Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God Has Spoken
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1341

Now in our study we are looking at the subject of revelation. Not the book of Revelation but the subject of Christianity as a revealed religion. I feel that it is very important for us to establish the credibility and the believability of the Bible. Since we believe and acknowledge that it is the source of all knowledge about God, since we study it so in detail and adhere to its principles, we need to be sure that what it says is true.

Sooner or later Satan is going to bring into our lives doubts that are going to make us suspect whether or not the things that we have set our life on are really valid. And the more evidence we have, the better off we're going to be in times like that. There is no knowledge of God from reason alone. Paul says that the mind of the natural man cannot comprehend God. There is no knowledge of God from experience. There is no knowledge of God from the world systems of religion. There is no knowledge of God from philosophy. Every once in a while, it is true that those various things like reason and experience and religion and philosophy will intersect with truth.

So I've said that's like that clock that doesn't run. It happens to be right twice a day. So there will be an intersection with truth from time to time, but true knowledge of God comes only from the revelation of God. God must disclose Himself to man. We believe that the Bible is that disclosure. That this book in its entirety, 66 total books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New and that's easy to remember because three times nine is 27. That's how I remember it. A little Sunday School thing I learned. That'll help you.

But that in its entirety it is the revelation of God. Now today the Bible is being denied blatantly and out rightly as the revelatory word of God. It is also being denied in a more subtle way, neo-orthodox says it contains the word of God and so as you read it, certain parts that speak to you may or may not be the word of God to somebody else, but they become the word of God to you. That is it is subjective and whatever happens to you then gives its revelatory content.

Others are flatly denying it saying it is simply book of morals and ethics, etc. I heard a man on the radio today who was saying that Jesus was a wonderful teacher, the greatest teacher who taught many wonderful things that certainly gave us the philosophy of life for every happy man.

And so there are all kinds of views of the Bible. We believe that its in its entirety, it is revelatory, it is the disclosure of God, it is the revelation of knowledge that is otherwise unknowable. It cannot be

attained to by any human source. Now, when we hold such a view of the Bible and the fact that it is not only the only revelation of God and the authoritative one, but that it is in its original autographs or copies inerrant, that is without mistake, in the very words and letters.

Since we believe such a very narrow view, why is that we can stand against all of the philosophers and intellectuals of our world that hold of this view? Now last time we said is it because we're more intelligent? No, because we're not. Is it because we have some secret information that they don't have? No, they can read the same Bible we read. They can make the same examinations that we make. They can look up the same archeological facts, the same prophetic truths, the same miraculous evidence. It's available to everybody. We don't have any special scoop on the unbeliever.

Some people think as we said last time that if an unbeliever only knew about archeology, if he only knew about miracles, if he only knew all the facts of the resurrection, if he only knew everything there was to know about fulfilled prophecy, both historically and in the end times, he would have to believe. But it doesn't work that way, because you see his mind is darkened. His reason is crippled. He is blind in his understanding to God's truth.

And all of the proofs that we'll be getting into of the Bible are not really proofs at all. They do not make the Bible true, the Bible is true. And they are not nearly so important to the unbeliever as they are to the Christian. We already believe this Bible. This is endeavoring to help us to have a firmer footing for our faith. There's a basic fallacy as we pointed out last time in thinking that the Bible can be proven to be true. Just as there's a basic fallacy in trying to prove that God exists. That's something that's apprehended by faith.

When you give to the unregenerate man the right to judge whether the Bible is true or not, you give him a right that the Bible doesn't even give him. He doesn't have the right to judge whether it's true or not. It is true. No matter what he says and he is never to sit in judgment on God and he is never to sit in judgment on the word of God. And so the reason we believe is not because we're smarter and it's not because we've seen all the truth and our logical processes have led us to believe. The reason we believe folks is because the Holy Spirit did a divine miracle in our hearts and gave to us the knowledge of the word of God. He made us new creations. He opened our minds. The darkness flew away and we were able to see the word of God.

We cannot expect that to happen to the non-Christians, so let's not call these proofs. Let's call them products. We are not going to say that because of these facts, because of archeological, historical, prophetic, and miraculous truth, the Bible is therefore true. We are going to say the Bible is true, therefore these things are products of its truth.

And this then is to substantiate our faith. So our study is really for Christians. It's for believers or maybe it's for those just escaping from unbelief whose eyes are beginning to be open by the Holy Spirit and God will use this. Then again, we wouldn't rule out the fact that maybe some darkened unbeliever will hear these facts and at some time the Holy Spirit will bring these facts back to his consciousness, do a work of grace in his heart and it'll all come together and lead him to salvation.

But the purpose of the study is not to intellectually convince people who don't believe the Bible and it is not to give them a pile of information by which they can judge whether the Bible is true. It is to strengthen believers primarily. We begin then with the doctrine of revelation. And the doctrine of revelation is simply a theological title for the fact that God reveals Himself.

Now, as we said, man lives in a world where he cannot know what is outside his world. The only way we can know God is when God condescends to reveal Himself to us. And so we believe that Christianity is that revelation of God. God has given to us a revelation from Himself. Revelation then is the act of God by which He has made known what was otherwise unknowable. There is no way to know what the Bible says unless God discloses it.

Now, as we look at our subject we're going to take five aspects. The revealer, the revelation, the reason, the result, and our response. Now first of all, just a quick review, the revealer. And by looking at Hebrews 1:1-2 just as a quick review, we'll see this in its perspective. The revealer, who is the Bible revealing? Who is this God whose up there disclosing Himself?

Hebrews 1, "God who at sundry times," different times, "and in different manners spoke and time passed unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Now God has revealed Himself in many ways at many times. In fact, the Bible bridges a period of at least 1,500 years. And during that period of time in which God was revealing Himself, He was doing it in many different ways to many different individuals.

But always disclosing Himself. It is characteristic of God to speak. That's part of His nature. Now people ask why does God create? Why did God create men if He knew they'd all go awry? Why does God create? That's a simple question. He creates because it's His nature to create and that's what He does. Why does an artist paint? Why does a singer sing? It's because that's what's in them to do.

And so it's in God by virtue of His nature to create and so He creates. And it's also in God's nature by virtue of who He is to speak so He speaks. God cannot remain undisclosed. It is His nature to communicate. We found that in the Old Testament as we studied it, God said, "I am not like the dumb idols. I will speak." And you know, there are times when God doesn't speak. And we said the times that He doesn't speak are for the most part what? Judgmental.

When God is silent that's judgment. And a good passage to support that concept is Proverbs Chapter 1, verse 23 to 28. When God doesn't talk it's because men have refused to listen for so long that His silence is judgmental. Now as we look at the Bible, we get an introduction to this revealer, and we're not going to look all the way through because that's the whole Bible.

The whole Bible is a disclosure of God. But let me just give you four facts about the revealer. Who is He? First of all, we saw the last time that He is personal, right? Whoever this revealer is, He is personal. Secondly, He is moral. He has personality and He has righteous standards. Thirdly, He is the beginning and the end of everything. He is the source and the stay and the end of all creation, the Alpha and Omega.

And fourthly, He is available. Isn't that nice to know? Personal, moral, the beginning and the end of everything, and He's available. And so we met the revealer. Now that revealer has given us in this book the revelation, but not just in this book. Because outside this book there is another revelation and we'll talk about that in a moment and I want you to hang on, don't lose me at this point.

Let's go to point two, the revelation. The revealer has revealed His revelation. By revelation we simply mean the content of His communication. He spoke and what did He say? Well, let's find out. You know, it's important for us to know what God's revelation is because there's an awful lot of revelation being claimed today, did you know that?

There are all kinds of people writing books supposedly coming from God. I spoke at seminar last Saturday. No...well, I guess it was last Saturday, a week ago Saturday, some time. And a person came to me afterwards and said "you don't believe that there's any more revelation being given today." And I said, "no, I believe the revelation of God has been given. I believe it's finished." Well, this girl said, "well, I happen to go to a church where we have an apostle." I said, "who, Peter, James, John, or Paul?" "No, it's not any of those. He's...he's an apostle." And I said, "how do you know he's an apostle?" "Because he speaks direct revelation from God." I said, "you mean when he gets up and talks it isn't like a sermon it's like God is speaking through him." "That's right," she says, "he gives direct revelation every Sunday."

Now how are you going to evaluate that? And some of you may go to the bookstore and you're going to pick up a little book that says David Wilkerson's Vision. And you're going to read David Wilkerson's Vision. What's most interesting about it, Dr. Rod Mockerwas telling me last week that another fellow at the very same charismatic conference in the same city at the very same week had a vision himself. That he also has published his vision and it contradicts with Wilkerson's vision. How interesting. That two people got two visions from the same God the same week and both of them contradicted each other.

It seems to me that God has never contradicted Himself once in the entire Bible. What is He doing contradicting Himself now? "I am the Lord," He said, "I," what, "change not." Now if two people are having two different visions from the same God either those people are not having two different visions or God has abdicated the throne and somebody else is running the place.

What is revelation and how much of the Bible or all of the Bible is revelation? Or is there more than this? We'll get into all of that. Let's begin at the beginning. Revelation is God's free voluntary act of love in disclosing Himself to men. It is God's communication. And there's no other way than the way God did it. Now, how do you suspect that Moses is going to sit down and write the creation of the world? He's going to sit down and He's going to say to himself, now let me see. I wonder how this whole thing came to be?

All of his human reason could never begin to come up with Genesis 1 and 2. So you know what happened? God simply told him what happened. And Moses sat down and wrote "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. The earth was without form and void. Darkness was upon the face of the deep and the spirit of God moved upon the waters, etc., etc., etc., etc., etc.," all the way down to the first day, second day, third day, seventh God rested. Second Chapter He created man and so forth and He wrote that all down because God told him that. That's revelation.

There's no way Moses could know that. And so this is revelation. This is God's disclosure of Himself that reveals information which is otherwise unknowable. Now the next study we get into after revelation will be inspiration and inspiration is the method by which God transmitted the revelation. It's as if God took the package of revelation and stuck it on a vehicle and hauled it down to man. The package is revelation, the vehicle is inspiration, and we'll talk about how inspiration functions.

Can you imagine Isaiah sitting down to write and he writes, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." Now, I didn't come up with that myself. That's revelation. Can you imagine David sitting down and penning Psalm 22 and giving an absolute perfect description of crucifixion even to the statement, "My God, My God, why hath thou forsaken me." And doing it hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born and not having had it revealed to him by God.

Can you imagine Ezekiel sitting down to write about the valley of dry bones and gathering all of the people of Israel together and putting them in the land again. Something you and I take for granted, but he was hundreds and hundreds of years before the time, if he didn't get it from God? That's revelation. That's what this book is.

These guys didn't sit down and write their thoughts. They wrote God's thoughts. Now let's back up a minute. In the concept of revelation, God has revealed himself in two broad categories. Now I want you to get these. First of all, He has revealed Himself through natural revelation, through natural

revelation. And what do we mean by this? Well, we mean apart from the Bible. We can just put this aside for a minute.

God has revealed Himself through natural revelation. What do you mean by that John? Well, two ways, turn for just a brief moment to Romans 1 and I'll show you what I mean. Do you remember this verse? "The heavens declare the glory of God and," what, "the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night reveals knowledge." In other words, you can't look at the day time and you can't look a the night time and see the stars and all that God has made and the sun and all of its glory and not conclude that there's somebody who made that. Not and keep your mental sanity in balance.

So the firmament shows God's handiwork. Now that's what Paul says in Romans 1. Watch as we begin in verse 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Now you say well, why would God do that? I mean, why does He hold everybody responsible? Why would He fire out wrath on all ungodliness? Because men hold, what, the truth. You say well, where do men have the truth? (Tape messes up at 17:08)Now the next verse 19, "Because that which maybe known of God is manifest in them." This is conscience. God speaks to a man's conscience about His own existence.

And the second part of this natural revelation is not only in man, but it says in the next phrase, God has shown it to them and then the next verse, it's revealed in creation. So man has inside information about God and an outside. It is not only the created world that speaks of a creator, but it is man's inner conscience that tells him somebody made him.

I've never met a ten year old atheist. It takes a long time for a guy to get to the place where he's got enough intellectual pride to try to reason away the fact that there is a God. Now you say, well, what does natural revelation bring to bear on a heart of a man? As he looks around and he sees creation around him, verse 20, "the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world are clearly seen." What is? "Being understood by the things that are made, even has eternal power and God had so that they are without excuse."

Now here he says that at least three things in that one verse, verse 20 are revealed by natural revelation and creation. What's the first one? His eternal power. The second one, His God head. And really we could add to that, His wrath. And if we throw Psalm 19 into here, we can add "the firmament shows His handiwork, the heavens declare the glory of God." So in natural revelation through creation man can see the glory of God, the power of God, the God head, and he can see God's wrath.

You say how in the world can he see God's wrath? Because he can see the curse on the earth. He can see that somewhere along the line this world is under a moral sentence. I think that's becoming

more and more obvious. This is a great day for us to take the approach of saying look at the earth if you don't think there's such a thing as a morale standard, look at the violation of the earth that's going on today and its destroying itself.

It's under a curse. But just from the natural revelation, first of all man can see the glory of God. Now what is the glory of God? It's the composite of all of His what? Of His attributes. You look in this world, and you can begin to see what God must be like. You can look out there and you could be...you could be Joe Aborigine from the middle of nowhere. And you could walk out on your little lump outside your little mud hut and you could look up and say whoever's up there is very wise.

Look what he did. Whoever's up there is a very gracious God because look at the beauty of the world. Look at the color of the world. Look at the happiness and the joy and there are things that are happy and joyful. I mean, God could have made brown sky and brown grass and brown flowers and brown eyes and nobody with blue and all that, but God has added color to the world. God has done things to just brighten up life and so we can say God must be a caring God. He must be a gracious God. He must be a God of beauty.

And we could say He must be a just God, because there's just something about the world that makes right kind of prevail. And there's a knowledge that it does. And so we could talk about the attributes of God. Secondly, he says in this verse 20, that the man should know His eternal power.

Now one thing that you surely can see if you look at the created world is whoever this God, He's tremendously powerful, tremendously. When I was reading about the sun and how many millions of miles some of those gashiousarms shoot off the sun, it was staggering to imagine the power generated to shoot those things into space.

And yet to think that that's one little tiny infinite tessimalsun in a universe of billions upon billions of sun with energy and power we couldn't conceive of and God is greater than all of those staggers your mind. And so we see that from our world alone, we know whoever He is, He's not only revealed His attributes, but He's especially revealing His power. He must be tremendously powerful.

Then it says we should see His God Head. What does that mean? Well, the Greek is theotes, and what it has reference to is it has reference to His divine character. The fact that He is God, whoever He is let's face it, He's in charge. So we ought to see His attributes. We ought to see specifically His tremendous power. We ought to get the idea that He's running the show. Anybody that could do that is in charge, folks. Anybody that could make this universe is in control. He is sovereign deity. He is supreme. He is absolute. He is infinite.

And then you ought to be able to also, as I mentioned, to see His wrath, because you can see that the earth is obviously under a curse. So watch without saying one word, without speaking a word,

God has revealed His attributes, His power, His absolute supremacy and His moral character. And it's all visible to man.

No man can believe there is no God unless that man has accumulated sin and by his super ego, his conscience has become seared and he has sinned the way his very reason. There must be a first cause. I can't understand how anybody could say nobody times nothing equals everything. That doesn't make sense. Psalm 100, which you've recited a lot when you were a little child and maybe never thought of the verse says this in verse 3, "It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves."

We did not spontaneously generate. "It is He that hath made us." Not us making ourselves. That's a pretty important verse. To imagine that creation is not the act of a revealing God is to say that a painting was done without a brush. Better yet without an artist or without a canvas or paint. Or without a concept of art. Paul was simply answering the information of natural revelation when he said to the Athenians. In Acts 17:24, he said, "God made the world and all things in it." I mean, that's something anybody ought to know. That's as obvious as anything.

Now that is the content of natural revelation. That is the content of natural revelation. Let me give you secondly the clarity of it. You say well, maybe its foggy, fuzzy, hard to tell. Watch verse 20, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are fuzzy." Is that what is says? Foggy. What does it say. "Clearly seen." Natural revelation is clear. God would be wasting His time to put a fuzzy revelation out. If God's going to do it's going to be clear.

In fact, it is so clear that the last two words of verse 20 are what? "Without excuse." Nobody can beg off on the count of ignorance. No excuse for atheism. There's no excuse for agnosticism. You say well, John if it's so plain, why don't men see it? Educated and bright, intelligent people claim to see no evidence of God in creation.

I'll never forget reading what I read. I read an article in a science thing and the guy said I'm an evolutionist. And the reason I am is because I reject the idea of a transcendent God so what other options do I have? Now if that isn't the most subjective conclusion you ever heard. He just decided there wasn't a God, therefore he had to be an evolutionist.

That's just an idea of what men have done. How, if this is so unmistakable, have men missed it? Listen friends, God says the difficulty isn't with my revelation. The difficulty is with man. Catch it in verse 21. "Because when they knew God the knowledge is available. They glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, became vain in their imaginations, their foolish heart was darkened and they thought they were smart. But they were fools. So they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, birds, four footed beasts and creeping things."

God says the difficulty is with man. He held the truth. Verse 18, "He held the truth in unrighteousness." And so he can't know anymore. In fact, it says in verse 24, "Once he went this way God gave him up." What a fearful statement. "God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts." Lust means bestial and purity. "To dishonor their bodies between themselves, they exchange the truth of God for the lie," the lie, "and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator."

They loved themselves, so God gave them up, verse 24. Verse 26, "God gave them up." Verse 28, "God gave them over. God let man go in his own way and reject clear revelation." So you know what man's problem is? Here is unregenerate man, stands in the midst of a world where God's content is revealed, His attributes, His power, His wrath, all of these features we've talked about. They are disclosed to man the fact that God is sovereign and man can't see it. Man rejects it.

The state of unregenerate man is really sad. The reason he rejects is number one, Ephesians 2:1 says, "He's dead." Dead men don't respond. Not only is he dead, but Ephesians 4:18 says, "He's blind." Not only is he blind, but Ephesians 4:18 says, "He's ignorant." So unregenerate man is dead, blind, and ignorant. You say, how did he get in that mess?

Because he turned his back on the truth. Because he willfully rejects the truth. He throws it aside, turns to himself, worships himself, chucks God, and God says if that's the way you want to go, I'll just let you go. And God gave him up.

A Dr. Thomas whose book I was reading this week made this statement. He says, "Man has poked his own spiritual eyes out." God made Himself clear. God made himself visible in the natural world. The fault is not God's, it is the self-imposed choice of blindness through sin that man puts on himself that suppresses truth. So a natural revelation comes in creation.

Secondly, natural revelation comes in man. Look at verse 19 again. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them." It is in them. Now there's just something in a man that speaks of the fact that there's a creator that should be obeyed and glorified. It's amazing as I said that you don't find any ten year old atheists. You know, kids are so open to believing in God, because it's just a natural thing.

I remember when I was preaching one time in Mississippi and had a...I had a school assembly jammed with elementary kids. Boy that is really tough. I'm not good at speaking to elementary kids. Everything from first grade to sixth grade and I just gave them the gospel. And it was just jammed with kids, wall to wall bodies in this auditorium. And I got all done and I said now how many of you would like to give your heart to Jesus Christ. I want you come forward.

Every kid. Every single kid in the building came up there. And I was standing there going I think I did something wrong. They don't have any intellectual problems. They're not fighting an atheistic philosophy. That is the most natural thing to tell a child that God made the world and that God cares about you, etc., etc.

It's not until man grows up and gets educated and sophisticated that he decides he's going to be his own god. And the Bible says that "they become vain," verse 21, "in their imaginations." You know what that translates out to in 20th century English? They have futile thinking patterns, futile thinking patterns. Their foolish hearts are darkened. Here He is surrounded by a revelation outside revelation, inside everywhere He sees the evidence of God, every bird, every rock, every tree, every flower, every star, everything that he sees, reveals God's glory, God's deity, God's sovereignty, God's power, God's holiness, and he concludes that God doesn't exist. And if He does it's because he has rejected the knowledge of God and he's worshiping himself.

And the supreme egotist is the atheist. Next to him is the agnostic. If a man does accept natural revelation, is he saved? Is he saved if he just accepts natural revelation like the guy who says well, I worship God at the beach. Yeah, well, I know there are times when I'd like to do that. Is that enough? Or like the natives somewhere who just sees God in everything and it's rather undefined.

Is that enough? Is natural revelation enough to save? John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Then what did He say? "No man comes unto the Father, but by me." It's got to be more than natural revelation. Acts 4:12, Peter looked at the Sanhedrin and said, "Neither is there salvation in any other. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." In John Chapter 3, Jesus said, "You are condemned because you don't believe in me." There's got to be more than just natural revelation.

I mean, let's face it folks. If all the people need to have is natural revelation to get saved, we might as well just keep the missionaries home, right? Because most natives don't have a problem. But if we introduce the gospel to them, then they've got to make a choice at that point. And if they make the wrong choice they're damned. But if you leave them alone and let hem hang in there on natural revelation, they'll be all right.

Well, how do you square that with the command of Jesus to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature? If He said to tell every creature, then I'm going to take the assumption that every creature is going to need to know that revelation. You say what about the guy who's over in the middle of nowhere and no missionary ever gets to him? Well, I just believe that the Bible is clear that if he lives up to the life he has, God will come with more light and enough light for him to know the truth to save.

Now maybe he won't know Christ's name and maybe he won't know all the features, but I think God will deal with him as he lives up to the life that he has. And I think this is what Paul is saying in Acts 17. Faith in Jesus Christ is necessary so that's why God didn't stop with natural revelation. Watch this, He gave also special revelation, special revelation.

Now this is very interesting subject. Man is the center, he's spiritually dead, he's willfully blind, he can't understand, he rejects natural revelation and then maybe all of a sudden in his life, he begins to kind of see that maybe there is a God. Maybe this natural revelation is revelatory. Maybe there is somebody up there.

But it doesn't do him any good to just grope around like that, because he can come up with anything. So God says in addition to the natural revelation, let me give you the special revelation that will tell you all you need to know about this God. And this is never before understood information.

God had some specifics to say, special revelation says those things. It tells about mercy. It tells about grace. Tells about forgiveness for sinners. It tells about the sacrifice of Christ. It tells about salvation. It tells about the church, the second coming, everything from Genesis to Revelation is God's special revelation.

It wasn't enough to have that broad natural revelation God wanted specifics. God had something to say, and God doesn't mumble. And God doesn't speak in broad generalities. God said very specific things. In fact, you know, as we shall see in our study the very tense of the verb, the difference between plurals and singulars, the very simplest choice of words, the choice of the proper case of a word, indicates the exactness with which God speaks.

Now how did God reveal Himself in special revelation? Well, there are many ways. First of all, let me just give you a list of these. How did God reveal Himself in special revelation, not just the broad category of His deity being visible by the world, but how did He get special?

Number one is...and these aren't in any order, but the first one is theophany. Have you ever heard of a theophany? Well that means a visible appearance of God in some form. God at times began to appear to people in form. You say you're kidding? No, in what form? Well, you remember Abraham? Had some visitors one day in Genesis 18? You know who it was? God and two angels. And he ran and he said you guest come to my house and he said Sarah get in that kitchen and whip up something you know.

And didn't have any Hamburger Helper in those days, so, you know, you had to start from scratch and go kill whatever you're going to eat, you know. And they entertained God and two angels. God was peering in a theophany. That means an appearance of God in a form. Now God is invisible and so God assumed so kind of form.

You have another occasion of it in Exodus Chapter 3. God appeared in the form of a burning bush didn't He? That's a theophany. So God said some specific things to Moses. God said some very specific things to Abraham in a theophany. And do you remember Jacob in Genesis 31 was wrestling with angel and it really was God wasn't it? It may be called a crystophania, pre-incarnan appearance of Christ. And then, of course, God's greatest theophany, His appearance in the form of man in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

So God did reveal Himself before Christ came in a visible way. On several occasions, He actually became visible in different forms. That's theophany and God said specific things. But every time God wanted to communicate specifics, He didn't have to appear He could speak too and He had some vehicles through whom He spoke. Do you remember who they were? Prophets.

When God wanted to say something He would speak through the mouth of a prophet. And the prophet would open his mouth and say "thus saith the Lord," and God would take control of his mind and his mouth and he would speak for God. In fact, sometimes as you study the prophets you can't tell whether it's God talking or the prophet and that's the idea.

God used men supernaturally and spiritually controlled to communicate. Now you know it was amazing how God got His message across even in addition to the prophets. Sometimes God got His message across by casting lots. You remember that? Remember Jonah Chapter 1? God wanted a certain thing to happen. God wanted Jonah to take a short ride on a long fish and God wanted to be sure that it happened that way. So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. God just made sure he got the short stick.

And God got a specific thing accomplished. In Leviticus Chapter 16, God even gave instruction about casting lots. In Numbers Chapter 26, verses 55 and 56, again you have the indication that God got His will across through casting lots. So God specifically gave His will in a theophany, through prophecy, through casting of lots. Another one, He communicated His will through dreams didn't He?

For example, you have in the book of Genesis in Chapter 28, Chapter 37, Chapter 40, and Chapter 41 the significance of dreams repeated. Who probably was really used of God more than anyone else in the area of dreams? Joseph. Joseph, God communicated His will through dreams. I'll tell you that's a very common way. Another very common way for God to communicate His will was through visions. Can you think of two Old Testament prophets who had visions?

One was Ezekiel. Have you ever read Ezekiel 1, boy that's a vision like no vision. Don't try to figure that out. That's like trying to unscrew the unscruitables. It's just there and you just say praise the Lord, halleluiah, go to Chapter 2. It's been used by many people in modern times to be a so-called description of UFOs. That's one theory you can immediately reject.

Another prophet who had some...who dealt in visions was Daniel. And Daniel dealt as a secondary figure in visions because the visions often came to somebody else and he would interpret the vision. So God communicated through dreams and visions. There were other times when God communicated by speaking. The Bible says and God said. Did you know that God came to Abraham and said "Abraham get out of Ur of the Chaldeans and go to a land that I want to send you to." And He just talked to him and He talked to him and He talked to him and quoted through Chapter 15 He talked to him again on into 17, 18. God talked and said.

How many times have you heard the prophets make the statement, "Thus saith the Lord." Sometimes God just flat out spoke. Why you can think of the apostle Paul on his way to Damascus and all of a sudden the Lord talks to him right out of heaven. What a fantastic concept. And imagine what kind of a loud speaker system they had up there. But God could send His voice across the sky from wherever heaven is and communicate verbally and He did it.

There's another interesting thing that in the Old Testament it says that sometimes God communicated face to face. Now you say, well God doesn't have face. No, so we know it doesn't mean literal face to literal face. But it means that God actually came down somewhere and just stood nose to nose with a prophet and they just talked. And they were just all edicts coming out of the sky, you know, and God thundered. I don't see Him. Boom, you know, like Mount Sinai. Moses was up there going like this and God was booming and everybody at the bottom was hearing the noise.

But sometimes God came down in a face to face communication. So you see, God wanted to disclose Himself. All of these are simply media by which God communicates. Another thing God used, I think this is most significant, another thing God used to communicate was miracles. You say what did miracles do? They just communicated that God was involved. That God was present. That God was active. And watch, God used miracles to attest to the preaching.

Old Elijah would come around and he'd start announcing what God said and everybody would say oh how do we know you're true, and then he'd raise somebody from the dead. They'd say maybe the guy's right. Pretty classy signs. You come to Peter and Peter stands up and preaches the gospel then he heals everybody that's sick, and he's going to make some people wake up and say this guy may really be from God. You see God in the New Testament particularly, as well as in the Old Testament era, at least in two different periods of the Old Testament, God literally accompanied His word with signs in order that men might know that it was His word.

Because Paul would preach and Peter would preach or whoever it was, even Jesus, and God attested to Jesus' truthfulness by signs and wonders, didn't He? In 2 Corinthians 12:12, it even talks about the signs and wonders and mighty deeds of the apostles to confirm the word.

So miracles were to prove God was speaking. I think it's interesting, just look for a minute at Mark Chapter 2 and an illustration of how God reveals Himself through miracles. "Jesus came to Capernaum after some days and He was in the house there and straight way many were gathered together," Mark 2:2, "insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no not so much as about the door and He preached the word unto them. They come unto Him bringing one sick of the palsy born by four when they could not come near unto Him for the crowd. They uncovered the roof where He was and when they had broken it up they let down the bed in which the sick of the palsy lay.

They took the roof off and dropped him the middle. "When Jesus saw their faith He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son thy sins are forgiven thee." Now watch, "But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts why doth this man speak blasphemy? Who can forgive sin but God? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they had so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them why reason ye these things in your hearts?" Can you imagine the shock? He read their minds.

"Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy? Thy sins are forgiven thee or to say arise take up thy bed and walk?" The man was sick because of violation of God's laws. His sickness was chastisement. So the consequence of forgiveness was freedom from the burden and the punishment.

Verse 10, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy. I say unto thee arise, take up thy bed, go thy way in thine house. Immediately he arose and took up his bed and went forth before them all insomuch they were all amazed and glorified God saying we never saw it on this fashion."

Now here God uses a miracle to attest to the truthfulness of the word of Jesus Christ. There was a healing, that's a mighty work. They were amazed. That's a wonder. It was a sign that the Son of man had authority. Those are three terms, signs and wonders and mighty works. The mighty work created the wonder that was the sign. So God acts and so God speaks.

Now the result of all of God's acting and all of God's speaking was His revelation. You say well, John, how come we have this Bible? What is this? This is the recording of all of those acts and speakings of God. You say well are every...is everything that God ever said, that God ever did here? No, some of His revelation didn't get into the written revelation.

Did you know that John, the apostle, said in Chapter...at the end of his book, he said, Chapter 21, "That I suppose that all the books of the world could not contain," right, "the things concerning Christ." So God did many things that aren't here. But God wanted of all of His revelation to capture the main part of it and put it in writing.

And that's the Bible. Now God wanted to preserve His revelation so He had it written down. Now friends, writing down the revelation is important. Do you know why? Passing on oral communication gets really sloppy. God new that oral communication is very risky. And God wanted a written truth. And God had it written down and Jesus said this, Matthew 5:18, "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in now wise pass away from this law." He said God wrote it this way, it'll never be changed. God wrote it down this way. The original word then that we have here is the record of God's revelation.

In fact, you know what God said to Moses in Exodus 17:14? God says, "Moses write this for a memorial in a book." God wanted His revelation written down. You say, why did He want it written down? Well, because first of all, a book groups all the messages together. I mean, wouldn't it be horrible if you had to trail around to find people who had bits and pieces of the oral communication?

If the only authority we had was if somebody told somebody and this is what I got from them and I guess this is how it is. Whoa. Help. A book gathers all the message together. 1 Corinthians 10:11, "These things happen to Israel by way of example." Listen, "They were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come." The things that happened in Old Testament time to Israel were written down for us today.

It groups them all together for our admonition. God wanted us to have them all. These things are by way of example. Another reason that God wrote it down is not only because the written word preserves the original and the written word gathers it all together, but the written message is independent of the orator and the writer. And that's good. People come to me and they say well the other night in such and such a devotion, I had an ecstatic experience and God spoke revelatory words to me and revealed great truth to me.

No, God doesn't do that. God isn't in the business of giving private revelation. God has gathered it all together and God wants it independent of the orator and the writer and that's the beautiful part. Let me illustrate that to you. Jeremiah 36, and Jeremiah is a good illustration of a revelatory tool, because God continually spoke to him and he continually said, "the Lord said." But a most interesting portion in 36:2, now listen to what the Lord says to him. This is really good. The Lord said, "Take a scroll of a book and write in it all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, against Judah, against all the nations from the day that I spoke unto thee from the days of Josiah even to this day."

He's says Jeremiah write everything down. Write it all down. Verse 4, "Then Jeremiah called Baruch, the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord." Now my friend there you have one of the greatest pictures of what inspiration is that you'll ever find in the Bible. Do you even know what that verse says? It says Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah the words of the Lord. "God literally spoke through the mouth of Jeremiah. And he wrote

which he had spoken unto him upon the scroll of a book."

He wrote it down. Now you know what was beautiful about it? You say why did God want it written down? Because, look at this, verse 5, "And Jeremiah commanded Baruch saying I am restrained I cannot go to the house of the Lord." You know why? He was a prisoner. Now if the prophet's in jail, the prophet's not going to be any good for the people, right? So God says write it down. Why? So that the word would be independent of the writer and independent of the speaker. So that if the speaker's in jail the words still goes on.

So he says in 5, "write it all down because I'm restrained, therefore go and read in the scroll that which thou hast written from my mouth the words of the Lord and the hearing of the people and the Lord's house upon the fast day and thou shalt also read them in the hearing of all Judah who come out of their cities." He says, I'm a prisoner, you take God's word and take it all over the place and read it to everybody.

"It may be that they will present their supplication before the Lord return everyone from his evil way, for great is the anger and fury of the Lord has pronounced against His people. A Baruch, the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the Lord in the Lord's house. It came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah in the ninth month they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, to all the people who came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem. The read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord and the chamber of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, the scribe and the higher court at the entrance of the new gate of the Lord's house and the hearing of all the people." And so it goes.

And you know what happened as a result of reading it? Some wonderful things happened. From verse 14 to 21, they got so excited about it they wanted to make sure the king heard it. And the word of God was heard by the people. Verse 28 says, "Then take thee another scroll and write in it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which Jehoiakim, the king of Judah hath burned." King wasn't too happy about it.

Verse 32, "Then took Jeremiah another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe the son of Neriah who wrote it from the mouth of Jeremiah. All the words of the book which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had burned in the fire. And they were added besides unto them many like words." Here was God giving His revelation to His prophet and God repeated it when it was burned.

Now you see God wants it written because it becomes independent of the one who happens to be in prison and can't get around. Simple point. Another thing that that point brings up is that God wants His revelation written because that way it is mobile, it is enduring, and it is far reaching. Do you realize the prophets are gone now? But do you know something? Though the prophets are gone

here I am in America, clear halfway around the world from the land of Israel where those truths were dictated and I've got it in my hand write here. I don't need the prophet. This book is mobile. It transcends His life time. It is enduring.

You know how they had a revival in Nehemiah's time? You say the got a prophet. No, they didn't get a prophet. In Nehemiah Chapter 8, verse 1, we have a fantastic thing that happened. Nehemiah 8:1, "All the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate and they spoke unto Ezra, the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses." Do you know what they did? They got out Moses' writings. Now they were in bad shape at this point and they're going to have a revival here. Going to be something exciting, spiritual revival and so they got the book of Moses. Isn't it wonderful that they could have it? Moses is long gone, that's why God wanted His revelation written down.

"And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation of men and women, all who could hear with understanding upon the first day of the seventh month and he read from it facing the street that was before the water gate, from the morning till midday. Before the men and the women and those who could understand the ears of all the people who were attentive." Boy I'm telling you could stand there from dawn till midday attentive to the word of God, the Lord's doing something.

"And Ezra, the scribe, stood upon pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose and some folks stood beside him," and I'm not going to attempt to tell you who they were. "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people where he was above the people and when he opened it the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord the great God and all the people answered Amen, Amen. Lifting up their hands and the bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." Boy they heard the word and they got right with God right on the spot.

Verse 8, "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly." All right, watch this, "And gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading." There's the greatest Old Testament verse on expository preaching right there. You read it, you give the sense of it, then you help the people to understand it.

That's how to preach. And they had a revival and the book was mobile and they didn't need the prophet and they didn't need Moses. Another thing I think that is important and the reason maybe that God wanted His message written down is because a written message makes everybody responsible. It does. It's written, everybody's responsible. Listen to the words of Jesus. Luke 16:29, listen, "They have Moses and the prophets," what, "let them hear them." Jesus says they're responsible.

You've got the book friends. You're responsible. You know that brings up a tremendous point. You know there are many homes in America that have Bibles. There are many people that have Bibles. You have the book, listen to it, hear it. And so there was no need for a big dramatic miracle. There's

no need for this guy out here to be getting prophecies from God and uttering so-called visions and all of this kind of stuff.

Here it is friends, right here. God wrote it all down. It's all here. You say well, maybe God didn't put it all in there. Oh I think He did. I think at the end of book of Revelation He says if you add anything to it, it shall be added unto you the plagues that are written in it. And I get the impression that He doesn't want anything added to it. There's no miracle needed friends. You don't need some great divine miracle to tell whether I'm telling you the truth or not. You know how you know whether I'm telling you the truth? How do you know? Read the Bible, find out.

You could tell a false prophet the day that fast. All you've got to do is check him with the Scripture. It's all there. God's revelation. So the Bible is a culmination and a product of God's revelation. It's the embodiment of God's disclosure of Himself to us. That's the revelation.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the word, the revelation. Oh how exciting it is to hold in our hands this treasure of divine knowledge. What a blessed thing it is. Thank you God for giving it to us. For having placed in our hands the truth that we might know thee, that we might know ourselves and that we know...that we might know how to serve thee. Thank you Father for your revelation. Thank you for the truth revealed to us and we thank you in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2016 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).