



Basic Christian Doctrine

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The Bible

In this study we will learn about the basic facets of the doctrine of Scripture including revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, illumination, perspicuity, authority, and canonicity.

Introduction

God has revealed Himself to mankind by special or particular revelation. That revelation is known as the Bible. Believers must study the Scriptures carefully in order to properly understand divine revelation and what it is. The Word of God must be at the heart of any study of doctrine. The Bible provides more than just the themes of Christian theology, it provides its norms. Biblical revelation expresses in words what God wanted said and wanted His people to know. We must begin with the Bible in the study of Basic Christian Doctrine.

Our Primary Premise: *The Bible's identification as the Word of God is the only foundation for its authority in regard to our faith and practice.*

Some of the questions we will examine include the following:

- How can we know that the Bible is truly the Word of God?
- What is revelation? natural revelation? special revelation?
- What do we mean by “inspiration”?
- How can we understand the Bible?
- Are there errors in the Bible?

- How did we get our Bible?
- Why are there differences between translations of the Bible?

We are what we say ... Is God what He says? (see James 3:17)

When I love the Word of God, I love God.
When I believe the Word of God, I believe God.
When I preach the Word of God, I preach God.
When I receive the Word of God, I receive God.
And spiritually when I know the Word of God, I know God.
....
And when I love the written Word, I love the incarnate Word.

— W. A. Criswell, "What Happens When I Preach the Bible As Literally True,"
in *Can We Trust the Bible?*, ed. by Earl D. Radmacher
(Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1979), 92

Part 1: Revelation

Revelation is the presentation or impartation of truth to mankind that they could not otherwise know except by supernatural means.

1. It involves the supernatural presentation of truth, not the presentation of supernatural truth.
2. God reveals Himself, not just truths about Himself.

Daniel 2:47; Amos 3:7

What is Natural Revelation?

Natural revelation is what God shows to mankind through His creation both in the physical realm and in the moral constitution of human beings.

■ Methods of natural revelation:

- Creation

Romans 1:18-20

➤ Conscience

Romans 2:14-15

■ Natural revelation is:

- Limited.
- Mostly unused and misunderstood.
- Not sufficient for salvation or Christian conduct.
- Does not reveal the Trinity nor Christ.

What is Special Revelation?

Special revelation is what God has given in the Scriptures, His written Word.

■ Reasons for special revelation:

- The God of the Bible is a God Who speaks.
- Man was gifted with the power of speech when he was created by God and can communicate with God.
- God needed to reveal His will to human beings in order for them to obey Him and glorify Him.
- Written revelation can be reviewed, progressively expanded, referred to, and conveyed in many languages.

■ Methods of special revelation:

- Theophanies: appearances of God—often accompanied by fire, earthquake, lightning and thunder.

Exodus 3:1-2, 4

- Dreams

1 Kings 3:5

- Visions

Genesis 15:1

- Direct speech

Exodus 33:11

- Miracles, signs, and wonders

Hebrews 2:4

- Prophets and seers

2 Samuel 24:11

- Jesus Christ

Hebrews 1:1-2

- Special revelation is:

- Limited.

- Defined.

- Objective.

- The Incarnate Word and the Written Word

- The Bible is the living, written Word of God;
Jesus Christ is the living, personal Word of God.

- “... to have room for Christ is to have room for his words,
and to have room for his words is to have room for him.”

— Douglas Farrow, *The Word of Truth and Disputes About Words*
(Winona Lake, Ind.: Carpenter Books, 1987), 51.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.