His Son, Jesus may also grow and be strengthened.

INTRODUCTION

Most people in America own a Bible and a number of these people have more than one copy. Bibles are given as gifts for births, consecrations, dedications, or other important events in a person’s life. Families have used Bibles throughout history to record births, marriages and deaths within the clan. A Bible is used to swear in the President of the United States. Passages of the Bible are even engraved upon the walls of capitol

buildings throughout the U.S. Without a doubt, the Bible has had an important place in the history of our country.

But what is it?

The Bible is God’s written revelation of Himself to mankind. In it we can know about His nature, His Son, and His purposes. In the Bible we can discover the truth about mankind; his beginnings, his rebellion and his future. In the Bible, we find God’s plan and action to deliver man from his dilemma.

“Revelation” comes from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means “an uncovering, laying bare.” In the New Testament, it is “a disclosure of a divine truth or manifestation of God.”² Thus, revelation is simply God uncovering truth about Himself and His plans to those He has created.³

This revelation of God to mankind has two basic categories—general and special revelation.

I. GENERAL REVELATION

General revelation can be defined as that which can be known about God by observing and understanding nature and mankind. This knowledge is universal. It is available to all of mankind. Concerning the revelation found in nature, the Apostle Paul writes:

Romans 1:18-20 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

God has made Himself known to mankind through the work of His creation. All people can have an elementary knowledge of God. All people can know, by observing the world around them, that God is eternal, powerful, and far greater than them. This general revelation presented by the created order has been used throughout Scripture to show the greatness of God. David wrote, *The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And*

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: WEDNESDAYS @ 12NOON, HEARING ROOM #1
ATTORNEY GENERAL’S OFFICE: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, BROADWAY BUILDING 3RD FLOOR CAFETERIA

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their expanse is declaring the work of His hands (Psa 19:1). In Job, God commands Job to look around and tell Him who put all these things together, knows them and sustains them (Job 38-41). Through Isaiah, the nation of Israel is told *Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these stars, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, Not one of them is missing* (Isa. 40:26).

Through nature God has presented an abundance of evidence of His existence and character to all people. The evidence is enough, Paul writes, to prove that men are without excuse for their willful ignorance of Him. There is so much evidence that people have to actively work hard in order to suppress and disregard the facts (v18). Just like the little child who closes his eyes and thinks something is not there because he cannot see it, the sinful heart of people has caused them to look right through the obvious evidence in order to believe that God is not there or not important. Therefore, God is righteously angry with this willful disobedience of men. They cannot plead, “we didn’t know.”

**SPECIAL REVELATION PROVIDES FOR MANKIND
“PERSONAL INFORMATION” ABOUT GOD. THROUGH
IT, GOD REVEALS HIS NAME, ENTERS INTO
RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE AND MAKES
HIMSELF KNOWN IN WAYS THAT HUMANS CAN
UNDERSTAND.**

General revelation can also be noted in the make up of human beings.

Again, Paul writes:

Romans 2:14-15 *For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...*

The non-Jews in Paul’s day did not have the revealed Law of God as did the Jewish people. But their actions prove that the Law was already built within them. “Even though they had never seen the Scriptures their morality demonstrated that God had placed His law of right and wrong in

their hearts.”⁴ And through this law, an understanding of God can be gained.

The evidence put forth in general revelation clearly reveals God, but there are limitations to general revelation. First of all, it is only an elementary revelation. While it is specific—God is powerful, holy and eternal—it does not reveal the Trinity or God’s grace or His gospel. It simply does not put forth everything about God, His plan and His purposes. Secondly, general revelation renders everyone guilty because God has been revealed but all have rejected and refused to acknowledge or obey Him (Rom. 3:10-18). But the truth necessary for the salvation of one’s soul cannot be found in the revelation found in nature and in man’s heart.

Therefore, God further reveals Himself and His work in special revelation.

II. SPECIAL REVELATION

Dr. Larry Pettegrew defines special revelation as “God’s personal disclosure of Himself to us through the Living and Written Word so that we might come to know Him in salvation and glorify Him through our lives.”⁵

This special revelation provides for mankind “personal information” about God. Through it God reveals His name, enters into relationships with people and makes Himself known in ways that humans can understand.

One type of this special revelation is God becoming a man through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible instructs us that Jesus was the complete revelation of God (Col. 2:9) and perfect revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-3). In fact, Jesus tells Philip on the night before Jesus was crucified, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9b).

Another type of special revelation, which is the purpose of this study, is God revealing Himself through the written word—the Bible.⁶ Over 3800 times in the Old Testament, references are made that the words the authors are writing are God’s Words.⁷ Phrases like “thus saith the Lord,” “the mouth of the Lord has spoken,” “the Lord says,” “the Lord spoke,” “hear the word of the Lord,” “thus the Lord has shown to me,” and “the word of the Lord came to me saying” are used to illustrate this point.

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The authors of the New Testament quoted from the Old Testament 320 times and considered them as Scripture, as God's Word (Heb. 1:1).⁸ Peter also referred to the writings of the Apostle Paul as Scripture (1 Pet. 3:15-16); and John, in the book of Revelation, made many references to the words of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, along with the statement, *These are true words of God* (Rev. 19:9b).

CONCLUSION

God has unveiled Himself through general revelation and through His Word in written form. The book which can be found in the homes of many Americans, as well as translated into numerous languages across the globe, is God's intimate disclosure of Himself to people.

This short lesson and discussion are simply introductions to the topic of Bibliology. Over the next several weeks, we plan to discuss this book's authority, truth, sufficiency and necessity (all of which are controversial topics in the church and secular culture). We also plan to discuss answers to the various voices of opposition to this book and the proposition discussed in this short lesson. We will look at the role archaeology plays in the study of Scripture and if it is sufficient to prove the truth of the Bible. We will take an historical journey to see how the Bible has been preserved and translated throughout the centuries. We will also spend time on the science of hermeneutics—that is, the process of studying the Scriptures.

Psalm 19:7-11 *The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.*

¹ This study was originally written while the author served with Capitol Ministries™.

² G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 50.

³ I like Robert Reymond's definition of revelation as "the divine act whereby God deliberately discloses an unknown and unknowable (unknowable, that is, to the unaided mind of human beings) portion of his knowledge of Himself and/or of His purpose of creation" (*A New*

Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 4fn3).

⁴ Andrew Snider, "TH605 Theology I" (unpublished class syllabus, The Master's Seminary, 2005), 61.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶ God also revealed Himself through the work of miracles, signs and wonders (Ex. 5:1-2; Josh. 4:23-24; John 10:38). But for the purposes of this study, this discussion will be left for another day.

⁷ John MacArthur, *How to Get the Most From God's Word* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997), 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*