

GOD HAS SPOKEN IN HIS WORD – THE BIBLE

Stark Road Summer Series 05

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INTRO: Context of this topic within the Summer Series.

Looking at God's general revelation in Creation – history, cosmos, man's design, design of nature.

Last week looked at God's full revelation in Christ.

Next three sessions: Look at God's special revelation in the Scriptures – Structure, Translation, Application.

A. THE DIVINE SOURCE OF THE SCRIPTURES (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21)

All of the scriptures were inspired (God-breathed) by God. Men were used by God as human authors to record God's truth. God allowed the authors' personalities, viewpoints and life experiences to shine through the writing but God oversaw every word that was written, so that the completed work is the word of God. The Scriptures teach the plenary, verbal inspiration of the original manuscripts so that the word of God is both inerrant and infallible.

B. THE LITERARY GENRES OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Bible is composed of various genres or types of literature: Narrative, Prose, Poetry, Songs, Parables, Sayings, Visions, Prophecies, Proverbs, Allegories and Letters.

Why did God choose to communicate in written form?

Why the various styles of writing?

Why not a systematic itemization of truths?

1. The written Scriptures provide an objective revelation.
Truths are set forth for all to read and analyze. Unlike subjective visions and oral history which can become twisted based on the motives and memories of the communicators.
2. God reveals Himself in the lives and experiences of others. Although controlled by the Spirit the authors wrote from their own experiences. (2 Pet 1:21)
3. God is a personal God.
He wants us to have a relationship with Him through the study of Bible.
The Bible is not a simple Book. God wants us to meditate and analyze it.
4. Diversity of literary genres allows for a fuller communication from God.
God is able to reveal not only his plans and purposes but His mind, will and feelings. For example, the Psalms reveal the heart and emotions in a way that the written Law or historical summaries can not.
Different types of writing appeal to us in different ways depending on our circumstances.

C. THE TIMEFRAME OF THE SCRIPTURES

Old Testament - written over period of 1,100 years from approximately 1,500 BC to 400 BC.

Consists of 39 books written by 28 authors.

New Testament – written over a period of 50 years from 50 AD to 100 AD

Consists of 27 books written by 9 authors.

D. THE LANGUAGES OF THE SCRIPTURES

1. **Hebrew:** The Old Testament primarily written in Hebrew as it records God's dealings with the Hebrew people.
2. **Greek:** New Testament written in Greek. Through the world conquest of Alexander the Great 300 years before Christ and his desire to spread the Greek language and culture throughout the known world, Greek became the common language of the "civilized" world. God oversaw that the Greek language became one instead of many dialects so that at the time of the Roman conquest Greek was the common language of every day life and commerce.
3. **Aramaic:** Certain sections of the Old Testament were written in Aramaic (also called Chaldean or Syriac Aramean). Those sections are Daniel 2:4 – 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and Jer 20:11. They relate primarily to the times of the Gentile domination of Israel.

E. THE DIVISION OF THE TESTAMENTS

Origin of the titles taken from the words of Christ ('new testament' – Matt 26:28) and Paul ('old testament' – 2 Cor 3:14). New covenant anticipated by Jeremiah (31:31-34).

Greek word for testament - "diakhkh" - means will, testament or covenant". Covenant best conveys the meaning of the word. Idea of a pact or alliance between God and His people and refers to the basis on which people could enter into relationship with God.

Old Testament is primarily the record of God's dealings with the Israelites on the basis of the Mosaic Covenant given at Mount Sinai.

New Testament primarily describes God's dealings with men from every nation on the basis of the new covenant (anticipated by Jeremiah 31:31 and instituted by Christ (I Cor 11:25)) that is based on the foundation of faith in Christ and His work.

Contrasts:

- The Old Covenant revealed the holiness of God in the righteous standard of the law and promised a future Redeemer. The New Covenant revealed the holiness of God in the righteous person of His Son, Jesus Christ.
- The Old Covenant provided no power to the individual to meet God's righteous standard whereas the New Covenant provides new life and an indwelling Spirit to the individual who trusts Christ implanting both the desire and the power to live for God.
- "the New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed" (Augustine)

F. THE STRUCTURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. **Hebrew Scriptures:** Follow the division Christ set forth in Luke 24:44 – "the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms".

The Law of Moses – refers to the Pentateuch

The Prophets – refers to both (the Former Prophets) the historical books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1 & 2) and Kings (1 & 2) which show God's mind for the present and to (the Latter Prophets) the prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and The Twelve – Hosea through Malachi (one book) which declare His mind for the future.

The Psalms or the Writings – refers to Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Eccl. and the Song of Solomon – books which express the heart and moral character of God plus Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (1 book) and Chronicles (1 & 2).

Chronicles is the final book of the Hebrew Scriptures which Christ uses to define the limits of the Old Testament – Luke 11:51.

2. **Current Old Testament Arrangement:**

The Law – the Pentateuch – Genesis through Deuteronomy

Historical Books – Joshua through Esther

Poetic/Wisdom Books – Job through Song of Solomon

The Prophets – Isaiah through Malachi

3. **The Books of the Law** – also known as "The Torah" by the Jews and the Book of Moses.

Called the Pentateuch – for it consists of the 5 books of the law.

Written/recorded by Moses.

- a. **Genesis** – Greek name for beginning. Book traces the origins of the universe.

Chapters 1-11 Recount from Creation till the Tower of Babel.

History of all mankind from creation to the division into many nations at Babel.

Chapters 12-50 Detail the story of the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

History of one family resulting from God's choice of Abram.

3 Catastrophes each followed by a gracious promise from God:

Fall (Gen 3) followed by the promise of a Seed (3:15)

Flood (Gen 6-8) followed by a promise to dwell with Shem (9:25-27)

Scattering of nations (Gen 11) followed by a promise to bless all nations (Gen 12:1-3)

Chapters 12+ God takes up dealings with one family and centers around God's covenant with

Abraham, which included the promise of a seed, a land and a blessing for all nations. God's promise of a Seed refers to both great numbers of descendants and to individual sons and representative offspring who would deliver the people. Ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Much of Genesis details obstacles and difficulties which seemingly threatened God's fulfillment of His promise – Abram was too old, Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel all barren, Abraham's and Isaac's wives nearly taken from them by others, famine threatened their lives and God Himself tested Abraham's faith.

- b. **Exodus** – Story of God's redemption of the people of Israel from Egypt and the giving of the Law and detailed description of the Tabernacle. Shows the establishment and basis of God's relationship with the nation of Israel.
 - c. **Leviticus** – details the rituals of Levitical service. Sets forth how the relationship with God to be maintained.
 - d. **Numbers** – named for the two census' taken in book – one at beginning and one at the end. It details the journeys of Israel in the wilderness.
 - d. **Deuteronomy** – Greek for “second law”
Moses repeats and expounds the Law to the new generation of Israelites who had not died in the wilderness in preparation for their entrance into the land.
4. **Historical Books** – Joshua through Esther.
God records the history of Israel under the law from the entrance into land of Canaan till their captivity by Assyria and Babylon through to the restoration in the land under Ezra and Nehemiah. Divided into three main eras:
- a. **Theocratic or Pre-monarchical Period (1405-1043 BC)** – a government directly under God. Comprised of three books – Joshua, Judges and Ruth.
 - i. **Joshua:** first half recounts the conquest of the land while the second half details the division of the land.
 - ii. **Judges:** Records the consequences of Israel's failure to obey God's commands regarding the nations in the land. Seven waves of Gentile oppression.
 - iii. **Ruth:** Events take place during the time of decline in Judges but reveal a godly remnant.
 - b. **Monarchical Period (1043-586 BC)** – the nation ruled by kings. Comprised of three books – Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.
 - i. **Samuel (I & II)** – details the history of Samuel, Saul and David.
 - ii. **Kings (I & II)** – details Solomon and the kings who followed. Northern kingdom (Israel) carried into exile in 722 BC and Southern kingdom (Judah) taken into exile in three waves between 605 and 586 BC.
 - iii. **Chronicles** – last book in Hebrew Bible. Recounts Jewish history from Adam to downfall of the Southern Kingdom.
 - c. **Restoration Period (536-420 BC)**
After 70 years of exile a remnant of the Jewish nation returns to the land to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. There was a brief period of revival under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah and the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah. Nation was under the province of Gentile powers. Comprised of three books – Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.
 - i. **Ezra** – based on King Cyrus' decree in 536 BC 50,000 Jews returned to land under Zerubbabel to rebuild temple. Ezra the priest later took 2,000 Jews with him to the land in 458 BC.
 - ii. **Nehemiah** – In 444 BC Nehemiah lead a delegation to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem
 - iii. **Esther** – recounts events in Persia during this period. Events of Esther occurred between Chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra.
5. **Poetic or Wisdom Books** – Job through Song of Solomon
God uses poetry to express the heart and moral character of God.

Every experience and emotion of the believer's life is given expression in songs and poetry including worship, praise, frustration, loneliness, rejection, suffering, confession, hope, love, joy and trust.

- a. **Job** – possibly the oldest book in Bible.
Records dialogues between Job and his “friends” regarding his suffering.
- b. **Psalms** – Collection of five books of songs written over a thousand years (Moses to Ezra).
It is the hymn book of Israel. Almost 50% written by David.
Messianic Psalms – directly refer to the Messiah – they are identified by Spirit in NT as relating the Messiah's suffering and glory – (Ps 2, 8, 16, 22, 31, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 109, 110, 118)
Psalms of Messiah's Kingdom – (Ps 2, 18, 20, 21, 24, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144).
- c. **Proverbs** – wise sayings on how to live a successful life – compiled/written mostly by Solomon.
- d. **Ecclesiastes** – written by Solomon.
Expresses the futility of a person living without God's revelation and purposes.
- e. **Song of Solomon** – contrast to Ecclesiastes. Celebrates the wonder of monogamous marital love which pictures the relationship between the Lord and His people.
Reinforces truth that God's purpose for His people is love, significance and joy.

6. **The Prophetic Books** – Isaiah through Malachi

While the Poetic or Wisdom books record God's people expressing their cries to God, the prophetic books reveal God's heart as He speaks to the people.

- a. **Who were prophets:** Prophets were those who told forth the word of God. Often used expressions such as “Thus says the Lord” or “The word of the Lord came to me”. Also they foretold the future and what would happen to the people.
- b. **Classifications:**
 - i. By size of the Prophecy:
Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel
Minor Prophets: Hosea through Malachi
 - ii. By Chronology:
Pre-exilic: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah (930 BC to 600 BC)
Exilic: Ezekiel, Daniel (593 BC to 537 BC)
Post-exilic: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. (538 BC to 430 BC)
 - iii. By audience:
Israel: Hosea, Amos, Jonah
Judah: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, Malachi, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah.
Other Nations: Obadiah, Nahum
- c. **Message of the Prophets:**
Two primary themes: God's certain judgment on the kingdoms of man and the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom of God.
 - God's holiness, the failure of the people and God's coming judgment on them.
 - God's judgment of the nations.
 - Coming of the Messiah, his suffering and glory.
 - Ultimate restoration of God's people and the reign of the Messiah.Prophets saw the Messiah from a distance and did not understand the distance between His first and second comings.
“OT prophets bridge the gap between the failed Old Covenant and the promised New Covenant. They illuminate the reason for the failure of the first (Israel's sinfulness) and the basis for the certain fulfillment of the second (God's faithfulness).” (George Bristow)

G. THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. **Historical Books** -Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts.

Historical books record the birth, life, public ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ and the formation of the early Church and its spread throughout Roman world.

Four gospels written to different audiences and present a four-fold portrait of Christ.

- a. **Matthew** – written for a Jewish audience – Portrays Christ as the King.
- b. **Mark** – written in Rome for Roman audience - Presents Christ as the Servant.
- c. **Luke** – written by a Gentile – for the Greek mind with its love of beauty, cultural and literary style. Presents Christ as the Son of Man.
- d. **John** – written for believers – Presents Christ as the Son of God.
Emphasis on Christ's teachings.
- e. **Acts** – written by Luke – records the early church in Jerusalem and the spread of the Gospel to Rome.
Chapters 1-12 deal with the Church in Jerusalem
Chapters 13-28 deal with the spread of the Gospel to Gentiles.

2. Letters or Epistles

- a. Structure
 - i. Paul's Epistles – 13 letters to churches and individuals
Nine to Churches – Romans, 1 Cor, II Cor, Gal, Eph, Col, Philip, I & II Thess.
Four to Individuals – 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus & Philemon.
 - ii. General Epistles – 9 letters by five authors – Heb, James, I & II Pet, 1,2 & 3 John, Jude, Revelation
- b. Purpose: Epistles reveal the doctrines of the Person of Christ, salvation, church truth and practice and Christian behavior. God uses the experiences and failures of other individuals and churches as the background for reveal His mind and will on these subjects.

3. Prophetic Book - Revelation

Reveals God's program for the church age, the tribulation, the millennium and the eternal state. Details how all of God's purposes will be culminated with sin and Satan destroyed and Christ exalted.

H. PROGRESS OF REVELATION

God's revelation in the Bible is progressive. God revealed His will gradually over long periods of time. Similarity to the progressive teaching of our children.

1. **Revelation of God's Person.**

The Bible is progressively the revelation of God's character and being. It culminates in the Lord Jesus who is the full representation of God. Through the Law and His dealings with the Patriarchs and the nation of Israel, God begins to reveal His character and Person to man. But in the Gospels the Son of God, Jesus Christ is set forth who is the full display of all that God is. The Epistles and Revelation provide a fuller understanding of Christ's Person, His purposes and His ultimate glory and honor.

2. **Drama of Redemption.**

The Bible progressively reveals the plan of God for redeeming fallen man and the world that we live in. Beginning with the promised "Seed" in Gen 3 the Old Testament provides a more and more detail description of the coming Messiah. Often the OT revelation is in pictures and symbols. The Gospels detail the Savior, Jesus Christ and His work of redemption on the Cross. The Epistles provide the doctrine of the Person and work of Christ. The Revelation shows the ultimate results of the work of Christ.

3. **Dispensations of God's Administration with man.**

Dispensationalism is a method of interpretation that divides all history into distinct periods of time. The Bible teaches that history is composed of successive ages (Eph 3:9; Rom 16:25; Col 1:26; 1 Cor 10:11). A dispensation is a biblical age. In each age or dispensation God has administered differently. In each dispensation, God places man under special conditions and then tests man's obedience to His will and to specific revelations. Each dispensation begins with new revelation from God and contains both responsibilities of how man is to relate to God and promises that enable man to perform them. Man invariable has failed to appropriate the blessings or obey the revealed responsibilities. God was forced to come in judgment. Although man fails in every dispensation, God is also moving in grace in every age.

a. Dispensation of Freedom or Innocence (Gen 1-3)

Adam created in state of innocence and enjoyed fellowship with God. Adam had no compulsion to sin but was free to obey or disobey God. Adam sinned and was expelled by God from the Garden.

b. Dispensation of Conscience (Gen 3-7)

As a result of the Fall, man became aware of the difference between good and evil. While sinful, man retained a God-given conscience which provided a sense of shame, fear and guilt. Following the Fall, God revealed the principle of substitution in the death of an animal to provide covering for man. During this age man was responsible to live up to his conscience. He was to respond to God through his inner sense of right and wrong and to obey God's requirement for sacrifice. The Age of Conscience ended 1650 years later with the "thoughts of [man's] heart only evil continually". God judged the world with a universal flood.

c. Dispensation of Civil Government (Gen 8-11)

After the Flood, God instituted human government as the divine means of maintaining order – the government of man by man. Human government was the divine means of maintaining order and preserving the message of salvation. Man used civil government to unite the people in a system of false religion ultimately culminating in Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. God came in and confused the languages to slow the development of evil.

d. Dispensation of Israel under Promise (Gen 12:1 – Exodus 18:27)

After Babel, God created a special nation to preserve and propagate truth on the earth. God choose Abraham and gave him promises that he would (1) make him a great nation; (2) preserve his descendents, (3) bless the nations through Abram's Seed and (4) give his descendents a specific land. 400 years later the family had grown to approximately 2 million. Through the failure of Abraham's descendents the nation ended in slavery in Egypt.

e. Dispensation of Israel under Law (Exodus 18:28 through Pentecost, plus Great Tribulation)

God reveals Himself to the nation through the giving of the Law with its moral requirements and its ceremonial system of sacrifices. After agreeing to accept the conditions of the law, the nation proceeded to spend the next 1520 years breaking all of God's requirements and turning to the idolatry and pagan worship of the nations around them. God offered the Messianic kingdom to Israel through Christ but they responded by crucifying Him. God punishes Israel for their failure with the Captivity to Babylon, followed by the destruction of the rebuilt Jerusalem in 70 AD. The 7-year tribulation period will complete the age of the law.

f. Dispensation of the Church under Grace (Day of Pentecost till the Rapture of Church)

After the Crucifixion, God temporarily suspended His dealings with the nation of Israel. The revelation of the age is God's saving grace offered through the death and person of Christ (John 1:17; Rom 3:24-26; 4:24-25). The test is not legal obedience but acceptance or rejection of Christ. While salvation has always been by faith, this age is marked by union with Christ and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit provides the grace and power needed to live up to the righteousness of the law. Age of Grace will culminate in the professing church falling away (1 Tim 4:1-4), organized Christendom having a façade of godliness but denying its power (2 Tim 3:1-10) and the Rapture with the pending judgment to follow.

g. Dispensation of the Kingdom or Millennium (Rev 20)

After the Rapture and the 7-year tribulation period which ends in the return of Christ to the earth, the 1,000 year millennium period will begin. Only believers will enter the Millennium kingdom. Christ will rule over a redeemed earth in righteousness, Satan will be bound for 1,000 years and the curse over nature will be removed. Man will have a perfect environment again. The unbelievers who are born during the millennium will rebel culminating when Satan is released at the end of 1000 years. God will again come with judgment on earth followed by the Great White Throne and the eternal state.

God is moving through the ages to test man and show that the problem with man is not his environment but his heart. In every circumstance and age, man fails and God is required to come

in judgment. Each successive age has more light than the previous age. Through the ages God is also moving to bring Christ to His rightful place as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.