

# Give Me the Bible

## Lesson 1

### WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

*“God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds”*  
(Hebrews 2:1-2)

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

##### A. Give Me the Bible.

1. There are many religious books: the Upanishads, Vedas, and Bhagavad Gita (Hindu), the Buddhist Sutras, the Quran (Muslim), the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Tao Te Ching (Chinese Taoism and Buddhism), the Book of Mormon, etc.
2. What is the Bible and what sets it apart from these other books? The Bible is the most influential book of all time with reference to its reading, printing, teaching, discussion, and influence.

##### B. The Bible Is A Revelation From God.

1. The Bible is the record of God’s revelation; the other books are revelations of men. The Bible is what God has spoken, recorded in book form (Jer. 30:2; Mt. 22:31).
2. “Bible” is from the Greek, then the Latin (*biblion, biblia, biblos* = books, written documents) – see Daniel 9:2. “Scripture” is from the Greek (*graphia* = a written document) – see Matthew 21:42. “Testament” is from the Greek (*diatheke* = covenant) – see Jeremiah 31:31 and Hebrews 8:13.

#### II. REVELATION FROM GOD.

##### A. What Is Revelation?

1. The word “reveal” in both the Old and New Testaments means “to uncover” that which is concealed (Heb. *gala*, Amos 3:7; and Gr. *apokalupto*, 1 Corinthians 2:10). Revelation is an act of God whereby God gives knowledge of himself to mankind, including knowledge which man could not have otherwise known.
2. God’s revelation comes from God. It is God’s revelation about himself and mankind, not man’s revelation about God (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 1 Thess. 2:13). God reveals himself to us.
3. God’s revelation is both partial and complete. It is partial in that it contains only a part of God’s revealed truth (Deut. 29:29; Jn. 21:25; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 10:4), but it is complete in that it contains all that God wants us to know to accomplish his purpose in our lives (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jas. 1:25; Jude 3). There are no “latter-day revelations” from God.

##### B. God Wants to Reveal Himself.

1. We know about God only what God chooses to reveal about himself to mankind (1 Sam. 3:7, 21). God is an infinite being (without limitation) and man is a finite being (with limitation). The finite cannot know the infinite without revelation of

some kind. We cannot know everything (exhaustively) about God because He is incomprehensible and transcendent (Job 11:7-9; 36:26; 37:5,22-23; Psa. 139:6,17-18; 145:3; 147:5; Eccl. 11:5; Isa. 40:18,28; 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33-34).

2. God is unknown until he reveals himself to us. Mankind simply cannot know God fully, apart from His revelation (1 Corinthians 1:21; 2:10-13). However, what God has revealed to us about Himself is real truth and we can know it (John 8:32; 1 John 5:20).
3. God speaks to mankind in order to “reveal” (uncover) himself and his will to them. God reveals himself in two ways: in his world (Psa. 19:1-6) and in his word (Psa. 19:7-11). His world is formed by his word (Heb. 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:5).
4. When we speak of “general revelation” and “special revelation”, we are not speaking of two revelations, but two sides of one great, unified revelation of God. Many denominationalists and some brethren claim that God has revealed himself by two additional means: the conscience of man (citing Romans 2:14-15) and the direct operation and illumination of the Holy Spirit (citing John 16:13). But these positions do not rest upon sound Biblical teaching.

#### C. God’s “General Revelation” in His World.

1. “General revelation” is the term used to describe the revelation of God in nature – the created universe. It is “general” in two senses: first, it is available to all people, at all times and places; and, second, its content is less particular and detailed than God’s revelation in the Scriptures.
2. God reveals his power in his world / creation (Job 12:7-9; 36:24 – 37:24; 38:1 – 41:34; Psa. 8:3-4; Psa. 19:1-6; Isa. 40:26; Ac. 14:17; 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-20).
3. First, nature serves to reveal the glory, power, divinity and kindness of God and it causes man to seek after God.
4. Second, nature puts man in a position where he is without excuse in knowing God. In reality, mankind cannot be ignorant of the one true God. All persons can have knowledge of God. Nature clearly and loudly proclaims that there is a God. There is some knowable truth about God outside of the Scriptures in nature. God’s self-revelation in nature is present, regardless of whether men observe it, understand it, or believe it. It would be good then to follow the admonition in Isa.40:26: *“Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these...”*

#### D. God’s “Special Revelation” in His World.

1. “Special revelation” is the term used to describe the revelation of God through (1) Scripture and (2) Jesus Christ. This revelation is “special” because it involves particular revelations to particular persons at particular times which are now available to us only by particular sacred writings – the Scriptures.
2. God reveals his plan in his word / the Bible (Psa. 19:7-11; 119:1ff). The phrase “word of God”, or, “word of the Lord”, is found many times in the Bible.
3. God has spoken. What is the word of God?
  - a) His inaudible words (Gen. 1:3ff; Psa. 33:6; Heb.1:3).
  - b) His audible words (Gen. 2:16-17; Ex. 19:19; 20:1-3; Mt. 3:16-17).
  - c) His transmitted words (Deut. 18:18-20; Heb. 1:1; 2:2).
  - d) His embodied words (Jn. 1:1,14; Rev. 19:13).
  - e) His written words (Ex. 31:18; 32:16; 34:1,28; Deut. 31:9-13; Jer. 30:2; 36:1-6; 1 Cor. 14:37).

4. God revealed himself in many ways in the past. What means has God used to personally reveal himself to man?
  - a) There are basically three: historical events, divine words, and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Jesus revealed God's existence, God's nature, and God's will (Jn. 14:6-9). When we come to fully understand Jesus, we too will say like the Centurion, "*Truly this was the Son of God*" (Matthew 27:54).
  - b) God has revealed himself to man by mighty acts which are historical events (Deut. 28:9-10; Acts 13:16ff). These mighty acts include dreams and visions (Dan. 2; Rev. 1), the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30), casting lots (Acts 1:26) and miracles (Ex. 7-14; Heb. 2:4). God has also revealed himself to man in spoken (prophets, Amos 3:7) and written words (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1-2). Direct speaking is the most common ("thus saith the Lord" is found over 350 times in the OT). Finally, God has revealed himself to man in divine appearances sometimes called "theophanies" (Ex. 24:10). The climax of God's appearances is found in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "word" (Jn. 1:1, 14) and the "word of God" (Rev. 19:13).
5. In the "last days", God reveals himself through Jesus and his apostles (Heb. 1:1-2). So, what does God reveal?
  - a) God reveals his righteousness and his wrath (Rom. 1:16-18).
  - b) God reveals who he is and what is on his mind (1 Cor. 2:10-13).
  - c) God reveals his Son (Gal. 1:16; 3:23).
  - d) God reveals his gospel of good news (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:10-12).

### III. THE RESULTS OF GOD'S REVELATION.

- A. Divinity – when God speaks and reveals his will it is from God, not man (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).
- B. Inerrancy / Infallibility – when God speaks and reveals his will it is true and accurate; without error, flaw, or falsehood (Psa. 12:6; 18:30; 19:7; Prov. 30:5; Isa. 45:19; 65:16; Jer. 10:10; Lk. 1:1-4; Jn. 3:33; 17:3, 17; Acts 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:15; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Jas. 1:17-18; 1 Jn. 5:20).
- C. Authority – when God speaks and reveals his will it is binding (Mt. 4:4; 5:18-19; 7:21; 23:23; 26:54; Lk. 6:46; 16:17,29; Jn. 10:35; 12:48; Acts 1:16; Rom. 2:16; 1 Tim. 5:18; Jas. 2:10,12; 4:5-6; Rev. 20:11-15).
- D. Unity – when God speaks and reveals his will it is a unified message from beginning to end: the salvation of mankind from sin (Psa. 119:160).
- E. Necessity – when God speaks and reveals his will he benefits mankind and takes care of all his spiritual needs (Rom. 10:17; 15:4; 1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 1:3-4).
- F. Clarity – when God speaks and reveals his will it is knowable and understandable (Psa. 19:7; 119:30,105,130; Prov. 1:4; Mt. 11:25-27; 12:3,5; 19:14; 21:42; 22:31; 28:19-20; Lk. 10:21-22; Jn. 8:32; 20:30-31; Acts 8:31; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 1:13-14; Eph. 3:3-6; 5:17; Phil. 1:1; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27).
- G. Ability – when God speaks and reveals his will he is able to accomplish all he wants (Num. 23:19; Isa. 55:11; Lk. 1:37; Acts 19:20; Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:1; Heb. 4:12; "as the Lord has spoken" is found many times in the OT).
- H. Finality – when God speaks and reveals his will it is final and complete (Deut. 4:1-2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Jn. 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 1:1-2; Jas. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:3-4; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19).

- I. Delivery – when God speaks and reveals his will he delivers and saves mankind from sin (Jn. 20:30-31; Rom. 1:16-17; Jas. 1:18, 21; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; 1 Jn. 5:13).
- J. Conformity – when God speaks and reveals his will it is for the purpose of obedience (Deut. 29:29; Lk. 8:21; Acts 3:22; Heb. 12:25; Rev. 1:1-3).
- K. Indestructibility – when God speaks and reveals his will it endures for all time (Psa. 119:160; Isa. 40:8; Mt. 24:35; Jn. 10:35; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

#### IV. OUR RESPONSE TO REVELATION.

##### A. Improper Responses.

- 1. Too often the Bible is used in homes for little more than display. How should we respond properly to God's revelation? What are we to do with our knowledge of God as revealed in nature and the Scriptures? Is it enough to get the facts about God? Or, like many religious theologians do, should we merely sit around and discuss the philosophical possibility of knowing God? Certainly not!

##### B. Proper Responses.

- 1. First, we must be careful not to elevate one method of revelation above the other. Lately, it has been common among some Bible believers in the scientific community to elevate (intentionally or unintentionally) general revelation above special revelation. They believe the scientific "facts" of God's general revelation show the earth to be about 4.5 billion years old, so they re-interpret (distort) the text of Genesis 1 to fit that time frame. On the other hand, there are those who reject general revelation all together, saying that man cannot know anything about God outside of Jesus Christ. It must be remembered that both nature and the Scriptures are in harmony and mutually reinforce each other.
- 2. Second, God clearly speaks to man, but many today will not listen. How foolish men are to reject the revelation of God! All men will pay the price for rejecting the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18, 21; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 1:8). May we always have the attitude of Samuel who said to God, "*Speak; for thy servant heareth*" (1 Samuel 3:10), and may we always heed the warning of the writer of Hebrews, "*See that ye refuse not him that speaketh...*" (Hebrews 12:25). Don't wait until the Judgment Day to listen to God when God will speak to you at that time in His wrath (Psalm 2:5).
- 3. Third, our faith as a Christian is not built upon myth, fable, or some subjective "crisis experience." Our faith is rational, built upon genuine, credible revelation from God (2 Peter 1:16-18).
- 4. Fourth, many want to say that the Scriptures are merely "personal" (giving us an "encounter" or "experience" with God), not "propositional" (revealing facts and truths to be believed and obeyed). However, we are told by God that the Scriptures are authoritative (Matthew 4:4; 7:21; Luke 6:46; John 12:48), for our obedience (2 Timothy 3:15; Revelation 1:3; 22:9), and for a pattern of daily living (2 Timothy 1:13). We must be hearers and doers of the Word (James 1:22-25).
- 5. Finally, we do not want to merely know about God. We also want to know God; that is, have fellowship with God through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ (Jn 17:3; Phil. 3:8-11; 1 Jn. 1:1-4). May God help us to both know about Him and know Him.

#### V. CONCLUSION.

- A. God is Reaching Out to Give Us Knowledge. Let Us Make It Our Goal in Life to Take Hold of That Truth (Proverbs 4:7).
- B. We Look Forward to A Day When We Will Know the God More Fully (Rom. 8:18-19; Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1; 1 Jn. 3:2).

- C. Without These Characteristics of God's Word, The Bible is Just Another Book.
- D. Our Bible Reading and Study Will Be a Waste of Time Unless We Approach the Bible with a Firm Conviction That It is Different from All Other Books – It Is God's Revelation.
- E. Let Us Always Approach the Bible Giving It the Proper Place It Deserves.