

#4 THE REVELATION OF GOD

Q How can all people, from all times and places, know there is a Creator God?

A God's existence is clearly seen in creation. He has placed the knowledge of Himself in the hearts of all, but mankind denies the truth.

Q How can all people, from all times and places, know the way of salvation?

A God reveals His way of salvation through His Son, Jesus, and in His Word, the Scriptures.

"...He has put eternity into man's heart..." **ECCLESIASTES 3:11b**

"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."

ROMANS 1:20

THEOLOGY: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The presence of God is all around and His self-disclosure is irrepressible. Man is inherently a religious being. He is driven to worship in response to God's revealing His existence. However, natural man chooses to believe in anything but in the existence of God. Foolishly, they deny His moral law even though it is written on their conscience, and pursue worship of the creature instead of the Creator. Christians, on the other hand, do not know God exhaustively, but through the New Birth and the indwelling Holy Spirit they have a keener awareness of Him. A Christian's right understanding of God comes from *"the Spirit himself [who] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"* (**Romans 8:16**). Simply stated, a Christian knows God through God's revelation of His Son in the text of Sacred Scripture. As **2 Peter 1:3a** explains, *"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness."*

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APPLICATION: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The Revealer— God is not hiding. His nature includes the revealing of Himself in creation. His heart is one of clarity and not confusion, plain truth and not clever secrets. It can be hard to discover what God has revealed, not because God is hiding in the shadows, but because fallen man thinks only of himself.

The Supernatural Revealer— What we see is not all there is. God is greater than nature, and while working within the world He created, He also miraculously does that which no physical law can describe or contain.

So What?— *"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him"* (1 Corinthians 2:14). Man cannot reason himself to God, nor can the spiritual be discerned by the natural. God can be understood by man only through a supernatural work of the Spirit in his heart. If you cannot see what God has revealed, the issue is the hardness of your own heart.



"God makes Himself known."

- How does this image represent God's revelation?

- How does this picture show us that God is distinct and greater than man?

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FURTHER STUDY

Wayne Gruden, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 54, 55, 56.

The Bible is necessary for knowledge of the gospel. In Romans 10: 13 -17, Paul says: "For, 'everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.' But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?... So, faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."

The Bible is necessary for Salvation, then, in this sense: One must either read the gospel message in the Bible for oneself or hear it from another person. Even those believers who came to salvation in the old covenant did so by trusting in the words of God that promised a Savior to come.

The Bible is necessary for maintaining spiritual life. Jesus says in Matthew 4:4 (quoting Deut. 8:3). "Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (NASB). Here Jesus indicates that our spiritual life is maintained by daily nourishment with the Word of God, just as our physical lives are maintained by daily nourishment with physical food. To neglect regular reading of God's Word is as detrimental to the health of our souls as the neglect of physical food is detrimental to the health of our bodies.

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FURTHER STUDY (CONT.)

The Bible is necessary for certain knowledge of God's will. It will be argued below that all people ever born have some knowledge of God's will through their consciences. But this knowledge is often indistinct and cannot give certainty. In fact, if there were no written Word of God, we could not gain certainty about God's will through other means such as advice from others, an internal witness of the Holy Spirit, changed circumstances, and the use of sanctified reasoning and common sense. These all might give an approximation of God's will in more or less reliable ways, but from these means alone no certainty about God's will could ever be attained, at least in a fallen world where sin distorts our perception of right and wrong, brings faulty reasoning into our thinking processes, and causes us to suppress from time to time the testimony of our consciences.

Thus, it is appropriate for us to be more certain about the truths we read in Scripture than about any other knowledge we have. If we are to talk about degrees of certainty of knowledge we have, then the knowledge we attain from Scripture would have the highest degree of certainty. If the word certain can be applied to any kind of human knowledge, it can be applied to this knowledge. Christians who take the Bible as God's Word escape philosophical skepticism about the possibility of attaining certain knowledge with our finite minds. In this sense, then, it is correct to say that for people who are not omniscient, the Bible is necessary for certain knowledge about anything.

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FURTHER STUDY (CONT.)

J.I Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993) 5.

What Scripture says, God says; for, in a manner comparable only to the deeper mystery of the Incarnation, the Bible is both fully human and fully divine. So, all its manifold contents- histories, prophecies, poems, songs, wisdom writings, sermons, statistics, letters, and whatever else- should be revered as God's authoritative instruction. Christians should be grateful to God for the gift of his written Word, and conscientious in basing their faith and life entirely and exclusively upon it. Otherwise, we cannot ever honor or please him as he calls us to do.

