

LBC | *Bible 101: Revelation*

1. Revelation comes from God.

Revelation is the work of God by which He makes Himself and His purposes known to mankind.

2. God has determined to reveal a certain amount of information.

There are some things that God has not and will not reveal to mankind. This is what some people call the “hidden counsel of the Lord.” Deuteronomy 29:29 puts it this way: *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.* In saying this we are not at all implying that God’s revelation is somehow lacking in any way. God’s revelation is perfect and complete. Though God did not reveal all things to us, what He did reveal is without spot or blemish.

3. God created mankind to be revelation receivers.

Our need of revelation is bound up in the fact that we are created beings. Even before the fall in Genesis 3, God still had to reveal truth to Adam and Eve. Adam wasn’t born innately knowing that he could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had to make this idea known to him. See Genesis 2:15-17. So our need of revelation is not ultimately a result of the fall. It is part and parcel of what it means to be created in the image of God.

4. Sin complicates our understanding of revelation.

We will talk more about this throughout our series but for now we need to acknowledge that mankind’s fall into sin and rebellion has altered its ability to receive God’s truth. Theologians talk about something called the “noetic effect of sin.” The word noetic refers to one’s mental activity. It is also a word that can refer to the intellect. Sin has not only negatively affected our souls and bodies, but also our minds and our ability to reason and think clearly.

5. A helpful way to categorize God’s revelation is to say that God has revealed Himself in general ways and in special ways.

- A. General revelation comes through observing nature and through the law of God written on the heart. The reason it is called “general” is two-fold. One, it is revealed to all people. Two, it unfolds general truths about God.

Psalm 19:1-2: *The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.*

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 what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal*

LBC | *Bible 101: Revelation*

power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 2:14-16: for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.

- B. Special revelation comes through specific means such as direct words from God and/or written words from Him. The reason it is called “special” is two-fold. One, it is revealed to a specific group of people. Two, it unfolds specific truths about or from God.

Hebrews 1:1-2: God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Romans 10:14-15: How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

6. There are some major differences between these two types of revelation.

General revelation allows one to recognize the signature of God as Creator and Sustainer. It also works to bring to light a basic understanding of right and wrong in the human heart a.k.a a natural law. This form of revelation is sufficient enough to hold someone accountable for their sin but not sufficient enough to show them how to be saved.

Special revelation unfolds truths that are necessary for one to grasp if they are to know God in a saving way. The gospel is not revealed through creation or through natural law. It is revealed through specific propositions about God, man, sin, and salvation. These things God specifically unfolds through the living Word (Jesus Christ) and written Word (Old and New Testaments).

BFM 2000: The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

LBC | *Bible 101: Inspiration and Authority*

1. God's revelation of Himself comes to us in general and specific ways. A specific or special way that His revelation is made known is in the Scripture. Since this is the case, it follows that Scripture is what we call inspired. This is the subject for tonight's talk.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* NKJV

2 Timothy 3:16-17: *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.* NASB

When we say that Scripture is inspired, we mean that it is breathed-out. This is what the word "inspired" literally means. Some Bible translations actually read this way: *All Scripture is God-breathed*. Wayne Grudem, a Christian theologian, puts it this way: "All the words in Scripture are God's words."¹

2. By Scripture we mean the Old and New Testaments.

In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul is directly referencing the Old Testament when he uses the word "Scripture." This does not mean that Paul is saying that it's only the Old Testament that's inspired. Paul also has in mind what we call the New Testament. Even before the Christian canon was completed, the human authors of the New Testament were writing with self-awareness that a certain number of their letters were inspired by God.

2 Peter 3:15b-16: *just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 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.* ESV

See also 1 Timothy 5:18 and Luke 10:7.

We believe this idea extends only to the Old and New Testaments and not the extra-canonical books that the Roman Catholic church endorses. A sample of these would include 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, and Judith.

3. By all we mean all.

The word "all" refers to every single word. In speaking about the Old Testament Jesus said this in Matthew 5:17-18: *Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p.73.

LBC | *Bible 101:* *Inspiration and Authority*

4. The stress in 2 Timothy 3:16 is upon the inspiration of the text, not the inspiration of the writer.

The word for Scripture in this verse is “graphe.” This is a technical term that the human authors of the New Testament used when referencing to a written document. Therefore, this idea of inspiration extends to only the words of Scripture. Compare reading of this verse in the NKJV to the NASB.

Question: Are certain Bible translations inspired while others are not?

5. It is best to say that the human authors of the New Testament were moved or carried along by the Holy Spirit in their writing.

2 Peter 1:19-21: *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

To put point 4 and 5 together we might say that the human authors were moved by the Holy Spirit to write letters/books that were breathed-out by God. In putting it this way we are able to distinguish between the divine and human authorship of the Scripture. God is the ultimate author of the Old and New Testaments. They originated from Him and Him alone. Yet He worked through human agency (person and ministry) to make known His revelation in written form.

6. There are a few different false theories of inspiration that we need to be aware of...

The Degrees Theory: This theory states that there are degrees of inspiration for the Scripture. The more “inspired” sections are those that should have the more influence in the life of God’s people. Theologian James Orr puts forward this idea when he says that a passage like Judges 5, the Song of Deborah, is on a lower plane of inspiration than something written by Paul.

The Moral Theory: This theory states that the doctrine of inspiration extends to what we call doctrinal matters. These would include passages addressing the person of Jesus, the gospel, etc. Those passages that are dealing with historical matters and/or scientific matters would not be inspired or inspired in the same way. This would be the person who claims to follow Jesus and believe His teaching, yet would question the authenticity of the creation account in Genesis 1-3.

7. Since Scripture is given by God, breathed out by Him, then what is authored is naturally and necessarily authoritative.

To disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God. God is the final and ultimate authority in this world. Therefore to go against His revelation in written form is to go against Him. To treat His Word lightly, is to treat Him lightly.

LBC | *Bible 101: Inerrancy and Authority*

1. Let's review and make a connection...

Up to this point in our study we have talked about the revelation of God and the inspiration of Scripture. We concluded last time that the totality of Scripture is inspired. Now it follows that since all Scripture is breathed out by God then what God has said would be free from error.

2. Let's define inerrancy...

"The inerrancy of the Bible means simply that the Bible tells the truth." Charles Ryrie

"Biblical inerrancy means the Bible is free from error and that it speaks the truth whether it addresses doctrine, ethics, or history." Regular Baptist Press

"...It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter." BFM 2000

"The Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching." ICBI-Chicago

The focus of this idea is on the truthfulness of the Scripture.

3. Let's look at what the Bible claims about God and itself...

A. The Truthfulness of God:

Numbers 23:19: *God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*

Titus 1:1-2: *Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.*

Hebrews 6:17-18: *Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

B. The Truthfulness of God's Word:

Psalms 12:6: *The words of the Lord are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.*

Psalms 19:7-8: *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

LBC | *Bible 101: Inerrancy and Authority*

Proverbs 30:5: *Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.*

Matthew 24:35: *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*

John 17:17: *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*

To summarize this data we can say that the inerrancy of the Bible is based upon the truthfulness of God and His character and what the Bible claims for itself.

4. Let's look at those who take a different approach to this topic...

The inerrancy of the Bible has been a hotly debated topic over the past one hundred years. This debate has taken place in the protestant and evangelical worlds and has actually split churches, ministries, and mission boards.

Stephen T Davis in *The Debate about the Bible*: “The Bible is infallible, as I define the term, but not inerrant. That is, *there are historical and scientific errors in the Bible*, but I have found none on matters of faith and practice.” (Errant on matters not pertaining to the church’s faith and practice.)

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: “We interpret the Bible differently, as will be seen below in our treatment of the biblical understanding of women and pastors. We also, however, have a different understanding of the nature of the Bible. We want to be biblical – especially in our view of the Bible. *That means that we dare not claim less for the Bible than the Bible claims for itself. The Bible neither claims nor reveals inerrancy as a Christian teaching.*” (A man-made idea imposed on the Bible.)

Presbyterian Mission Agency of the PCUSA: “What do Presbyterians believe about the Bible? We believe that through it God speaks to us—that it is inspired. *For some, that means the Bible is inerrant. For others, it means that even though the Bible is culturally conditioned and not necessarily factual or even always true*, it breathes with the life of God. In their limited ways, the ancients grasped something of the infinite that we need to hear and dialogue with today.” (Inspiration but not inerrancy.)

5. Let's look at why this idea is so important...¹

A. If we deny inerrancy, a series moral problem confronts us: May we imitate God and intentionally lie in small matters?

B. If we deny inerrancy, we must entertain the idea that God might not be trustworthy in anything He says.

C. If we deny inerrancy, we essentially make our own human minds a higher standard of truth than God's Word itself.

D. If we deny inerrancy, we must also say that the Bible is wrong not only in minor details but in some of its doctrines as well.

¹ Taken from Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*.

LBC | *Bible 101: Canonicity and Trustworthiness*

1. The word canon comes from Latin and means “ruler, rule, and standard.”

When we talk about the Christian canon we are referencing those books that have been breathed out by God. As Protestants we believe that there are 66 of them: 39 that make up the Old Testament and 27 that make up the New Testament.

2. Bible teachers and scholars approach the canonicity of the Old Testament and New Testament in slightly different ways. Our acceptance of the Old Testament rests, in many ways, upon Jesus and the apostles’ acceptance of it. Our acceptance of the New Testament is a little more involved.

In terms of the Old Testament...

“The 39 books of the Old Testament were written between 1400 and 430 BC. Some of them, it seems, were recognized instantly by God’s people as being “from God.” Others may have taken a while longer to become part of Scripture. What is clear is that by the time of Jesus, there was strong agreement about which documents should be recognized as God’s Word – and it’s a list that matches the Old Testament we have in our Bibles.” *Can I Really Trust the Bible?* by Barry Cooper.

“For Christians, accepting the thirty-nine book Old Testament canon is relatively easy. One might say “Jesus and His apostles affirmed the Jewish canon of the Hebrew Scriptures in their day. As a follower of Jesus, I affirm the same.” *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* by Robert Plummer.

In terms of the New Testament...

“The Bible is made up of books which were widely acknowledged as already having God’s authority. The early church didn’t willfully “declare” certain books to be from God; they could only recognize what was already apparent.” *Can I Really Trust the Bible?* by Barry Cooper

The church only recognized those books which were:

Apostolic – written by or closely connected to an apostle (an authorized eye-witness of Jesus).

Widely embraced – already in common usage by the early church.

Orthodox – not contradicting any recognized apostolic book or teaching.

3. In 1546 the Roman Catholic Church officially declared most of the Apocrypha to be canonical. They are as follows: 1 and 2 Maccabees, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon), Baruch, Tobit, Judith, and additions to Daniel and Esther. Why do we as Protestants not accept these books?

“(1) They do not claim for themselves the same kind of authority as the Old Testament writings, (2) They were not regarded as God’s words by the Jewish people from whom they originated, (3) They were not considered to be Scripture by Jesus or the New Testament authors, and (4) They contain teachings inconsistent with the rest of the Bible.” *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem

LBC | *Bible 101: Canonicity and Trustworthiness*

4. Let's turn a corner and talk for a moment about the reliability of the Bible. In other words, can we trust that what we have in our hands reflects what was breathed out by God?

Let's answer this question by looking at the *Iliad* and then the Bible...¹

The Iliad

There are 643 surviving manuscripts of the *Iliad*, a massive number by any normal standard. It's good we have this many manuscripts because the more manuscripts we have the more opportunities to compare copies and confirm that the original has been faithfully transmitted.

The oldest surviving copy of part of the *Iliad* currently known is dated to within 500 years of the original. This is excellent – the average time span between originals and their earliest copies is more than 1000 years. Shorter time periods mean less opportunity for the original to be altered.

The first complete copy of the *Iliad* dates from the 10th century. That's more than 1600 years after Homer wrote his work.

The Bible

There are more than 5600 surviving manuscripts of the New Testament – in Greek alone. If we include ancient copies in other languages (like Latin), the number jumps to more than 24,000.

The oldest surviving copy of part of the New Testament currently known is a small fragment of John's biography of Jesus (originally written between 70 and 95 AD) from the first half of the second century. This means the time gap between this copy and original is less than 100 years (quite possibly less than 50 years).

Copies of whole books of the New Testament appear within 100 years of the originals; copies of the entire New Testament are dated to within 250 years of its completion.

This means that as you read your New Testament, you can have the highest possible level of confidence that what you're reading is what the authors originally wrote! – Geoff Robsen

No Christian, confident in the providential working of his God and informed about the true nature of canonicity of His Word, should be disturbed about the dependability of the Bible we now possess. – David Dockery

¹ Gathered from *The Book of Books: A Short Guide to Reading the Bible* by Geoff Robsen