

1. How We Know What We Know About God

- a. God is wholly other.
 - Isa. 55:8-9, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*
 - Rom. 11:34, *For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?*
- b. We only know what God has revealed about himself.
 - Deut. 29:29, *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever.*
 - Martin Luther – “God in the nude.”
- c. How has God revealed himself?
 - general revelation
 - God’s revelation of himself to all mankind through creation. (Ps. 19:1, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*)
 - speaks of God’s nature, moral requirements, and personal reality.
 - nobody is ignorant of the existence and presence of God. (Rom. 1:19-20)
 - however unbelievers suppress the truth in unrighteousness. (Rom. 1:18)
 - C.S. Lewis – “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probably explanation is that I was made for another world.”
 - tells us that all is not right, that there is something more.
 - it tells us the problem but not the solution.
 - many false religions end here. They believe that this is all that God has given and he is now silent. Thus they worship aspects of creation, be it nature or other human beings.
 - special revelation
 - God’s solution to the problem set forth by general revelation.
 - his plan of salvation to showcase his glory.
 - God’s revelation of himself to sinners through redemptive history.
 - first mentioned in Gen. 3:15, *He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.*
 - forms of special revelation in history.
 - divine voice (God directly speaking)
 - prophecies, dreams, visions
 - miraculous events (flood, parting of the Red Sea, pouring out of the Holy Spirit)
 - theophanies (God taking on a visible form)
 - incarnation (God taking on human form)
 - form of special revelation today.
 - the Bible
 - written record of all of the above forms of special revelation.
 - Westminster Confession of Faith 1.1, *Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable, yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation: therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.*
- d. What it means to us

- God is intimately linked and concerned with his creation.
 - even post-Fall, he has not abandoned his creation.
 - no such thing as a consistent atheist.
 - God has revealed himself to all peoples around the world by general revelation.
 - furthermore, he hasn't just let us know that things are messed up but he has revealed even more of himself in stepping in to clean up the mess through special revelation.
 - believers in Christ are privy to God's redemptive work.
- both general and special revelation find their fulfillment and meaning in Christ.
 - special revelation helps us understand general revelation better.
 - Christianity isn't an other-worldly or anti-creation faith.
 - in the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only solution.
 - grace restores nature.
 - through the lens of Christ, we can better appreciate creation.

2. What We Believe About the Bible

a. The Authority of Scripture

- it is the very Word of God.
 - expectation that God's Word be recorded and remembered.
 - Deut. 6:6-9, Jude 3
- ancient Near Eastern covenants always included a written document/testimony.
 - treaties were often made between a greater king and a lesser king (suzerain-vassal)
 - not bilateral but unilateral, where the greater king determined the terms.
 - the covenant made on Sinai between God, the greater king, and man, the lesser king, and the "written documents" of the 10 Commandments follow the cultural practices of that time.
- the prophets of the OT
 - prophets were conscious of being called by God and having a message that wasn't their own.
 - considered mouthpieces of God. (Ex. 7:1, 18:18)
 - prophets didn't always understand their own messages. (Dan. 12:8, 9, Zech. 1:9, 2:3, 4:4)
 - they expected their writings to have the same authority as what they said.
 - way to test the legitimacy of the prophets.
- poetic books
 - recognition of some written form of God's Word. (Psalm 1:2, 19:7, 119)
 - recognized authority, expectations, demands.
- Jesus and apostles in the NT
 - by then, the books of the Jewish scriptures (Old Testament) had been agreed upon.
 - formula of "as Scripture says" or "it is written"
 - demonstrates authority.
 - all Scripture points to Christ.
 - Matt. 5:17-19, Christ fulfiller of the law and prophets.
 - John 5:45-47, Moses wrote of Christ.
- Pauline and pastoral epistles
 - self-testifying of its inspiration.
 - 2 Tim. 3:16, "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*"
 - 2 Pet. 1:19-21, prophecy not produced by man but by those carried along by the Holy Spirit.
 - Paul recognized the authority of his own work as given to him by God.
 - 1 Cor. 14:37, *the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.*
 - asked his letters to be read aloud to others.

- Col. 4:16, 1 Thess. 5:27

b. Why These Books and Not Others?

- seen that God rules his church by the written Word.
- the church does not make the Bible authoritative but only recognizes the authority already given by God to it.
- the OT is the same as that used by Christ and other Jews during that period.
- the NT books
 - generally accepted books from apostles.
 - Hebrews is unknown, Luke and Mark receiving authority from Paul and Peter.
 - consistency with other Scriptures.
 - read the non-canonical books and see the differences.
 - ultimately, much of it is trust that “My sheep hear my voice.” (John 10:27)

c. Other Attributes of Scripture

- inerrancy
 - God does not lie (Titus 1:2) and does not make mistakes (Heb. 4:13).
 - tied into the inspiration and authority of Scripture.
- clarity
 - the Bible is sufficient for knowledge of salvation be it through reading and especially through preaching.
 - it must be read with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- necessity
 - no one can know Christ and fellowship with him apart from Scripture.
 - it is the ground the truth of the gospel.
 - it must be partnered with the Holy Spirit to become efficacious.
- sufficiency
 - there is nothing else outside of what Scripture says that is necessary for salvation.
 - there is no need for extra revelation or more words from God.
 - we are not to add or subtract from Scripture. (Deut. 4:2, 12:32, Rev. 22:18-19)
 - human traditions are not to overrule what Scripture says.

d. What it means to us

- Scripture is God’s Word. It speaks with authority as the Creator speaks over his creation. It is to be trusted and obeyed.
- the beauty of Scripture
 - it is not simply dictation or just the random thoughts of holy people.
 - instead, what we see is God, by the Holy Spirit using distinct people at distinct times in distinct cultures, without “mind-control”, guiding them in their writing, such that the great tapestry of Scripture could be woven.
 - the story of redemption is an unfolding mystery recorded over thousands of years by a myriad of different people. That it would be clear and consistent through this whole process is nothing short but an act of God.
- WLC 3 – “What is the word of God? The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.”