

Sunday, August 18, 2024 am

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (22)

Bible Study – 1

If God Were To Speak to Us!

Today, we begin part 2 of our study about communicating with God. In part 1, we discussed the way God has provided for us to communicate to Him – prayer. In part 2, we want to address how God communicates to us today – through His word.

In this portion of our study, we want to address:

- What is the Bible and why should we study it?
- How do we know the Bible is the word of God?
- Does truth matter?
- How do we use the Bible to establish authority for what we do?
- What does it mean to study the Bible?
- What is the difference between Bible reading and Bible study?
- How can we effectively study the Bible?
- Proper attitudes as we study the Bible
- Different types of studies – we will emphasize “inductive reasoning” which means we put together all the facts and reach a conclusion about what is truth.
- Various rules to consider as we interpret scripture
- How can we make Bible study more effective?
- Various aids to help you rightly divide the word of truth.

This should carry us through to the end of the year in our studies. As with prayer, there is much to consider, and our time is limited, so in many these we will only be covering the surface.

We will begin by asking a question that introduces the Bible to us – If God were to communicate with us, what would you expect?

Imagine, you had never seen a Bible, but because of who you are you KNOW there is a God and believe there is purpose for being here. You want to know more about who He is and what He wants. How would you expect Him to reveal Himself to you?

You find a copy of the Bible. Perhaps it is given to you by someone who cares about you. But WHY should you believe it is the word of God? What are some of the qualities you would expect in a message that God has revealed to you?

I. What Would you expect in a message from God?

a. You would expect His message to tell you it came from Him –

- i. I believe most would agree, if it can be proven that a book came from God, it would be holy and ought to be treated as such.
- ii. The Bible tells us that it is inspired – 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 1. Inspired literally means, “the breath of God.” Notice what the text reveals to us.
 2. Throughout scripture we find appeals to its inspiration – Exodus 24:3-4, Moses spoke “all the words of the LORD and all the judgments”; Isaiah 1:2, “For the LORD has spoken.”; 1 Corinthians 14:37, Romans 1:16-17
- iii. You would expect it to introduce you to Him –

1. Genesis 1:1-2, 26-27 – the very first chapter introduces us to God. You would expect Him to declare Himself a Creator. And He does – cf. Romans 1:19-20.
 2. Genesis 17:1 – “I am Almighty God.”
 3. Virtually every book and every page of the Bible reveals God. It speaks of His character, His work, His power (all powerful, all seeing, all knowing & eternal) and so many other qualities about Him.
- iv. He declares that He speaks to us through His word – Hebrews 1:1-2.
 - v. The Bible addresses each of these thoughts. It is through these qualities, that we can know God – who He is and what He expects of us.

b. You would expect it to be a book that establishes itself as from Him.

- i. Many books claim to be from God, but how can we know for sure if it is? As you study a message from God, you would expect clues and declarations that PROVE God’s hand in it.
- ii. Proofs that the Bible is from God.
 1. Its historical accuracy. It has been established that the Bible was written some 3500 years ago over a period of about 1600 years. Moses is credited with the first 5 books (the foundation of the Old Testament) around 1500 BC, and the New Testament was written through the latter 2/3 of the 1st century AD. As you read through the Bible you will find that it is written as a book of history. Within its pages we find multitudes of ancient places, landmarks, nations, and people. Through archaeology we have discovered many of these. There are still many that we have not found (and likely will never find because of time), BUT there has not been a discovery that DISPROVES the historicity of the Bible. We always find plausible answers for questions about these things. IF God were going to reveal Himself to us, accuracy would be crucial.
 2. Its natural and scientific accuracy. The Bible is not a science book, but where it does mention scientific details and facts of nature, it is accurate and in many instances AHEAD of its time.
 - a. Genesis 1:1 – “in the beginning” – science KNOWS that this universe had a beginning.
 - b. Genesis 1:11-12ff, “according to its kind” – the naturalist teaches that all living beings evolved from one living source over billions of years. The Bible declares that “kinds” do not cross their boundaries. Ever since science has documented living creatures and “change” they have never seen evolutionary change cross certain boundaries (i.e., the family classification).
 - c. Acts 17:26 – all humans are of “one blood” (and animals are of different bloods).
 - d. Psalm 8:8 – the paths of the seas – these are used today by ships as they travel the ocean.
 3. Prophecy – one of the most powerful and direct PROOFS of God is prophecy. Because ONLY one with the power to control can determine well ahead of time what is going to happen with specific detail. The Bible is FILLED with prophecies. Some were national and others related to man’s salvation.

- a. Isaiah 53 (written ~700 BC) in great detail describes specific details surrounding the death of Jesus on the cross. So does Psalm 22 (~950 BC). Psalm 22:1 quotes a saying of Jesus on the cross (Matthew 27:46)
 - b. Isaiah 44:28-45:1, the LORD declares the history of Judah over the course of about 175 years. He mentions by name, Cyrus who would be His “shepherd”. The history of Judah after this – Assyria (the empire at the time of Isaiah) would fall to Babylon ~608 BC (90+ years later). Babylon would take Jerusalem (& Judah) into captivity for 70 years. In 536 BC (70 years later, ~160 years after the prophecy of Isaiah), Babylon falls to the Medo-Persian empire. Cyrus, king of Persia (Ezra 1:ff). This shows God’s control in the affairs of the world.
 - c. Daniel 2:44 – Daniel declares to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon that God would establish His kingdom during a 4th empire (Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greece (Macedonia) & Rome). The events of Christ and the new kingdom are established during the Roman empire.
 - d. ONLY God could make such declarations ahead of its time like that.
4. Consider Isa 46:9-11 – this even points out that this is HOW God proves He is!
- iii. Its enduring nature – indestructible.
 1. We have already noted the earliest writings of scripture are over 3500 years ago. And while there are plenty of ancient works (some perhaps even older), none has faced the history and scrutiny of the Bible.
 2. Over the centuries there have been attempts to destroy, outlaw, discredit and hinder its distribution, yet it has survived everything. Over the centuries its manuscripts have been the most copied and preserved of any other literary work. Concerning the NT, we have more than 25,000 mss and fragments (5500+ Greek – the original language), with a few dating back to within decades to 300 years after its completion. 90+% of its content is quoted by various “Christian authors” in the first few centuries after its completion.
 3. It has had a profound influence on various cultures, especially in Europe and the Americas, throughout history. It was used in founding the moral and ethical standards of the United States.
 4. It has been translated into 700+ languages (complete), with portions of it being translated into more than 3500 languages and dialects.
 5. Its impact is so great, that EVERY major belief system HAS TO address its influence (including atheism).
 - iv. Presenting a unified and timeless message
 1. We have already noted that the Bible was written over a period of 1600 years. But also consider that the original texts were written in 3 different languages (Hebrew, Greek & Aramaic), on 3 continents (Asia, Africa & Europe), by over 40 men of all different backgrounds.
 2. Yet its message is unified throughout. Consider how “design demands a designer”. The theme of the Bible is man’s salvation with Jesus being the central figure (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2). The Old Testament prepares us for our Savior. The gospels introduce us to Jesus- our Savior. Acts records the beginning and spread of His kingdom. And the letters (Romans – Revelation)

describe what life in Him ought to be like. 1 John 5:11 says, *And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

3. The Bible claims to be truth - John 17:17, Psalm 119:151, “*You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth.*” And it makes a powerful case for it being such.
4. The ONLY way this united message is possible is if there is an intelligent and controlling source behind it. And its timing and diversity in creation DEMANDS that He be beyond the natural realm – hence God!

v. The character of the Bible makes a powerful case for it being God’s word.

c. You would expect it to be meaningful to you

- i. Telling you what His plans are for the world and you. And it does. From the fall of man (Genesis 3:15), to the coming of the Savior (John 3:16), to the culmination of time (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22-26). The story of redemption is found throughout its texts.
- ii. Telling you what He has done to implement that plan – Romans 5:6-8, Galatians 4:4 (fullness of the time), etc.
- iii. Telling you what He expects you to do. The Bible is filled with practical instructions as to how to live. Its superior nature can be summarized in Matthew 7:12 (the golden rule). Consider the rules of man and then contrast that with the Golden Rule. Which would rather live by? Which rule, if followed by all, would make this world a better place?
- iv. You would expect it to be understandable. And it is. While there are certainly many challenging texts, and it IS a book that will take a lifetime to learn it (and even then there is still more), God’s plan for what we need to do to be saved and how to live a saved life is very straightforward and simple (NOTE: There is a difference between simple and easy). Ephesians 5:17 even commands us to “understand what the will of the Lord is.”
- v. AND that brings us to our subject – Bible study. Consider 2 Timothy 3:16-17 again and notice what the inspired word of God can do for us. Earlier in that same letter, Paul had declared, that we are to be diligent to present ourselves approved to God... (2 Timothy 2:15).

Considering all these points, we can see why you OUGHT to consider the Bible. In summary, the Bible tells you: 1) Where you came from; 2) Who God is and how much He loves you; 3) Who your Savior is; 4) How to be saved; 5) How to live and stay saved; and 6) Where you are headed after this life. There is much to study in this work.

It is not just another book, but THE word of God to us. And if it is the word of the God, then it is to be obeyed. As one author said, “To obey it is to obey God. To reject it is to reject God. That is the end of the matter.” (Jon W. Quinn, Feb. 2009, Expository Files 16.4).

As we begin a somewhat detailed examination of Bible study, it is my hope that these lessons will encourage us to listen to God in the way He has revealed it for us today. And when we do that, we can have the assurance that we can go to Him in prayer. How important is the Bible to you? Think about it.