

The Supernatural Word of God

by Jay Wegter

An overview of topics in this paper:

1. Scripture is replete with passages on God's character and the character of His Word. God and His Word are one in their immutable character. God's eternal decree and His Word are one (Eph 1:11; 3:8-12). God's Word is constantly active in upholding what He has created and in making new creatures in Christ (Heb 1:3; 2 Cor 5:17).
2. God reduces His thoughts to human language. This is an act of incredible condescension. For our triune God's thoughts and infinite knowledge need no words (Ps 19:1-3). Thus, for God to speak in human language is a profound thing, for there must be a common code and set of symbols between the sender and the receiver. The salvation of our souls depends upon His condescension, for God's written Word is His self-revelation and it is only possible to know Him by believing and obeying His Word.
3. Scripture corrects all wrong views of the creation (Rom 1:18). Creation is a general revelation of God. And creation is a stage for the fulfillment of God's immutable Word.
4. The cosmic war is raging. By means of this war, the whole human race is being bifurcated into vessels of honor and vessels of wrath—those who know God and those who do not know God. The marvel of God's grace is that He is making both kinds of vessels from the same lump of clay (Rom 9:21-24). The vessels of wrath remain in the kingdom of darkness and are still under the pall of Eden's lie. This primordial lie first uttered in Eden is a lie about the nature and character of God and His Word.
5. God's Word is unbreakable; it is a hammer that breaks rock. It crushes all that opposes it (Jer 23:29). Thus, every wager which bets that God is not as good as His Word will fail publicly in shame and folly. Demons and reprobates have entered a suicidal pact that the Word of God will not prove to be true—as if God were not as good as His Word. But Scripture is clear, all of God's attributes stand behind the integrity and fulfillment of His Word; because of who God is, Scripture is inviolable.
6. Because the whole world lies under the power of the evil one, it has collectively entered the serpent's suicidal wager (1 Jn 5:19). The Day of the Lord will hit like a billion atom bombs, for in that moment men will know that their own word was false and God's Word was true. The oft repeated phrase in Ezekiel, "And then they will know that I am the Lord," takes place most often in association with judgment.

7. Because God is holy and righteous as revealed in His Word, this is a moral universe (Ps 71:19). Sin has temporal and eternal consequences because of who God is. God's character is the very law of the universe. The law of sowing and reaping is ineffable (Gal 6:7-10). Therefore, reaping is ineluctable, and sin pays the 'wage' of death and separation. This highlights the all-pervasive fact that man's greatest need is forgiveness and justification (Rom 6:23).
8. Redemptive history is a stage for God to magnify His perfections. Is it any wonder then that God is testing, refining, and proving the faith of His people (1 Pet 1:6-9; 4:12-14)? And He is doing so before the eyes of the world and angels. For, by His redeeming grace, His people have revolted against the initial revolt in the Garden. By the Lord's quickening and regenerating work the saints have trampled the world's wager and are now building on the rock of God's Word (Mt 7:24-25).
9. Satan's followers encompass the entire human race apart from those who are united to Christ (Eph 2:1-3). Mankind's love of darkness is evinced in its affinity for the primeval wager which disbelieved God's Word. For, Scripture reveals God's dominion and authority are viewed by fallen man as a threat to autonomy. Reliance upon God's Word is seen as a conflict of interest, and hostile to the kingdom of self (Ps 2:1-3).
10. It is against the backdrop of the human condition that we are to understand what God is doing in human history. He is reclaiming His image by forming a new race or humanity around His Son (Col 3:9-11). He is sanctifying and setting apart a people for Himself by means of the truth of His Word (1 Cor 1:2).
11. The godly have a vital, living relationship to His Word, so much so that it is impossible for them to treat His Word in a casual manner. His Word dominates exceptionally in their lives. It instructs, renews, transforms, and sanctifies them (2 Tim 3:16-17). This is proof that God has changed their hearts to be 'good soil hearers' of the Word (Lu 8:15).
12. In those whom the Word of God dominates exceptionally, there will be a zeal for good works (Titus 2:14). The Word does its work (1 Thess 2:13) in these individual lives so that they will bring a crop to harvest (Mt 13:8). Their contact with the gospel through the regenerating work of the Spirit produced good soil so that the good seed of the Word was able to produce a harvest that will remain.
13. Among the unique and exceptional qualities of God's Word is that it diagnoses the reader. Nothing else in the universe can flawlessly examine and exegete those who

come in contact with it. For, Scripture pronounces the hearer's character, nature, and spiritual condition. The Word of God announces the hearer's relation to God and declares a man's eternal destiny. The Word of God in the hands of God's Spirit is able to create faith within the hearer and grant him eternal life (Rom 10:8, 14-15). God's infinite might stands behind His words, thus, the gospel has the power to save, sanctify and glorify (Rom 1:16-17). Thus, the Holy Scriptures are supernatural. They create faith in an elect person, and they bring him into an eternal covenant with his Creator. The Word of God is therefore the believer's food. For, it not only created an initial faith in the penitent sinner, it is now his object of his daily faith (Job 23:12).

14. The Word of God scribes a circle around all of reality. There is nothing outside that circle but darkness, oblivion, and confusion. Scripture tells us everything we need to know regarding faith and practice and life and godliness. Scripture is a divine library of sixty-six books. On either side of Scripture's account of redemptive history are the 'bookends' of eternity past and eternity future.

15. All the Word of God is the Word of Christ; for He is the living Word, the *Logos* (Jn 1:1-3). As the eternal utterance of God and Creator and Upholder of the cosmos, the Son of God is the source of meaning, order, purpose, rationality, and knowability of the universe (Col 1:16-17). Scripture exists to testify of Christ.

16. As the only creatures is made in God's image and likeness, we were created to receive divine revelation (Gen 1:27). Our faculties of sight, speech, hearing and reasoning were designed by God to receive and take in His self-revelation that we might truly know our Maker and live unto Him in fellowship, worship, and obedience.

17. There are examples too numerous to list of Israel's appointed calling to possess the promised land. Obedience to the Word of God is the stated condition by which alone it will be possible for the nation to conquer the land and possess it. This principle that occupying territory for God, i.e., 'holding the land' can only occur if they are faithful to their covenant obligations as spelled out in Scripture (Deut 4:1-32). Though believers today enjoy the New Covenant, there are many parallels—for we hold and advance the territory of truth by our fidelity of Scripture (1 Cor 10:1-13). Israel's habitual breaking of the Covenant caused them to lose the land for seventy years (Jer 25:9-13).

18. At the great consummation of the age, God will install His Kingdom. Those who have followed Christ the King by abiding in His words and obeying them, will rule and reign with Him forever (Mt 19:28).

19. The Word of God constantly corrects unbelief and disobedience (1 Tim 4:15-16; 2 Tim 4:1-5). Churches today are filled with passive spectators who content themselves with secondhand convictions. The central focus of the great commission is designed to move the Word of God from head to heart so that it holds a man's conscience and affections in a way that is captive. Discipleship moves a man from hearer to doer, from a man who appreciates God's truth to a man who obeys the truth (Jas 1:22-25).

20. Scripture gives a man ever clearer sight. God becomes the believer's dwelling place and City of Refuge (Heb 6:17-20). God is seeking true worshippers. These God-fearers are produced by the Word and the Spirit. Central to our teaching is that the Word of God produces the fear of God (Ps 119:38; Prov 2:5). God reserves His promises to those who fear Him (Ps 25:14; 34:7).

21. Devotion to the Word of God is intimately tied to the believer's perseverance, stamina, and endurance (Ps 86:11). Believers are called to exercise fresh applications of faith in God (Prov 4:25-26). The Christian must move from mere probability to absolute full persuasion that Scripture is the infallible Word of God to him. For, God has sworn by Himself in an oath in order that the heirs of salvation might have assurance, confidence, and unwavering hope (Heb 6:17-20). The Word of God is His oath to believing sinners (Ps 110:4; Rom 10:11-13). Thus, salvation by God's oath is His condescension in which He puts a claim upon Himself by His Word to save the sinner through Christ (2 Cor 5:18-21).

22. In the culture war waged by this present evil age, sinners are becoming increasingly bold. They are pressing for greater liberties in their quest for the removal of self-restraint (Ps 12:4; Lu 19:14). Everyday there is less motivation for them to disguise their hatred of God. New permutations of the Edenic Lie are offering pseudo-freedom, fake autonomy, and false dominion. But, according to Scripture these deceptions are the very opposite of freedom. For, they are fashioning eternal chains and bonds that will squeeze and crush and bind for all eternity (Rom 2:1-12; 2 Pet 2:9-22) .

23. The Word of God requires of God's people that they press on to spiritual maturity (Eph 4:1-16). This set of maturity commands is known as the transformation mandate. By means of Scripture the new man is to undergo daily renewal as he becomes increasingly conformed to the image of Christ (Col 3:8-11). To become increasingly like his Savior is the goal and the treasure of the 'new man' in Christ (Rom 8:28-30).

Relevant Quotes from the book, *The Scripture cannot be Broken*, John MacArthur, Ed.

J. Barton Payne, “Current Resistance to Biblical Inerrancy.” All resistance to Scripture, [as to its quality] being divine in origin, is supposed by the critics that it is their own right to judge (p. 32). God Himself becomes the only authority who can tell us about His own writing. If we establish some criterion over God Himself, it would be idolatry. Man’s primeval sin is pride (pp. 33-34). Until a man puts his trust in Christ, he has no reason to believe the Bible is supernatural (p. 36).

John Murray, “The Attestation of Scripture.” The ground of our faith is not to demonstrate that the Bible is self-existent and true (in other words, we do not demonstrate the Bible’s truth by subjecting it to man’s criterion). The nature of faith is accepted on the basis of testimony. The Scripture gives witness to its own character (pp. 51-51). Human instrumentality does not inhibit Paul’s statement that Scripture is God breathed (pp. 65, 68). The book of Hebrews begins with this statement, “In these last days, God has spoken to us in His Son.” To reject inerrancy, is to reject Christ’s own witness to Scripture (p. 72). Our full persuasion of Scripture’s infallibility and divine authority is the inward witness of the Spirit, and not upon the witness of any man or church. The authority of Scripture is a fact residing in the quality of inspiration. Faith in the Bible as God’s Word rests upon the quality of divinity. Scripture manifests itself to be divine. But, to have this conviction requires the requisite perceptive faculty (the new nature imparted by regeneration). For, the carnal mind is enmity against God, thus it resists the claim that the Bible is divine perfection (pp. 74-77).

J. I. Packer, “Scripture.” The Holy Spirit opens minds to perceive the testimony of God’s Word and its excellence. The Spirit bears witness of the Scriptures own testimony to its origin and authority (pp. 78-79). Scripture alone is the judge of our doctrine of Scripture (p. 82). The freedom of God and the freedom of man are mutually exclusive (only almighty God can claim autonomy). God’s singular care and providence have kept the Bible text pure (pp. 86, 94). No one would have guessed without being told that the man Jesus Christ was Creator God (p. 95). God’s Word is infallible because God Himself is infallible (p. 98). In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul gives the systematic relation of all the great themes of the Bible. Romans is the key of understanding the whole landscape of the Bible (p. 106). All the Bible doctrines are partly mysterious. They cannot be solved by human investigation. Our human intellectual competence is not the test and measure of divine truth. Unless you believe, you will not understand. To grasp spiritual truths requires spiritual receptiveness; but no man has this by nature. God’s book only yields its secrets to those who will be taught by the Spirit (p. 108-112).

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, “The Biblical Idea of Inspiration.” The value of inspiration gives the books of the Bible their trustworthiness and speaks to the reader’s heart and conscience as truly as the divine voice of God (p. 160).

Edward J. Young, “Some Reflections on Inspiration.” History and faith cannot be divorced from one another (for God has revealed His character and attributes and purposes on the canvas of redemptive history). The Bible is a revelation of God (pp. 184-185). Luther gave people the Bible in their own language. Once they had the Word of God, they came to know Christ as Savior. The Bible was a closed book in the Middle Ages. Literacy unchained the book so that it shined its light (pp. 190-191).

Alan M. Stibbs, “The Witness of Scripture to its inspiration.” In order for the Bible to have supreme authority, it must be self-authenticating (i.e. because it is self-attesting, it is not proven or validated by the wisdom and philosophies of man), its authority stands above all sources of examination (p. 207). The purpose of Scripture is to testify to Christ. Our Lord does not change. His words correspond to the character of the ultimate Author (a testament to Scripture’s immutability). How different this is in a world of transient glory (pp. 216-218).

Robert Preus, “Notes on the Inerrancy of Scripture.” The truthfulness and reliability of Scripture is an article of faith and is not primarily intellectual (in expressing this, Augustine said, “I believe in order to understand.”) (p. 223).

Rene Pache, “Inerrancy and Inspiration.” The Old Testament claims to be the words of God 3,308 times (p. 237). By divine preservation (by God’s singular care and providence), the Bible has come down to us in purity (F. F. Bruce) (p. 253).

Gordon R. Lewis, “What does Biblical Infallibility Mean?” Language is only a means for articulating a proposition. The truthfulness of a divine proposition is not a feature of its language form. Thus, to assert the infallibility of Scripture is to assert that it is grammatically adequate to convey the divinely intended meanings (note the Reformers doctrine of perspicuity) (pp. 316, 326-327). The major point of inerrancy affirms the truth of the meaning rather than the wording (p. 328).

The Word of God (part one)

I. THE NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

A. The knowledge of God is necessary in order to have eternal life (Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 5:20).

1.) God's goodness, wisdom, and power are revealed in His creation and in His acts of providence so that men are *without excuse* (Rom 1:20).

2.) But, God's revelation of Himself in nature and creation (called the 'light of nature') is not sufficient to give men a saving knowledge of God. The Gospel is necessary for salvation.

3.) The Gospel message that God saves through the substitutionary work of Christ is known as God's *redemptive revelation*.

B. Men must come into contact with God's *redemptive revelation* (the gospel set forth in the Holy Scriptures) in order to be saved .

1.) Regarding God's *redemptive revelation*, Scripture says, "How shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14). "So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).

2.) "And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15).

3.) God's Word *inscripturated*, or written down as Holy Scripture, is the necessary means for bringing men into contact with redemptive revelation. The salvation of men depends upon them being in possession of God's truth.

C. God's redemptive revelation must be *inscripturated* in order to be preserved in a fallen world.

1.) God's redemptive revelation has been preserved by being committed to writing. The salvation of sinners necessitates that they be in possession of a trustworthy record of God's *redemptive revelation*—the written Word of God (Sam Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, pp. 30-32).

2.) In a sinful world there are forces that oppose God's truth—the malice of Satan, the weakness and corruption of the flesh, and the wickedness of the world. Because of this opposition, God's Word was committed to writing to preserve it from corruption.

3.) The same sovereign redemptive purpose of God that *gave us* His truth and *inscripturated* His truth has also *preserved* His truth through all the ages.

4.) God, by His special care and providence, has kept His written Word pure in all ages. This provides great comfort and stability to the Church (Ibid, p. 33). “Now I make known to you brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4).

II. THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

A. The divine authority of the Bible extends to the very words.

1.) The teaching that all the words of the Bible are authoritative is known as the doctrine of *plenary verbal inspiration*. ‘Plenary verbal’ means that all the words in the Bible are products of a direct, supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the men who were His instruments (Ibid, p. 34).

2.) The support for the authority of the Bible begins with the New Testament’s testimony about the Old Testament’s authority. The N.T. affirms that the O.T. writings are ‘God’s writings’. “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (Rom 1:1-2). Jesus affirmed O.T. authority (Matt 5:17-18; Jn 10:34-36).

3.) The O.T. writings of God are called ‘*the oracles of God*’—Romans 3:2. The nation of Israel was entrusted with *the oracles of God* (the divine ‘utterances’ of God).

4.) God is the determinative Speaker and Author of the O.T. Matthew highlights God speaking through His prophet (Ps 78:2), “He did not speak to them without a parable, so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world’” (Matt 13:34b-35).

B. What God says and what Scripture says are equivalent.

1.) ‘God says,’ and ‘Scripture says,’ are equivalent because the Scripture, by its own testimony, is viewed as God speaking. “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would

justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘all the nations shall be blessed in you’” (Gal 3:8). What Scripture says is attributed to God. “He (God) said, ‘For this cause a man shall leave father and mother. . .’” (Matt 19:4-5; Gen 1:27; 2:24).

2.) Since God is the Author of Scripture, it is the written transcript of His plan or decree. Therefore, the mighty attributes of God stand behind the reliability of Scripture and necessarily bring about the fulfillment of all that God has said in His Word. When Peter sought to prevent Jesus from being arrested, the Lord answered, “How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?” (Matt 26:54). (See also Luke 22:37).

C. The authority of the O.T. is proclaimed in the N.T. by Christ and the Apostles.

1.) There are five pivotal N.T. passages which attest to the authority of the O.T.— 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-20; Matthew 5:17-18; John 10:34-36; Matthew 4:1-11. These passages assert that the O.T. is a unified whole, inspired by God in every part, authoritative, unbreakable, and permanent. The Bible is the ‘living Word of God’ (Jer 23:28-29; Heb 4:12-13).

2.) The *prophetic nature* of the O.T. demands that its prophecies be fulfilled. The N.T. proclaims itself to be the fulfillment of these prophecies. After His resurrection Jesus said to His disciples, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44).

3.) When Jesus first began His earthly ministry; He quoted from the O.T. to introduce Himself (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus quoted from the O.T. to battle Satan (Luke 4:1-12). Jesus quoted the O.T. to teach His hearers (Jn 6:25-34) and to silence His enemies (Matt 15:1-9). Even on the cross, He quoted from the Scriptures (Matt 27:46). And when He had risen, He still spoke from the Scriptures explaining that He had fulfilled what had been prophesied (Luke 24:27) (B. A. Ramsbottom, *Bible Doctrines Simply Explained*, p. 7).

4.) O.T. and N.T. form a unity and are equal in authority (Heb 1:1-3; 2 Cor 3:10-11). The highest attestation of the Bible’s authority is the Bible’s own witness to itself. Therefore, to make some external test ‘proof’ of the Bible’s authority is to be misguided (Waldron, p. 43).

III. THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

A. The meaning and the extent of inspiration.

1.) “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim 3:16). The Greek word for inspiration means *God-breathed*. It has been breathed out by God—it is not the product of men’s ideas and imaginings. Rather, Scripture has its source and origin in the mind and heart of God (Thomas A. Thomas, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, p. 6).

2.) “All Scripture” is inspired by God (*God-breathed*). The Scriptures know nothing of inspired men, but rather inspired books. It is not the biblical writers that were inspired. It is what they wrote—the message *breathed out* by God is alone inspired; the 66 books of the Bible.

B. The role of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures (2 Pet 1:21).

1.) The Apostle Peter, in speaking of the Holy Spirit’s use of the biblical writers, says, “For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet 1:21). The Greek word for ‘moved’ means *to be carried along*, or *borne along* like a boat is borne along by the wind and the current.

2.) More than 3800 times in the O.T. we have expressions such as, “Thus saith the Lord,” “God said.” It is clear from the Bible’s internal claims that the very words attributed to God are not ‘wordless’ concepts and thoughts placed into the minds of the writers. On the contrary, the biblical writers received the words of God. God said to Moses, “Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say” (Ex 4:12) (See also Ex 24:4; 34:27; 17:14) (Ibid. pp.10-15).

3.) The biblical writers were directed by the Holy Spirit; they wrote exactly what the Spirit intended. The inerrancy of Scripture does not negate the fact that the men *moved by the Spirit* wrote in their own distinctive style and through their own unique personalities. God selected men whose character and personality He had prepared for the task (Ibid. p. 10).

IV. THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

A. The Word of God is ‘sufficient’ to achieve the purposes of redemptive revelation.

1.) The Scriptures are *sufficient* to bring about God's purposes: *God's own glory, the salvation of sinners, life and faith*. "So shall the Word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it" (Is 55:11). God's saving power is manifested in association with His Word (Rom 1:16-17). "For you have been born again, not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding Word of God" (1 Pet 1:23).

2.) God's Word is sufficient to give us His will for us so that every Christian might know what his duty is to God (Rom 12:1-2). His Word gives us all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:2-4). The Word of God is thoroughly sufficient for every need of the man of God. "All Scripture is inspired of God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). (Waldron, pp. 44-45).

B. The clarity of Scripture.

1.) In order for the Bible to be sufficient; it must be clear. It is absurd to say that the Bible is sufficient to redeem the lost and yet not clear enough to be understood. Because the Scriptures are clear and understandable; they produce conviction of sin (Ibid, p. 46).

2.) The Bible is not equally clear in all parts. 2 Peter 3:16 says that in Paul's writings there are things hard to understand. But, only some things are hard to understand, and only the untaught and unstable distort these things to their own destruction. The Bible is abundantly clear about the *way of salvation*; the *duties of the Christian life*; and the *necessity* and the *source of good works* (Prov 6:22-23; Matt 7:13-14).

3.) The Bible is clear enough to enlighten even a child as to the way of salvation. And the Bible is clear enough to enlighten the man of God concerning the scope of his ministerial duties (See 2 Tim 3:15-17) (Ibid, p. 48).

4.) In speaking of those not born again, Paul says, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor 2:14).

5.) The power of God, working through His Word, grants spiritual 'sight and light' to believing sinners. "The Word of Scripture, being the Word of God, is an object of

perception that creates its own organ of perception, or faith, thus Scripture itself bears witness to its [own] divine authority” (Francis Pieper quoted in *Sola Scriptura! The Protestant Position on the Bible*, Don Kistler, ed. p. 127).

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY:

(I.A-B) 1.) Which attributes of God are revealed in creation? (See Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:19-20).

(I.A-B) 2.) If sinful men looked closely enough at creation, would they find God’s *redemptive revelation* in nature? Does creation alone reveal the divine truths necessary for salvation?

(I.C.1-4) 3.) Write down some of the reasons why God purposed that His *redemptive revelation* be committed to writing.

(I.C) 4.) Would the Bible still be infallible and authoritative if God had not preserved its purity and accuracy? Why or why not? How would you answer this skeptic’s charge? “Because men are corrupt and prone to error, it is proof that man has falsified God’s revelation?”

(II.A-C) 5.) Read Matthew 5:17-18, John 17:17, and Acts 13:27-29. Did Jesus and the Apostles regard the Scriptures to be infallible, inerrant, and authoritative?

(II.C.1-4) 6.) Many well-meaning Christians appeal to archaeology, fulfilled prophecy, science, and historical accuracy as reliable ‘tests’ which can be used to determine the Bible’s authority. Why is the Bible’s own witness concerning itself the highest attestation to its authority?

(II.A-C) 7.) Carefully read John 16:13-14; 1 John 5:7-12. What is the ultimate source of the Christian’s full confidence in the authority of Scripture?

(II.C.1-2) 8.) Read Hebrews 4:12, Jeremiah 23:28-29; and 1 Peter 1:23-25. In what sense is the Word of God ‘alive’? (Hint: What is the *power* behind the Word of God?)

(II.C.1-4) 9.) Read John 12:48-50 and answer the following: According to Jesus; what will God use to judge people on the last day? Jesus said that the words He spoke came from where? What term in verses 49-50 does Jesus use to designate these words He spoke?

(III.A.1-2) 10.) Read 2 Timothy 3:16. What does the word ‘inspired’ mean? According to this passage, was it the writers of Scripture who were inspired, or the books themselves which are inspired? Why do you think that matters?

(III.B.1-3) 11.) Is it safe to say that the biblical writers were for the most part passive, like stenographers, or like dictation devices, when they received God’s Word and wrote it down? (Hint: were their personalities involved in the process of writing Scripture?)

(IV.A.1-2) 12.) When we refer to the *sufficiency* of Scripture, we mean that the Scriptures will accomplish certain divine purposes. What are those divine purposes?

(IV.A.1-2) 13.) Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What assurances are given regarding the sufficiency of Scripture for the spiritual life and ministry of a man of God?

(IV.B.1-4) 14.) What doctrine of Scripture is being attacked in the following quote? “The meaning of Scripture is subject to opinion, there are as many interpretations of Scripture as there are people in the world.” How would you answer this objection?

(IV.B.1-4) 15.) Are there some parts of Scripture that are less clear than others (parts more difficult to understand)? What is the warning given in 2 Peter 3:16?

(IV.B.1-4) 16.) Read 2 Timothy 2:15, according to this passage, what is one of the benefits of diligent Bible study?

The Word of God (part two)

I. WHY DO WE STUDY THE WORD OF GOD?

A. The God’s Word is where we meet God for fellowship and communion (1 Jn 1:1-3).

1.) The Word of God is His special revelation to mankind. God’s Word gives us all we need in order to know God personally and to know His will for us (2 Pet 1:3-4).

2.) God’s Word is His absolute authority over us—His Word reveals to us His standard, His ownership, His will, His promise, His love, His grace, and His covenant.

3.) By your relationship to God’s Word, you can know what your standing is before God, and where you are headed after death (1 Jn 5:13, 20).

B. The Word of God testifies to its indispensable importance in our lives for spiritual growth, fruitfulness, and progress toward maturity.

- 1.) God's Word is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17b).
- 2.) God's Word is His truth by which we truthfully interpret the facts in God's world (Ps 145:1-13).
- 3.) The Word of God transforms us. Jesus said, "Sanctify them in the truth, Thy Word is truth" (Jn 17:17). His Word provides our guidance and training for the Christian life (1 Pet 1:23).
- 4.) Our obedience to God's Word is the only sure mark that we are submissive to the Lord and that we are living to please Him (Ps 1:1-6; 119:1-16).

C. The Word of God energizes the ongoing process of conformity to God's will.

- 1.) All our obedience to God is grounded in faith toward His Word (Rom 12:1-2; Col 2:6-7). By the Word we keep entrusting ourselves to God in fresh acts of faith—by the Word we keep abandoning ourselves to God in love, trust, and obedience (Rom 6:11-13).
- 2.) Scripture continually presents us with a series of 'crossroads'. As we face these turning points, the Word examines us and then commands us to take the path of obedience. It's much like a sailor who takes frequent headings from his compass in order to stay on the correct course. The Christian 'navigates' through life by the compass of God's Word.
- 3.) The Scriptures continually search us—uncovering our motives and the intents of our hearts (Heb 4:12). It is vital that when we 'look into the mirror' of God's Word that we practice what is known as biblical self-confrontation. The Holy Spirit is always working through the Word as it is pressed upon the believer's conscience. Our response to Scripture must be faith, repentance, and obedience if God's Word is to be profitable to us (Heb 4:1-2; Jas 1:22-25).

4.) God's Spirit actively attends our devotion to the Word. He illumines the meaning of Scripture, He educates the conscience, He convicts of sin, He motivates repentance, He enables obedience, He comforts and assures (Jn 14:16-23).

5.) Because God's Spirit is so intimately at work in you through His Word, it is your responsibility to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil 2:12-13).

II. WHY SHOULD WE LEARN HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE?

A. Because all people are sinners, there is a liability to err in the study of the Bible.

1.) People often excuse the error of misinterpreting the Bible by calling it "individualism," or by saying, "You have your interpretation, I have my own interpretation."

2.) The Apostle Paul makes it clear in his exhortation to Timothy that to understand God's Word correctly, one must 'divide the Word aright' (2 Tim 2:15). 'Divide the Word' means *cut it straight*. God requires that His servants show precision and accuracy in Bible interpretation—anything less is shameful (*MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 1877).

B. Because we are stewards of God's truth we are required to handle His Word accurately.

1.) We are *stewards* of God's message. Our task is to be faithful as workman—we are to be exact in our handling of the Word (cutting it straight as a carpenter would). God is our ultimate 'audience'—we must concentrate on His approval in our study of His Word.

2.) Every time we open the Bible, we must know that it is God's authoritative, inerrant Word. We ought to prayerfully seek the Spirit's help, for He is our primary Teacher (1 Cor 2:10-16; 1 Jn 2:27).

3.) As you work through difficulties in interpretation, allow the Spirit to teach you at the appropriate time. Utilize reliable Bible study tools such as Bible dictionaries, English concordances, Bible commentaries, Bible atlases, study Bibles, topical Bibles, Bible backgrounds, Bible encyclopedia, theologies, and word studies (for a very helpful

list of Bible study tools, see *How to Interpret the Bible for Yourself*, Richard Mayhew, pp. 33-43).

4.) God's power and authority stand behind the meaning intended by the biblical authors. God's authority does not stand behind erroneous interpretations of His Word. Therefore, the only proper control for interpretation is, "*What is the intent of the biblical author in this text?*"

III. WHAT ARE THE LOGICAL STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY?

A. The first step is 'OBSERVATION'—what does the text say?

1.) Do an *overview* of the book of the Bible you are studying—reading it one or more times. Note the main themes, layout of the book, the author's purpose for writing, and the historical setting. You may locate the above items in the book 'introduction' section of a study Bible.

2.) Select the *context* of the verse you are studying. The context you choose will have boundaries. Here are some typical boundaries: *immediate context*—a single verse which is composed of one or more sentences. *Near context*—a paragraph, or paragraphs, composed of verses. *Broader context*—a segment of paragraphs, and/or, the flow of the book.

3.) Bombard the text with questions: *who, what, why, where, when, how, with what words, to what intent, with what circumstances, what goes before and after?* Write down your observations. Note every point at which there is a change in the subject or thought.

4.) Highlight the main statements in the verse or paragraph. Look carefully at the verbs. They will indicate time, result, cause, emphasis, and sequence. Locate the key words and note the repetition of words. Use *Vine's Theological Dictionary* for word studies.

5.) Rewrite the verse in your own words. Paraphrasing is an excellent help and discipline. Rewriting forces you to deal with what is actually said in the text. Beginners are often too quick to 'plug in' a meaning before giving the text a chance to speak for itself.

6.) Don't resort to guess work when you encounter things you do not understand, instead make a list of unclear items for further study in commentaries.

7.) Observation involves *saturating* oneself with the particulars of the text until one is aware of the need for their explanation. The observation step employs patience, precision, and persistence. Faithful observation is the *foundation* for accurate interpretation.

B. The second step is 'INTERPRETATION'—what does the text mean?

1.) Interpretation is based on good observation. The more time taken in observation, the less time will be needed for interpretation. Interpretation involves decisions about *what the author means*. Always look for a *single meaning* in the passage.

2.) Interpretation employs the normal rules of literary interpretation. It recognizes figures of speech such as metaphor, hyperbole, irony, etc. As is common in all literature, reality is often portrayed by symbols and imagery. Jesus referred to Himself as, '*The Bread of Life*', '*The Good Shepherd*', '*The Door*', etc.

3.) Interpretation looks carefully at language and grammar. Word meaning, syntax, composition, figures of speech, and verb tenses all effect accurate interpretation.

4.) Interpretation looks at culture. How did the author's audience live? What habits, customs, values, and beliefs permeated their culture? Since the accounts in Scripture occur in world history, the diligent Bible student will make note of the historical setting of his text.

5.) Interpretation acknowledges that '*context is king*'. Context is central in interpretation. Our procedure is to *reconstruct* the situation to which the biblical author is speaking. Was the biblical author addressing the legalism, false doctrine, sensuality, or unbelief of his readers?

6.) Interpretation *reconstructs* the occasion for which the book was written—this is accomplished by asking three kinds of questions:

Questions related to historical context:

- How does an understanding of the time period and geography of the culture help us *reconstruct* the situation addressed by the author?
- What is the *occasion*, or purpose for what is written?

Questions related to literary content:

- Are there figures of speech in view (metaphor, simile, symbol, etc.)?
- What is the attitude of the author in the text (encouragement, rebuke, instruction, correction, prayerful concern, warning, commendation)?
- What is the major idea communicated? Upon what basis is the author's appeal?
- What is the logical connection of this verse to the material around it? How does it connect to the rest of the book and to the Bible as a whole?

Questions related to grammar and syntax:

- What are the major divisions in the material? What marks the change in the flow of thought? What is the point of the sentence, what is the point of the paragraph?
- What is the author's train of thought? How does he develop it? Is he building a line of argument with supports, proofs, reasons, and results?

7.) Interpretation is never separated from reverence for God. 'Authorial intent' is critical if we are rightly handle God's truth. The text means what God intended it to mean. The text cannot mean today what it did not mean when it was written. The proper interpretation from the text is the result of faithful labor, and at times hard work and patience.

C. The third step is 'CORRELATION'—how does the text relate to the rest of the Bible?

1.) Correlation acknowledges that the Bible is one book. It is therefore important when studying the text to ask, "What has God said about this theme or subject—how is this word or theme explained in the rest of Scripture?"

2.) Correlation allows us to see a subject in light of the whole—the entire Bible. Correlation gives us *perspective* so that we 'major in majors' not in minors.

3.) Some of the major themes in Scripture include: *sin and grace, the character of God, judgment for disobedience, blessing for faith and obedience, Christ as Lord, Christ's*

all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, the coming Kingdom and glory. These themes repeatedly play out in historical settings in which the biblical writers address their audiences.

4.) Correlation involves doing an expanded, or theological, emphasis. It enables us to understand the part in light of the whole of Scripture.

5.) Correlation recognizes that Scripture never contradicts Scripture, therefore it provides a safety check for interpretation. Correlation is cognizant of the fact that Scripture truths commonly stand in a relationship of ‘tension’ to one another. For example God exercises sovereign control over history, yet men are responsible to God for their behavior.

6.) Correlation is valuable in order to understand what God says about a particular subject. Correlation is a skill that is learned by reading the Bible regularly and extensively and by cross-referencing. Some of the tools for correlation include: *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, *Nave’s Topical Bible*, *The MacArthur Topical Bible*, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, by Walter Elwell, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* by James Boice.

D. The fourth step is ‘APPLICATION’—how does the text apply to my life?

1.) Application is discovering what God is saying to me by His Word and then doing something about it. Application involves *personalization*—that is applying the whole text to oneself in an exercise of the will (Jas 1:22-25).

2.) Application’s basis is described in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. ‘*Reproof*’ is exposing wrong thinking and behavior. ‘*Correction*’ involves taking the steps necessary for change. God’s Word is given to correct what is wrong in thought and conduct.

3.) Application is first personal, then corporate. Those trained in righteousness by Scripture (Heb 5:13-14) are being equipped for *proclamation*. We are to disciple others and teach them what we have learned and are mastering (Matt 28:19-20; Rom 15:14; Eph 5:15-21; 2 Tim 2:2).

4.) Application means that we do not study Scripture simply for religious information, but for conformity to God’s will. When applied to one’s life, Scripture produces change, renewal, and transformation (Rom 12:1-2). We’ve seen in the *steps of Bible study* that we are to ask questions of the text all along the way. And application is no exception to this rule.

Questions for personal application form an acrostic, S P E C K L E:

- S. Is there a SIN for me to avoid?
- P. Is there a PROMISE for me to trust?
- E. Is there an EXAMPLE for me to follow?
- C. Is there a COMMAND for me to obey?
- K. Is there personal KNOWLEDGE of God for me to gain?
- L. Is there a LESSON which corrects an area of wrong thinking?
- E. Is there an obedience pattern to EVALUATE my Christian walk?

5.) There is unspeakable joy in obedience. The biblical process of change, brought about through personal application, is described as *putting off* old behaviors, and *putting on new behaviors* (Eph 4:23-32; Col 3:12-16).

Select Bibliography:

Arthur, Kay, *How to Study Your Bible*. Precept Ministries Reach Out, Inc., 1985.
Essex, Keith, *Applied Hermeneutics*. The Master's Seminary
Henrichson, Walter A., *A Layman's Guide to Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1976.
MacArthur Jr., John, *How to get the Most from God's Word*. Word Publishing, 1997.
Mayhew, Richard, *How to Interpret the Bible for Yourself*. Winona Lake, BMH, 1986, Moody Bible Institute.
Waymeyer, Matthew, *Cutting it Straight, Level One*. Grace Community Church, Panorama City, CA.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY:

(I.A.1-3). 1.) Read 1 John 1:1-3. Locate the words that tell us that the message of Christ in the Scriptures is the foundation of our ongoing fellowship with God?

(I.B.1-2) 2.) Read Psalm 145:1-13. Write down several phrases from this section which describe a believer *interpreting* God's works to God's glory. Do you regard it to be your responsibility to *speak* and *tell* of God's works? Has that been your practice to make God's works known?

(I.B.3-4) 3.) Read Psalm 119:1-16; Deut 8:3; Col 3:16. Write out a sentence explaining why submission to God's Word is submission to God Himself.

- ❖ (I.C.1-3) 4.) Read James 1:22-27. Why is the Word of God compared to a mirror?
- ❖ According to verse 22, what kind of person *deludes* himself?

- ❖ What does God say about the deluded person's religion (verse 26)?
- ❖ What kind of person will experience the blessing of God (verse 25)?

(I.C.4-5) 5.) Name some of the ways a believer is dependent upon the Holy Spirit in both Bible study and obedience. (Hint: What does the Holy Spirit supply?)

(II.A-B) 6.) Give at least two reasons why we should learn how to study the Bible.

(II.A-B) 7.) Read 2 Timothy 2:15. Will we give an account to God as to whether or not we have handled His Word accurately? Who are those who will be ashamed? Who will not be ashamed?

(III.A.1-2) 8.) What is the first of the four steps in Bible study? Explain what is meant by the 'boundary' of a context. (Hint: 'Boundary' is about how large a section of the Bible you will study, how many thought segments.)

(III.A.3-5) 9.) What is the value of *paraphrasing* the verse you are studying?

(III.B.1-2) 10.) Read John 10:1-6. If we interpret this passage *literally* (according to the plain meaning of the text), does it mean that Jesus was a real shepherd with a flock of four-legged, wooly sheep? Explain your answer thoroughly. (Hint: carefully look at the language in verse 6.)

(III.B.4-6) 11.) Context is so important to accurate interpretation, we are able to say, "context is king." Explain why this is so. (Hint: to illustrate the opposite, consider that false interpretations often involve taking something *out of context*.) Look at Matthew 13:24-30. One false interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the tares is that it is a lesson about profitable farming. What important theme has Jesus been addressing in Matthew 13?

(III.B.) 12.) Respond to the following statement: "Bible interpretation is very subjective. Each person is permitted their own interpretation—there is no one single interpretation for a text that is binding upon all." (Hint: Remember what was said in II.B.4 in your outline.)

(III.C.5) 13.) What is the third step in Bible study? Name at least one reason why this step helps protect us from inaccurate and 'novel' interpretations.

(III.D.1-3) 14.) Should the personal application of Scripture go no further than private application? Why or why not?

(III.D.4-5) 15.) Read Ephesians 4:23-32 and Colossians 3:12-16. God wants our old sinful behaviors to be _____, and He wants new Christ-like behaviors to be _____. Theologians refer to this biblical dynamic as *change through replacement behaviors*.

The Unbreakable Word of God, the Great Divider of Men

The study of the doctrine of the Word of God sets forth the reasons why God and His Word are one in purpose, power and authority. His Word does not return void, but accomplishes all that He intends (Is 55:10-11). Scripture states that God has magnified His Word according to all His name (Ps 138:2). In other words, God stakes His own reputation upon the unfailing quality of His Word. He has bound the integrity of His Word to the integrity of His name (His reputation). Those who rely upon His Word will not be ashamed or let down (Ps 25:1-3; Rom 10:11).

When Jesus stated the Scriptures cannot be broken, He was indicating that it is impossible to annul a single word of it (Prov 21:30; Jn 10:35). God's Word is the expression of His eternal decree. This is why Scripture states, "Forever Oh Lord, Thy Word is settled in Heaven (Ps 119:89). God's Word is the constant, the authoritative reference point. God does not adjust it or improvise it as history unfolds. Thus, the mystery of providence will never violate His Word, but will prove on the last day to be the fulfillment of His Word (2 Sam 22:31; Acts 13; Jer 23:29).

Our Lord has stated that only those who build upon the Rock of His Word will survive the devastating 'storm' of death (Matt 7:24-27). All other supposed supports of human existence, meaning, and security are but a foundation of sand compared to Scripture. For, the very cosmos itself is upheld by the Word of God. Thus, God's Word bears a sustaining relationship to the entire physical creation (2 Pet 3:5-7; Heb 1:3). God's Word has the power of fiat. In other words, by merely speaking God's words carry out His will in infinite power (Gen 1:3; Ps 33:6,9; Lk 5:23-26).

God condescends to use language and place His thoughts into words so that He may be known, worshipped, loved, enjoyed, and adored and trusted by two orders of creatures, humans and angels. We come to know Him savingly by His Word. Our darkened thinking desperately needs the light of truth by His Word (Jn 17:17). Christ is

God's truth incarnate, He is the light of the world (Jn 8:12; 12:35). By a word, Jesus demonstrated that He could heal, forgive, raise the dead, feed thousands, still a storm and imprison devils.

God's creation is the stage for the fulfillment of God's Word. The entire cosmos is His theater. Comprehending this aspect of reality will radically effect the way you look at redemptive history. For, in God's long suffering, He let the nations go their own way (Acts:14-16). Thus, by His incredible patience, He is holding back His wrath for the time being (2 Pet 3:8-9ff.). But, His righteous anger will eventually explode upon the planet full of sinners. If we do not grasp the intended impact of Romans 9:2-29, we might assume that God is presently detached and is tolerating all manner of evil, leaving it unchecked. But Scripture states that God is going to deal in absolute justice by means of a comprehensive sweeping judgment (Zeph 1:14-18). Only those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life will survive the Day of the Lord (Rev 17:8; 20:15). But, what is happening in the mean time?

Scripture tells us that a cosmic battle is raging. The stakes are immeasurably high: the glory of God, the truth of God, and the eternal souls of men. The initial declaration of war was by Lucifer who attacked God by attacking His Word. And, having influenced the apostacy of our first parents, he has set up a temporary kingdom of darkness constructed upon human and angelic sin. The Lord's Kingdom and the serpent's kingdom are locked in combat until the end of the age. God could have disintegrated His enemies in a millisecond, but instead He is engaged in the drama of redemption. Scripture sets this forth as grand demonstration: two kingdoms, two kinds of vessels, and two destinies.

The reason God is expressing long-suffering is that in His kindness He may bring many to salvation (Rom 2:4-8). For, from the same lump of depraved humanity He is forming vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor, vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy (Rom 9:21). Redemptive history and its consummation will prove to be the display of God's justice and mercy before the angelic hosts. The Bride of Christ will be presented in her perfection released from every effect of the curse (Eph 5:25-27). But, reprobates will be tormented with fire and brimstone before the holy angels (Rev 14:10-11).

So, how does the Word of God factor into the war of the ages? The answer is profound. For, it will be revealed that what you think of God's Word is what you think of God Himself. There is no neutral ground. Those who fear God walk

in the truth and light of His unfailing self-revelation. All those who reject the veracity of God's Word demonstrate by that posture of unbelief that they are firmly in Lucifer's camp (Rom 1:18). Apart from the power of Christ saving them, they will share in the devil's own fate (Matt 25:41). Scripture reminds us repeatedly about God's rightful honor, authority, power, and rule. But, as depraved individuals born spiritually dead, by nature we are children of wrath who walk according to the Prince of the Power of the air (Eph 2:1-3). This diagnosis of total depravity shocks us, for we don't want to believe that we have the same attitude to the Word of God as the devil himself. We tend to reject the fact that we view the authority of God's Word as a threat to our imagined autonomy.

Because God's Word is His self-revelation, it reveals His goodness, holiness, love, sovereignty, and ownership of the entire creation. Consider what this means, to come face to face with the Word of God is to be confronted with the voice of your Maker. Faith, or its absence does not make the Word of God true or false. Contrary to the serpent's lie, sin is powerless to create a new reality—sin started the 'death meter' ticking (Rom 5:12).

Whenever anyone hears the Word of God, a work of correspondence takes place. For, the divine quality of God's Word is immediately recognizable even by spiritually dead truth suppressors. Men suppress the truth with the purpose of clutching onto their imagined liberty from God. But in order to maintain this posture of independence, they attack God's Word—denying what they owe their Creator. They raise up fortresses against the knowledge of God and use their speculations to trample the veracity of His self-revelation (2 Cor 10:3-5). The central point of this being, the devil's suicidal wager that 'God and His Word are not one' in power and authority.

By their lives, words, and thoughts, unbelievers subscribe to the lie that God is not as good as His Word—thus the devil's original attack on Scripture is imitated by every unbeliever. Eve was hoodwinked by the false promise, "You will not die." This prevarication said in effect, "God is not as good as His threats and promises." The world of sinners whom the devil has deceived are involved in the same original 'wager'—for, they are all betting their eternal souls upon the folly that God is not as good as His Word. Oh, my friends I hope this is giving you clear insight into what God is doing in human history. He is glorifying His name, extolling His reputation by clearing His name of all slander, and vindicating His Word of all distrust. In the perfect fulfillment of His Word, He is silencing all charges of error and consistency and

fallibility. How sobering it is as we encounter the frequent phrase in the book of Ezekiel, “And then they will know that I am the Lord.” In the fifty or so times this phrase is used in Ezekiel. In the majority of instances in Ezekiel of ‘then they will know’, the phrase refers to finding out who God is by means of experiencing His crushing judgment.

This wager or contest regarding whose Word will stand, God’s or man’s, comes to a crisis point in Jeremiah 44:28. In an act of breathtaking insolence and blasphemy, the cohort dragging Jeremiah to Egypt utters the following: “But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her . . .” (Jer 44:17a). God’s response through the prophet is, “Then all the remnant of Judah who have gone to the land of Egypt to reside there, will know whose word will stand, Mine or theirs” (Jer 44:28b). What a horrifying sin is that unbelievers are so obstinate in their rebellion, that only in their destruction and damnation do they inescapably come face to face with the unbreak-ability of God’s Word.

In God’s sovereign mercy toward His elect, He, through their regeneration brings them to the full conviction that His Word is truth (Jn 17:17). We ought to be sobered by this fact that every single person will discover that God’s Word is perfect and infallible either by salvation or by damnation. The natural man is without excuse. For, even if he refuses to open God’s Word, his conscience tells him that he has eternal soul and that there is a Judgment Day coming. Because God is holy this is a moral universe. And, because this is a moral universe, reaping follows sowing. And because reaping follows sowing, man’s greatest need is forgiveness of sin. Only a fool denies the need of divine forgiveness.

The good news of the gospel can penetrate the most hardened heart. For, in the Person and work of Christ man’s greatest need has become God’s greatest deed. It is this author’s prayer that these truths are gripping your heart. In these last pages, there has been an explanation of the contours and scope of the battle of the ages. In view of this, it ought to make sense why your faith in God’s Word must be tested, refined, and ultimately approved (1 Pet 1:6-9). For, God is going to reveal in a most public way—before the watching universe, the actual species of faith of every man. That will happen in a most visible way, for Scripture states that, “. . . God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus” (Rom 2:16b).

The Day of the Lord has a rectifying effect on the people of God—it keeps

calibrating them to the priority of eternity and the fear of God. Thus, this big picture vantage point of the battlefield ought to be viewed with regularity so that we will keep perceiving what is at stake. For, the powers of darkness are exerting themselves relentlessly with a view to nullifying faith in God's Word. "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:3-4).

True believers bear fruit that remains (Jn 15:16). It is the godly who faithfully bring a crop of spiritual fruit to harvest (Lu 8:15). These are individuals in whom the Word of God 'dominates exceptionally'. Though at times the world tugs at them, with its cares and pleasures and possessions, these individuals are faithful. When speaking of the Word of God 'dominating exceptionally', it means the following: **1)** It is the message of God's absolute rule through His Word over a man's life. **2)** It is the transforming reality that the Word is an exclusive, exceptional message that must take up all interest in all of life. **3.)** It is the infinite privilege in being a partaker of the gospel, for in the gospel God has broken into our world to make an eternal covenant with sinners in mercy. **4.)** It is the dynamic power of the Word of God which exerts such a control over your life that it dictates his values concerning his pleasures, possessions, cares, and concerns. **5.)** It is the radical nature of the Word of God, for a true believer will not treat Scripture as one more thing but will regard it as revolutionary, producing all new values, new priorities, and a new worldview. Thus, as the Scriptures are supernatural in origin, their message of a coming Kingdom will control a man's goals and ambition. This coming Kingdom will ultimately fill the creation and eternity. Thus, the 'word of His grace' (Acts 20:32) is a revolutionary message of new life, new hope, new priorities, and a new world. **6.)** The Word dominates exceptionally unto fruitfulness because without the Word, by nature we are unfruitful soil able only to produce thorns.

Though countless individuals have professed Christ, they do not give evidence of being good soil. Consider that the intended effect of the seed of the Word implanted is a godly, fruitful life. But, where good soil is absent, these potential crops of spiritual fruit are choked out because the Word of God is relegated to last place. And, rather than 'holding the Word fast, and bearing fruit with perseverance, the individual is obsessed with 'cares, pleasures, and deceit of riches.' When Scripture is not our priority, it cannot dominate exceptionally, nor hold sway over a man's life.

The exceptional nature of God's Word as divine distinguishes it from all other books. Men examine the contents of other books. But the Word of God exegetes the reader! It locates your unbelief, your doubts and fears and idols. It is able to search you and diagnose you to the core. It can locate the most deeply concealed motives and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12-13). It has been correctly stated that the Bible is also the most dangerous book in the world. For, if you willfully and recklessly mishandle God's Word, it will seal your doom (2 Pet 3:16-17). Because Scripture is the revelation of the mind of God, it is the living and abiding Word of God (1 Pet 1:23).

Among the titles of the Son of God is: 'the Word of God' or the 'Logos'. In Him reside all the laws governing the order of the cosmos (Col 1:17). This is why the universe is a cosmos and not a chaos! The Son of God as the *Logos* is the reason the creation has rationality and is capable of investigation. As one physicist said recently, "Compared to the amount of information in the universe, the quantity of matter is inconsequential." What a statement, and as German author Werner Gitt titled his book on biblical creation, *In the Beginning was Information*.

Our God is transcendent, He lives outside of time, space, and mass; He is not part of the time-space continuum. When one considers His awesome majesty, what a foul sin it is to denigrate the authority of His Word. It is self-condemning to do so, for God has moved heaven and earth for the sake of communicating with us. He formed us in His own image and likeness that we might have a relationship with us, and He has spoken to us in His written Word, and in His Son, the living Word.

God wills to be known by us His creatures, by means of the instruction of His Word (Ps 78:5-8). Scripture has an extensive internal witness, for God frequently speaks about the character of His own Word—about its power, infallibility, and eternity (Ps 119:89; 138:2). The Book of Deuteronomy establishes an unbreakable link between faithfulness to His Word and success in Israel's calling. The Israelites are commanded to instruct their children in the knowledge of God, to remember His ordinances and to learn to fear Him (Deut 4:8-10; 6:4-9; 5:29-33; 6:23-25; 7:12-15).

God desires to possess His people in an unbreakable love relationship. But, as Israel of old was commanded; they must be holy to manifest His presence (Deut 7:6-8, 17-24). Israel must be careful to obey so as to possess the land (Deut 8:1). In order to keep His commands, they must love Him, fear Him, and serve Him with all heart and soul (Deut 30:19-20). His words must be impressed upon them in their mind and heart (Deut 10:12; 11:18-22). A people devoted to God will be His treasured possession for

praise, fame, and honor (Deut 26:16-18; Jer 13:11). God's people are commanded to choose life by loving God and following His ways (Deut 30:15-20). The Day of the Lord will reveal all that is hidden. God's eternal exclamation mark on the consummation of history is the installation of His Son's kingdom and the destruction of all other kingdoms. Christ will be publicly vindicated at His glorious return (Rev 19:11-16).

King David's relationship to God's Word filled every recess of His heart and mind. He indicates that meditating upon God's precepts is his treasure and delight and that God's commands are his counselors (Ps 119:11-16, 24). A remarkable statement of God's sovereignty over all the Psalmist states, "All things are Thy servants" (Ps 119:91). When Christ came to earth, He did not find one square yard completely devoted to His Father. But, by His Word and His finished work, He will ultimately retake the title deed the entirety of planet earth. At His second coming, He will crush the head of the usurper and glorify His chosen people (Rev 14; 19).

As a follower of Christ, how are you interacting with the Word of God? Do you content yourself with a few insights and academic considerations OR is the Word of God your very life? As Job said, "I have esteemed Thy Word is more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Countless church goers are merely 'auditing the truth' of God's Word and not living upon it in obedience. It is unwise to be content with second hand convictions. The Puritans remind us that one's faith claim is unsafe if it is untried.

In part, an offhand, accidental attitude toward the Word is because men do not understand the overarching purpose of redemptive history. Case in point, we never outgrow this controlling paradigm descriptive of a 'Godward life', *trust in God yields obedience to God, and trust in God is a function of knowing and relying upon Him and His Word*. He who trusts God, trusts His Word. The saving faith that the Lord grants to His elect is not meant to be static, for God also refines, tests, and tries it. This faith is not merely a general optimism or cheerful outlook. It is trust in the living and abiding Word of God.

God goes to greater ends than we can conceive of in proving the faith of His people (1 Pet 4:12-13). But, 'hyper grace' pulpits that major in a half gospel utterly miss the central point, namely that the testing of our faith is the manifestation of our perseverance (Heb 12:1-3), and it is our qualifying for the Kingdom (Acts 14:22). In the wilderness, the Israelites were sorely tested, but Scripture indicates that it was to do good to them in the end (Deut 8:16). This divine curriculum of testing is all about revealing our functional value system. God is weaning us from core values that are

merely temporal and not eternal. This is why His testing us is so closely tied to our eternal glory. On the last day proven faith will be revealed as more precious than gold (1 Pet 6-8). God's character is faithful character—and the saints by their trust, daily prove that to be so. As such, we honor God when we leverage ourselves upon Him and His promises in Scripture. Our trust exalts His character, and our trust becomes the instrument by which we develop proven character (Heb 6:11-12). Our reliance upon God and our obedience shout that God is trustworthy amidst a world caught up in a revolt against its Creator.

Only the gospel removes the ancient lie from our hearts (Col 1:19-23). The Edenic lie is lie about true source. For the lie offered self as a superior source to God Almighty. Jeremiah chapter 17 sets in opposition two competing sources of life and belonging: Yahweh, and our pitiful flesh. Where will we look for ultimate security, significance, and supply? In essence that question is, 'what will we worship as ultimate source'? Jeremiah boils this choice down to two options, reliance upon God Himself, or reliance upon an arm of flesh (Jer 17:5-9) (see also Job 40:14 on the absurdity of self-salvation).

In the Psalms it is only the godly man who makes God his refuge (Ps 46:1). In speaking of God's trustworthiness at times the psalmist refers to Him as our Rock, our Refuge or our Fortress. But, the man of the world is described by David as follows, "Deliver my soul from the wicked with Thy sword, from men with Thy hand oh Lord, from men of the world, whose portion is in this life; and whose belly Thou dost fill with Thy treasure; they are satisfied with children, and leave their abundance to their babes" (Ps 17:13-14b). The scoffer will not make the invisible God his dwelling place (Ps 90:1). But, conversely, in a very proactive way, the believer makes God his refuge by means of reliance upon His Word. King David states, "The wicked man did not make God his refuge but was strong in his desire" (Ps 52:7).

That strength of sinful desire is not simply lustful passions, but a graphic picture of the pride of life (1 Jn 2:15-16). For the natural man is confident that he can trade his talent and effort for what he needs and desires (Jer 17:5-6). But, God's hand is not so short that He cannot save, yet the unbeliever behaves as if he can save himself, yes even redeem himself. God does not need horse and rider in order to accomplish the victory (Ps 33:17). The true believer takes daily refuge in God just as the Psalmist was able to strengthen himself in his God (1 Sam 30:6). The believer takes refuge in God by leveraging himself upon God 's Word. This action is not only rational,

but required. For, God's Word is the same quality as His own perfection, excellence, wisdom, and power. Therefore, it is absurd for a man to imagine that there is a single neutral spot in the universe from which he can sit in judgment upon God's Word. For, this self-same Word created a cosmos, the creatures in it, and upholds the entire creation every moment.

True believers equate the infallibility of God's Word with God's oath to them.

For, God has made the oath that believing sinners shall have perfect representation by Him who has entered the veil for them (Heb 6:13-20). As we have seen above in this article, the battle of the ages is about whose word will stand, for there is God's Word, man's word, and the word of demons. Whose word will fall to the ground as impotent, proving to be a body of prevarications?

Fallen man's moral condition is described as the love of darkness; this means that his flight from the truth is an ethical issue (Jn 3:19-21). For human reason is not a neutral unbiased truth seeking faculty. It is a faculty created by God for the reception of divine revelation. Scripture tells us exactly what is going on in a man's faculty of reasoning. For, every man makes judgments based upon his heart commitments. The Word of God searches and probes a man's heart, and though men pretend to be objective, unbiased truth seekers, what they ultimately choose to believe is a function what their heart worships. Apart from Scripture, you will not discover the biases lodged in your heart. You won't know what sin deserves and you won't know who God is apart from the light of His self-revelation. Jesus said we will walk in darkness without Him (Jn 8:12). Men won't come to the light because they fear exposure (Jn 3:19-21).

Christ indicates that the world hates Him and the truth He preaches because He testifies that its deeds are evil (Jn 7:7, 17). When Jesus stood before Pilate, He stated that He came into the world to bear witness of the truth. This means that one's reaction to Christ's testimony of the truth reveals one's relationship to the truth. In our Lord's brief statement before Pilate, He was summing up the battle of the ages (Jn 18:36-38). For our Lord proclaimed, "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (Jn 18:37). Thus, to not be willing to hear His voice (a refusal to receive His truth claims) is to manifest that one is 'of the lie' and loves darkness.

The sacred Scriptures are able to make a man wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3:14-17). God's Word is sure (2 Pet 1:15-21). This sureness of His Word is because all of Scripture is backed up by the attributes and character of God. But, even more, His

Word rests upon His continual action and exertion of power in fulfilling His Word. The power of the gospel makes believers overcomers (Rom 1:16-17; 1 Jn 5:4-5). They become escapees from the corruption that is in the world by lust (2 Pet 1:3-4).. Only by the Word implanted is a man able to make it through life as an overcomer who is no longer living as an idolater.

Your ‘autobiography’ is being written day by day. It will be read publicly in the judgment to come. Will your story give glory to Christ as your redeemer? Are you prepared for that day? Did your life clearly demonstrate that it was built upon the Rock of God’s Word? This is why we make disciples, for we teach them to abide in Christ’s Word (Jn 8:31-32). Discipleship is our Lord’s provision and mandate so that every true believer will bear a relationship to the Word *in faith, reliance and obedience*. For, on the last day it is the words of Christ that will examine us (Jn 12:48).

CONCLUSION

God does all things for the His Name’s sake. God has annexed the honor of His Name to the veracity of His Word -- “Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven” (Ps 119:89). “Thou hast magnified Thy Word according to all Thy Name” (Ps 138:2). His Word is so important—our very faculties were created to receive His self-revelation, His Word (Ps 119:97-112). God’s Word must be the constant occupation of our attention. The psalmist saw his need to be constantly animated by God’s Word lest he stray, displease, rebel, and distrust (Ps 119:11, 105, 118-119). The believer is eager to have his life constantly conformed to God’s will, therefore he studies God’s Word that he might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will (Col 1:9). Ongoing repentance means that our lives are always being ‘aligned’ to God’s Word so that we love His truth and have our affections continually conformed to His truth (Ps 101; 111; 115). Since God’s reputation (His ‘Name’) is joined to His Word, our response must be unconditional trust in Him (Ps 33-34). The true believer has a passion to have His life conformed to the will of God found in His infallible Word.

God’s Word is attacked by Lucifer’s ‘Wager’. Unbelievers are hostile to the fact that God’s attributes, character, and zeal for His Name stand behind His inviolate, immutable Word. God binds Himself to His Word—staking His reputation upon the infallibility of His Word. The unbeliever’s attitude toward the Word of God mirrors Satan’s attitude toward the Word of God—for, every unbeliever, like Satan, speculates that God is not as good as His Word—not as good as His threats and promises. Every

unbeliever treats God's threats and warnings as 'idle threats.' Lucifer works tirelessly to make his own wager or bet (about God's Word) to be appealing to sinners—namely that Satan's own definition of freedom can be theirs. This luciferin 'freedom' is a 'master-less' freedom. The powers of darkness pump this lie through the medium of culture, making it as desirable as possible. No wonder he is called the 'god of this world' for Satan becomes the god of the unbeliever by default (2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2-3). It has been said that Satan has a terrible plan for a person's life. The evil one initiates that plan by doing his level best to erode confidence in God's Word.

Sin is deception, what the lie promises, it cannot deliver. It does not liberate or allow the sinner to transcend his creaturehood. Sin does not create a new reality. What sin does create is a 'death spiral' for those made in the image of God. Sin produces separation from God forever—eternal alienation from Him who is the source of all love, life, light, blessedness, meaning, well-being, and relationship. Our earth's moon has a reflected glory—it does not produce its own light. The moon serves the earth in countless ways. It stabilizes earth's axis, it mixes our oceans temperatures, flushes our bays and estuaries, and sets the reproductive clock of a multitude of earth's species. In its present orbit the moon serves and the moon reflects—that is its created glory—BUT if the moon left its orbit to wander into deep space it would lose all its glory. It would be useless, lost in the black vacuum of space, a wandering chunk of dust without an orbit, a meaningless undignified pock-marked ball of rock.

Much of the church today has 'domesticated' God. This false 'benign god' is missing such themes as wrath; burning holiness; ferocity; and vengeance. What men are willfully ignorant of is the fact that God is putting His own character and attributes on display in redemptive history. Every individual will ultimately prove to be an eternal object lesson on where they stood in relation to God's Word. Those who imitate Satan's wager will lose all their glory—1 Corinthians 1:19-20—instead of honor and life and blessedness, they will have eternal shame, misery, and dishonor. Neutral ground in this matter is an illusion. Everyone led by the evil one is also a rebel who has 'thrown down the gauntlet' before God Almighty. Redemptive history makes it clear that there is no neutrality.

The Psalms constantly repeat that there is a total antithesis between those who are of the truth and those who are not. God will exhibit perfect discrimination between these two groups of individuals when He brings history to its consummation. The Genesis flood is a paradigm of this perfect discrimination between believer and

unbeliever. The Genesis flood completely removed the illusion of neutrality. God took away all imagined middle ground. On the last day it will be the same (Lu 17:26-27), for the Day of the Lord will reveal that there are only two kinds of vessels: vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath—only two destinies: eternal life and eternal death (Rom 9:22-24).

What you think of God's Word is what you think of God Himself. God's immutable character backs up every word of Scripture. God and His Word are one in purpose, power, and perfection. God's Word will be fulfilled—it cannot be broken. Whether in redemption of the believer or damnation of the unrighteous—God will fulfill every threat and promise because He has joined the honor of His Great Name to the perfect fulfillment of His Word. God binds Himself to His Word. God has joined the greatness of His Name to the veracity and immutability of Scripture. God's honor and glory are leveraged upon the comprehensive fulfillment of His Word. Therefore, for God to not fulfill any part of His Word would mean that He is no longer jealous for the sake of His Name—which is impossible.

The unbeliever pretends that God's Word is not clear, not infallible, and not authoritative. But we must remember that when the unbeliever hears or reads God's Word there is an instant work of recognition taking place—the unbeliever knows he is hearing the voice of his Creator. Sinners are willfully forgetful of what God is doing in human history, for history is God confirming His Word—bringing to pass every word of it—staking His reputation on the veracity of His Word. God's universe is held together, ruled, ordered, and governed by God's Word. No matter how sincere, zealous, pious, wounded, self-sacrificing, or religious a person is—God will not alter or set aside His Word for you.

God loves people by giving them His Word and His Spirit, granting them faith in His Word and the power to be transformed by His Word. The reality of redemptive history exists so that God may confirm His Word in a public display or demonstration. Nothing is more absurd than to think that God is not as good as His Word. Sin is spiritual insanity. To know anything about God's purposes for human history is to see the depth of the folly of imagining there may be a chance that God will not fulfill every jot and tittle of His Word.

Repentance is not merely turning in remorse from moral failure; repentance is a repudiation (hatred) of one's imagined independence (autonomy) from God—and then falling at the feet of Him who is the Word—God incarnate—and from then on to be ruled by His Word. Diligent attention to God's Word is attention to God's will—we

cannot please and honor God unless our minds and hearts and consciences are captive to His Word. As we meditate on His Word and it fills our minds, conscience, and affections, our prayer lives will continually manifest a posture of repentance wherein we desist from our own ways and bow in trust, love, and obedience.