

Foothill Bible Church
The Training Hour
Systematic Theology

The Doctrine of Scripture

Scripture is the self-authenticating communication of God to man in human language, recorded in written form, propositional in construction (i.e. rational truth statements in subject - predicate construction), employing the typical conventions of human communication (i.e. narrative, poetry, discourse, law, epistolary etc.), and thus understandable and internally coherent, utilizing the normal methods of contextual, grammatical, syntactical analysis common to rational human speech.

Six stages of God's Revelation of Himself to man in Scripture.*

1. Preparation: The *Vehicle* of Revelation

The Bible was not dictated in mechanical fashion, but came through the pens of more than 40 men over 1500 years, each writing from their various educational, cultural, social, and experiential backgrounds (Government officials, priests, kings, farmers, shepherds, fishermen, physician, scribe, tax collector).

A. Sovereign & Providential preparation of the authors (**Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15; Acts 7:20-22**)

2. Revelation: The *Content* of Revelation

Since God is wholly other (transcendent) in order to be known He must reveal Himself. He can not be discovered from "*down below*," but must be revealed "*from the top down*."

General vs. Special Revelation

General Revelation is *general* in two senses:

1. It is given to mankind in general, not to a restricted group (**Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:19-21**)
2. It gives a general knowledge of God in terms of His existence and something of His character, externally through creation, and internally through human personality (**Gen. 1:26-27**) and conscience (**Rom. 2:15**).

Special Revelation is the knowledge of God in concrete form given to a specific person or community. The principle channels of special revelation are:

- Direct communication ("God said to Moses")
- Mighty deeds and their interpretation ("miracles")
- The Prophets (Scriptures) (**Heb. 1:1**)
- Jesus Christ (**Heb. 1:2**).

3. Inspiration: The *Record* of Revelation

"Inspiration is... a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given divine trustworthiness." (BB Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 131)

- The meaning of inspiration - “*God-breathed*” (**2 Timothy 3:16**). Note: The writings, not the writers were inspired, thus not everything written by a prophet or apostle was inspired.
- The method of inspiration - “*borne along by the Spirit*” (**2 Peter 1:19-21; Cf. Acts 27:15**).
- The miracle of inspiration - Scripture (**1 Cor. 2:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:15-16**)
- Proofs (**Ex. 20:1; Jer. 30:2; 31:2; Heb. 3:7 / 4:7 / Ps. 95:7; John 16:13; Rom. 9:17**)

Infallibility and authority are correlative to inspiration. In other words if the Scriptures are the actual word of God then they are by definition inerrant and infallible (in the original autographa).

4. **Preservation:** The *Security* of Revelation

“Theoretically, Scripture could be corrupted, lost or destroyed. Therefore, God also preserves Scripture so that His people might, in each generation, possess the very Word of God.” McCune, A Systematic Theology 1:49

The promise of preservation is primarily implicit and taught indirectly (Matt. 5:17-18; Rev. 22:18-19). The work of preservation is providential rather than miraculous. Because of this God does not prevent mistranslations or errant transmissions (1 Sam. 13:1). We can have confidence that we have the accurate and entire word of God through the science of textual criticism.

5. **Illumination:** The *Certainty* and *Significance* of Revelation

Because of the effect of depravity upon the human heart and mind (**Rom. 8:7; Eph. 4:18**), the Spirit of God must both confirm the certainty of the Scriptures to His people and enable them to properly apprehend them. Illumination removes man’s inherent hostility to the God and His Scripture.

- **Certainty** (*testimonium*) - The Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures to confirm the reliability of Scripture, giving us certainty that the Bible is the Word of God. If God opens the heart at the moment of regeneration then rational proofs are unnecessary and unconvincing, unless Arminianism is true, then rational proofs would be important.
- **Significance** (illumination) - The Spirit does not make the text of Scripture more clear, He changes the sinners formerly darkened heart and mind making them able to see and understand the already clear central meaning of Scripture, as well as provide the ability to continually grasp the significance of the whole Scripture as an ongoing activity (**Eph. 1:17-18**).

6. **Interpretation:** The *Meaning* of Revelation

While illumination guarantees the certainty of the Scripture’s source and significance, interpretation uncovers it’s meaning (**Prov. 6:23**). Because Scripture is objective, written revelation, it yields itself to a historical, grammatical, syntactical approach in order to determine it’s meaning.

* This arrangement was taken from "A Systematic Theology of biblical Christianity," Rolland McCune, pg. 37