

Revelation

The Bible Claims to be the Word of God

Christianity is the true worship and service of the true God, humankind's Creator and Redeemer. It is a religion that rests on revelation: nobody would know the truth about God or be able to relate to him in a personal way, had not God first acted to make himself known. But God has so acted, and the sixty-six books of the Bible, thirty-nine written before Christ came and twenty-seven after, are together the record, interpretation, expression, and embodiment of his self-disclosure. God and godliness are the Bible's uniting themes.¹

The Bible claims to be the Word of God. The Bible does not set out to prove the existence of God. It presupposes that God exist and delivers His documentation as proof that He does exist.

Exodus 32:16 (NKJV)

Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2 Peter 1:20–21 (NKJV)

²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

You should be able to explain your trust in the Bible. [Apologetics is the defense of what you believe.] If someone asks you why you believe what your church states in their statement of faith and their Beliefs page, you must be able to defend those beliefs.

1 Peter 3:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

Knowing how we got our Bible will give you greater assurance that the Bible you hold in your hand is correct, authoritative, and truly represents what God originally gave to the prophets and apostles.

GOD HAS SPOKEN "REVELATION"

apokalupsis = to unveil, to uncover

"Revelation has to do with disclosing, uncovering, or unveiling what previously was hidden, making known what had been secret. When used theologically ... revelation refers to God's deliberate manifestation of his plans, his character, and himself. "

¹ Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: a guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

Revelation is the act of God by which He has made known what was otherwise unknowable.

Two Categories of Revelation

Special Revelation

Hebrews 1:1 (NKJV)

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

Casting lots, dreams, audible voices, angels, prophets, miracles, etc.

Narrower in focus

Special revelation is narrower in focus than general revelation and restricts it to Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. God reveals himself in His Living Word Christ and in His written Word, the Scriptures.

| <u>Jesus Christ</u> | <u>The Bible</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| living Word (John 1:1, 14) | written Word (Hebrews 4:12) |
| human parent Mary | human authors |
| conceived by Holy Spirit (Luke 1 :35) | superintended by Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1 :21) |
| sinless life | inerrant writings |
| revelation in a person | revelation in proposition |

Proposition – a statement or assertion that expresses a judgment or opinion:

John 1:1 (NKJV) **The Deity of Christ** - He is the Living Word

1 In the beginning ^awas the Word, and the ^bWord was ^cwith God, and the Word was ^dGod. ²

The Bible is the Written Word

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Is God still giving special revelation today?

Some people believe that God is still giving special, private revelation today. They often say things like "The Lord showed me ...," "The Lord told me ...," etc. The idea is that God still gives special individual guidance through private revelation.

^a Gen. 1:1; [Col. 1:17]; 1 John 1:1

^b [John 1:14]; Rev. 19:13

^c [John 17:5; 1 John 1:2]

^d [1 John 5:20]

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (John 1 :1). Nashville : Thomas Nelson.

The problems with this view are many.

First, it is not biblical. The biblical examples of special revelation are from the era when God was still speaking directly in giving His Word, the Bible.

Second, it is dangerous to say that God told you to do this or that. You cannot draw a clear line between the subjective and the objective. God gets blamed for things He does not approve. One should ask, "What is the source and authenticity of this revelation?" Every cult begins by claiming some kind of "special, private" revelation from God. "Revelations" of this sort are often wrong, confirming that they were not from God.

Deuteronomy 18:22 (NKJV)

22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

The fulfillment of every prophecy of the Bible came to pass, except for the eschatological prophecies, which are of the end times. We will touch on these much later.

Third, this kind of special revelation is unnecessary. The Bible is all the revelation we need to know what to believe and how to behave. It is easy to reduce God's divine revelation to the absurd (i.e., "What does God want me to eat for lunch?", "What does God want me to wear to school today?")

There is no new private revelation today. The Bible gives complete guidance for all of life (2 Tim. 3.16-17). Prayer does not bring any new revelation, but it brings illumination to help us understand what God has revealed in the Bible.

Guidance from God in following His will is a result of obedience to God's revealed will in His Word and in using our spiritual gifts in the most faithful and fruitful way. God is primarily interested in our spiritual condition (holiness and faithfulness). The "right" job, spouse, school, location, etc. is one where we can be the most faithful to God's Word and effective in His work with our "SHAPE" (Prov. 3.5-6).

God guides us but does not give us Special Revelation. The Bible teaches us the way of wisdom.

Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV)

10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV)

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Today, God speaks to us by giving us His written word. He commands us to pray and when we do as His brother James tells us to do, He answers our prayers according to His will.

James 1:5-8 (NKJV)

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of

the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Christians Can Understand the Word of God

Psalm 119:34 (NKJV)

34 ^tGive me understanding, and I shall keep Your law;

Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.³

Even in the seemingly difficult book of Scripture, Revelation, John wrote as dictated by Jesus so that we may understand:

Revelation 1:3 (NKJV)

3 eBlessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it; for fthe time is near.⁴

You cannot keep those things without understanding those things. You may not understand all the symbolism, but you can understand the general jest of the passages.

All Christians have a right and duty not only to learn from the church's heritage of faith but also to interpret Scripture for themselves. The Church of Rome doubts this, alleging that individuals easily misinterpret the Scriptures. This is true; but the following rules, faithfully observed, will help prevent that from happening.

Every book of Scripture is a human composition inspired by the Holy Spirit. Although it should always be revered as the Word of God, interpretation of it must start from its human character. Allegorizing, therefore, which disregards the human writer's expressed meaning is never appropriate.⁵

^t [Prov. 2:6; James 1:5]

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 119:34). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

^e Luke 11:28; Rev. 22:7

^f James 5:8; Rev. 22:10

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Re 1:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: a guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

