

JESUS REVEALED

A. Introduction: For the past several years I've started the New Year with a series on the importance of reading the Bible. This year is no different. My goal in this opening series is to motivate and inspire people to read the Bible, as well as to give practical instruction on how to read God's Word effectively.

1. Bible reading has always been vitally important, but never more so than now. We are living at the end of this age, and Jesus Christ will return to this world in the not too distant future.

a. When Jesus was on earth He warned His followers that the years leading up to His second coming will be marked by increasing chaos and lawlessness. And religious deception will abound. Matt 24

b. If we're going to survive what is ahead, we need the information recorded in the Bible. This information will help us navigate through the turbulence that is even now coming on the earth.

And it will protect us from the rampant and deadly deceptions are already developing.

1. Sincere Christians struggle with Bible reading for a variety of reasons. They don't know what to read. They don't understand what they read. What they read doesn't seem relevant to everyday life. What they read is boring and puts them to sleep.

2. However, reading the Bible becomes less daunting and more effective when you understand what the Bible is, why it was written, what it will and won't do for you, and how to read it. 2.

As we begin the New Year, we're going to address these issues once again. I'm not going to do a repeat of last year's lessons, but there are several general, basic ideas that bear repeating.

a. The word Bible comes from a Latin word that means books. The Bible is actually a collection of 66 books and letters (known as epistles). Altogether, these documents tell the story of God's desire for a family and the lengths to which He has gone to obtain that family through Jesus.

1. These documents were written over a 1500 year period (1400 BC to AD 100) by over 40 authors located on three continents. Yet the Bible has a consistent theme. A Redeemer is coming (Jesus) who will deliver this world from sin, corruption, and death and restore it to a fit forever home for God and His family. Each writing adds to or advances the story in some way.

2. The Bible has two major divisions. The Old Testament (39 books) points to and anticipates the Redeemer. The New Testament (27 books) is a record of His coming and redeeming work on the Cross. The Bible is 50% history, 25% prophecy, and 25% instruction for living.

b. It's important to understand what the Bible is not. It isn't a motivational book that makes you a winner in life, or a self-help book designed to help you solve problems and improve your life.

1. The Bible will give you hope and change your outlook. It will impart wisdom that will help you deal with life more effectively. But those are by-products of its primary purpose.

2. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to man. Through its pages God reveals Himself—His nature and character, His will and works, His purposes and plans. The Bible does not prove the existence of God. It presumes He exists and then tells us about Him.

c. The Bible is unlike any other book in existence. It is a supernatural book. It is a book from God. Supernatural means of or relating to an order of existence beyond the visible observable universe.

1. The men who wrote the Bible were inspired by God. God breathed or imparted His words to the writers. The Greek word translated inspired means "God breathed". Authors were guided (or moved along) by the Holy Spirit as they wrote. The Bible is the Word of God. II Tim 3:16:

II Pet 1:20-21

2. God works in us by His power through His Word. He, through His Word, produces change and transformation in those who read and believe it. I Thess 2:13; Matt 4:4

B. Almighty God wants to be known by men and women. However, He is beyond our comprehension. He is transcendent, infinite, and invisible. He is absolute holiness. If God did not choose to reveal Himself to us

we could not know Him. But He has revealed Himself to us through His Word.

1. The Bible opens with these words: In the beginning God (Gen 1:1). Before there was anything else, there was God. In the first few chapters of the Bible, God reveals answers to life's big questions—why we are here and where we are headed.
 - a. The Bible reveals that Almighty God created both the earth and humanity. He created all of it by speaking His Word. The Lord created Adam (and man in Adam) for relationship. God and man walked and talked together in the beautiful home God made for His man Adam—Eden. Gen 1-22
 - b. The Bible reveals why there is pain, hardship, suffering, and death in the world. The first man chose independence from God through sin. His action profoundly affected the race resident in him and the earth itself. A curse of corruption and death infused all of creation. Every problem in this world is a by-product of the curse of death that is in the world because of sin. Gen 3:17-19
 - c. The Bible reveals God's solution to mankind's problem. Following mankind's fall into corruption and death, God promised that the Seed of the woman will undo the damage done by sin and restore man to God. That Seed is Jesus, who came into this world through the woman, Mary. Gen 3:15
 1. God then directed men to begin to keep written records as He progressively revealed His plan to deliver His creation from corruption and death through Jesus.
 - A. The Old Testament is primarily the history of the people group through whom Jesus came into this world—the descendants of Abraham (also known as Hebrews, Israelites, Jews).
 - B. The New Testament is the full revelation of the plan—the coming of Jesus to die for sin and bring men and women back to God through faith in Him and restore the family home. 2.
- The Bible ends with the plan completed—God and His family of sons and daughters together on this earth renewed and restored. No more death, sorrow, pain, and every trace of the curse of corruption and death vanquished forever. Rev 21-22
2. The men who wrote the New Testament were eyewitnesses of Jesus, or close associates of eyewitnesses. One of those eyewitnesses tells us why the Bible was written—so that men and women would believe on Jesus and have life through His name. The name Jesus means Savior. John 20:31
 - a. Because of sin, humankind is dead or cut off from God who is Life. Jesus came into this world to bring everlasting or eternal life to dead men and women. John 3:16
 - b. After Jesus rose from the dead, He revealed that men and women can now be born of God, or receive the life and Spirit of God in their innermost being. (We discussed this in some detail last year.)
 - c. But even before Jesus went to the Cross, the people He interacted with (1st century Jews) were looking for a Redeemer to bring eternal life (Matt 19:16; 29). This term had several meanings.
 1. One, it was equivalent to entering the kingdom of God. They knew from their Scriptures that God has promised to establish His visible, eternal kingdom on earth. And they wanted to know from Jesus how to have a place in the kingdom.
 2. Two, the term carried the idea of something unending, not transitory (changing, ending, or dying out). These people understood that this life is transitory and we are only passing through this world as it is in its fallen condition. They were looking for something permanent—a life with no more catastrophic change or loss, no more painful separations and death.
 3. The night before Jesus went to the Cross, in a prayer He prayed to God the Father, Jesus said: John 17:3—And this is the real and eternal life: That they know you, the one and only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent (The Message).
 - a. True life (peace, hope, satisfaction, joy, meaning, etc.) comes from knowing God. God's clearest revelation of Himself is Jesus—because Jesus is God, God manifest in human flesh.
 - b. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John applied the term Word (*Logos*, the Greek means something spoken) to Jesus—In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. John 1:1

1. Two thousand years ago, God took on flesh (a full human nature) in the womb of the virgin, Mary. He was born into this world to die for sin so that men can be restored to God through faith in Him. John 1:14; Heb 2:14-15
2. John 1:18—John stated that up to that time, no man had seen God, but that Jesus knew and declared Him.
 - A. The Greek word translated seen means more than the act of seeing. It emphasizes to discern clearly (physically or mentally) or to know. But Jesus declared him or made Him known.
 - B. “In the bosom of” is a cultural reference. People ate their meals in a reclining position. The person next to the other was said to lie in his bosom. The one next to the host of the feast was understood to be in a place of favor and intimacy with Him.
- c. Paul the apostle (another eyewitness of Jesus) echoed the idea that Jesus is God’s fullest expression of Himself. He wrote: Heb 1:1-3—God has spoken by Jesus who is the express image of God.
 1. Express image, in the original Greek language, refers to the imprint made by a stamp. Jesus is the exact representation of the Father, the same essence with the Father, since He is God.
 2. Heb 1:3—He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God’s] nature, upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power (Amp).
4. Jesus is God’s clearest revelation of Himself to mankind. He is the Word made flesh, the Living Word. The Living Word of God is revealed in the written Word of God, the Bible.
 - a. The night before Jesus was crucified He made a number of statements to His twelve apostles to prepare them for the fact that He was soon going to leave them and return to Heaven.
 - b. Among other things, Jesus told them that He would continue to make Himself known to them through His Word which His men would proclaim and then write down. John 14:21
 1. First, a quick statement about what Jesus is NOT saying. He is not saying that if you keep God’s commands He will love us and, if we don’t, God won’t love us. God’s love is unconditional. We have His love, not because of anything we do, but because of who He is. He is love. The idea is that when you live a life of obedience you are more conscious of God’s love for you because your conscience is clear. (Lessons for another day.)
 2. Here’s the point for our discussion. Jesus assured His disciples that He will make Himself known to those who have and keep His commandments (the teachings and precepts of Jesus).
 - A. Matt 28:18-20—Jesus before returned to Heaven He commanded His apostles to teach men and women what He taught them. The disciples did as He commissioned them.
 - B. And, after the Lord returned to Heaven, His apostles wrote down His commandments (teachings) in what became the New Testament.
5. Let’s go back to II Tim 3:16 and the statement that all Scripture is inspired by God (God breathed). The very next statement says that the written Word of God is profitable for doctrine. Doctrine is from a Greek word that means teaching or instruction.
 - a. The word doctrine is used over forty times in the New Testament. Jesus’ sermons and teachings are referred to as doctrine. After Jesus returned to Heaven, His apostles went through the known world proclaiming Jesus’ doctrine. Matt 7:28; John 7:16; Acts 2:42; etc.
 1. Doctrine or accurate teaching that is consistent with (in line with) the written word of God (the reliable source of information about God) is critical to our well being.
 2. The Bible speaks of sound doctrine (I Tim 1:10), good doctrine (I Tim 4:6), winds of doctrine (Eph 4:14), and doctrines of men (Matt 15:9). The point is that are degrees of teachings—and not all of them are good, not all of them are God given. Can you accurately assess teaching and discern whether it is good or bad, accurate or inaccurate?
 - b. The New Testament speaks of doctrines of devils. Paul stated that in the years leading up to the return of Jesus to this world to renew and restore the earth, men will be drawn away from faith in

Him through seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. I Tim 4:1

1. This agrees with what Jesus said prior to the crucifixion when His apostles asked Him what signs will indicate that His return is near. Jesus told them that there will be false christs and false prophets who will perform supernatural signs and wonders and deceive many—including believers. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
 2. Are you familiar enough with Jesus as He is revealed in the pages of Scripture to be able to recognize a doctrine (teaching) that originates with devils or realize that a so-called miracle is actually a lying wonder?
 - d. The Bible is our only one hundred percent, fully reliable revelation of God to man. It supersedes every other source of information about God—including charismatic teachers and supernatural manifestations. Not only must doctrines (teachings) be judged according to the written Word of God, all supernatural manifestations must be judged according to the written Word.
- C. Conclusion: If ever there was a time to become an effective reader of God’s Word, it’s now. Over the next few weeks we’ll consider some topics that will hopefully help you be successful at reading. Consider these thoughts as we close this first lesson.
1. In last year’s series on reading the Bible, I urged you to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament because it reveals the culmination of God’s plan for a family. And it is the full revelation of God in and through Jesus.
 - a. Regular reading means as often as possible (preferably every day) for 20-30 minutes. Systematic means that you read each New Testament document from beginning to end.
 - b. Don’t worry about what you don’t understand. Just keep reading. You are reading to become familiar with it. Understanding comes with familiarity and familiarity comes with regular repeated reading.
 1. Remember, the Bible is a supernatural book because it is the Word of God. His Word will produce change in you as you read.
 2. John 6:63—Jesus said that His Words are spirit and they are life. Consider this paraphrase of that verse: All the words through which I have offered myself to you are meant to be channels of the spirit and of life to you, since in believing those words you would be brought into contact with the life in me (J. S. Riggs).
 2. Remember why you are reading: To get to know Almighty God, to get to know the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. Jesus promised to reveal Himself to you as you read. I don’t mean that you will have a supernatural experience. I mean that you will begin to see Him as He truly is and yourself as you truly are in relation to Him.
 - b. Because the Lord knows you better than you know yourself, through His Word, He will impart things to you that you don’t know you need and remove things that you don’t know need to go. As Peter the apostle and an eyewitness of Jesus wrote: Grace and peace is multiplied to us through the knowledge of Jesus. II Pet 1:2
 3. We have a lot to talk about over the next few weeks. More next week!