

The History of Revelation

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[0 : 00] So today we're going to start what will probably be a five-part series.! I may actually cut it down to four. It may expand to fill available space.

! We'll see. So the series is a series to look at understanding the Bible. What is the Bible? And ultimately what I'm hoping that we'll achieve is to build confidence and understanding in the Bible as God's revelation. What does it mean that the Bible is the Word of God?

As we've been going through the book of 1 Samuel, every now and again I'll mention, oh, there's a textual problem here, or this verse could say something else, or this word could mean something else, and I'll say, I'll refer to things like the Septuagint.

And I felt myself thinking, have I really adequately explained these things? And are we at risk of not really understanding what we mean by the Word of God is inerrant if I'm also saying, but the Word, we don't know what it means, or this Word's dropped out. So I thought, and that thought turned into a whole five-part series. So here we are.

So this is the outline that I'm aiming for. And so the first session will be, is today, the history of God's revelation. And what I want to achieve today is look at how God has revealed himself throughout history, ultimately leading up to today, where we have the written scriptures, the Word of God as the primary way that he speaks. And I think the outcome will be, it's just amazing to consider that God wants to speak to us. He wants us to hear from him.

[1 : 55] The second session then will be the history of scripture. And that's where we're going to look at how did what is written come together? What's the history behind it? What languages did God choose to use? What texts do we still have available? How are they preserved? And what will the outcome we'll find is it's amazing. The preservation and the volume of texts still available is remarkable given how old it all is. The third session then is going to be focused on translations. Why are there so many? Why do we have so many Bible translations?

So having understood what we have, this session is going to be about, well, how do we get from a big pile of ancient language texts to one single English volume? Why do we have so many? So in order to show you why and why different Bible translations often read quite differently, I'm going to talk a bit about Hebrew, a bit about Koine Greek, and some of the challenges around translation, because Hebrew in particular is so different to English, not just in terms of the syntax, but also just in the way that they conceive of things. So we'll talk about that. And really, what I'm going to go on to show is you can't really ever get a best Bible, English Bible. You can't, because no one English translation can fully encapsulate all that God has said. The fourth session then is on the nature of Scripture, why it's reliable. So this is where we start to get onto the spiritual side. 2 Timothy 3.16 says that Scripture is God-breathed.

What does that mean? What does it mean when we speak of it being inerrant and infallible? And I'm going to show you a few things that you may have seen before, you may not, but they are proofs that this is a supernatural book, proofs that it is from God and it cannot have come about by any other way. And then the final one, fifth and final session is about the Word of God, Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the Bible, and how the Bible authenticates Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ authenticates the Bible. And you have this package, and I want to show how both of them authenticate one another.

And also conclude with the hopefully reassuring point that in spite of all the things we've discussed, the Bible is for everybody. We have the Holy Spirit. He is given so that we can all understand it and receive from it, even though there are things in there beyond me. So that's what we're going to try and do, if possible. And I hope that the overall outcome for this series is going to be just a real appreciation and awe in what we have. I wanted to show you this verse here. Psalm 138 verse 2. Just that highlighted bit there. This is from the New King James Version. And David says, you have

magnified your word above all your name. Which is an astounding thing for David to say, because the name of God, one's name represents one's power, character, glory, everything. And then David says, well, God has lifted his word even over that. And it just shows how seriously God takes his word, and how pressured it is, and how serious we should take it too. And my prayer is that we'll keep that in mind. We'll keep an awe.

As we go through some of the technical things, my hope is that I'll keep it engaging and exciting, and something that we can all connect to. So, the history of God's revelation. Today, there's three key things I'm hoping to achieve today, and you can let me know afterwards how well I've succeeded.

[5 : 53] Three key points, and they are these. One, God wants to make himself known to people. He wants humans that he has made, he wants them to know him. And I mean know him, not know about him. I mean know him. He doesn't simply want us to know about God and some of his characteristics. He wants us to be in relationship with him. Secondly, that God has used a number of different forms to communicate, to reveal himself, to build that relationship, and we'll go through some of those.

And we'll talk about, in particular, two categories, general revelation and special revelation. And I'll show you how special revelation must take priority.

And hopefully, we'll look at that all the way through from Adam and Eve to, depending on time, either to the Old Testament or through to the New Testament as well. And then the last point, then, is going to be about how the written word has become the primary means of God's revelation today. It's the climax. It is, for us, then, today, it is the final word on God's truth.

So, now, I should say this as a note. I'm taking for granted that God exists this morning. Taking that for granted. His existence is self-evident from creation. Okay? And I think everybody in this room will probably agree with that. The reality is, the fact that anything exists at all, anything has been created, it demands a creator. And actually, atheism can be immediately rejected as illogical. Because we know that we have a reality and that it had a beginning. That is enough for one to conclude there must have been somebody who started it. God. Okay? Simple. And when we start to look at creation and what God has made, there are two things that become apparent. One is, it's amazing.

[8 : 05] It's amazing. It's so incredibly, it blows up. Whether we look at the expanse of the heavens and we see how far into the universe we can see and we look at the stars and the planets, or we go the other way and we look at the microscopic and we look at the cells and even beyond that into the atoms.

It doesn't matter where we look. It's amazing. And the genius of God is throughout. Psalm 19 verses 1 and 2 say that the heavens tell of the glory of God and their expanse declares the work of his hands.

Day to day pours forth speech and night to night reveals knowledge. And similarly, another verse on that is Romans chapter 1 verse 12, where Paul says that since the creation of the world, his, God's, invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made so that they, the unbelieving, are without excuse.

Clear enough, right? So that's one thing that becomes clear. As we look at creation, we see not just that God exists, but we see aspects of his character, his creative genius. But the second thing is, it's kind of broken, right? It's kind of broken. And again, it doesn't matter where you look, you see, it's broken. The human body is just an astounding feat of biological engineering, and yet every single component is vulnerable to some kind of disease. Every single bit. And many of you are probably saying, yes, amen, I know. Every bit. What about the climate and the weather system? Ingenious system that God has created to get water, which is heavier than air, to fall from the sky and water the crops.

Incredible, but it's broken and we get extreme weather. Genius, but broken. And so what we see then is exactly what the Bible says. Genesis 3 speaks of God cursing the ground because of Adam's sin. And Romans 8, 19 goes on to say how creation groans and suffers, and then adds, so do we. And again, we all say amen. So that's, but what I have just done is I've given you an example of general revelation.

[10 : 32] All of that is general revelation. All of what I've just told you is freely available to anybody who will look up at the sky and think about it. Right? And I've shown you some of the scriptures that show that, you know, we're not mad, but it's true. You can see it's genius, and you can see it's

broken.

General revelation, which is to say the things that you can know and discover about God through what he has made. Knowledge that is generally available to all of humanity. It doesn't matter what language you speak. It doesn't matter what culture you're from. You can see it. And then special revelation then is the counterpart to that, I suppose. And that just means where God has directly and specifically communicated with people. Throughout the roughly 6,000 years of history, God has directly spoken to humanity time and again. Probably the first example would be in Genesis 2, when God had created Adam and Eve, and he said to them, don't eat from that tree. Not that one. Any other tree is good, not that one. A special revelation. They couldn't have figured that out without God saying it. And interestingly, if you look at this verse here from Genesis 3, if I can advance the slide,

Genesis 3, 6, the fruit looked good, right? Eve took of that fruit, and if she had not had that special revelation, if she had only had, what can I see and know? Well, actually, the fruit looks good. It's good for fruit. It's good for food. It's attractive to the eye. It's desirable for making one wise. So what you see from this, then, is that special revelation, when God speaks, it must overrule general revelation, of course. 2 Corinthians 5, 7 says that we walk by faith and not by sight. That is to say, we walk by faith, which is believing what God has said. We believe special revelation, what God has revealed over and above what we see. General revelation. Okay. So, now, I wanted to make one other quick point, again, on the subject of why. Why does God make himself known, which we've touched on already, and I wanted to just take a moment to emphasize God's desire for relationship with humans, with people.

God wants for humanity to know him, so that we can choose to live in relationship with him, which is exactly how we are designed. In John chapter 17, verses 2 and 3, Jesus is praying, and he says, just as you gave him authority over all mankind, so that to all whom you have given him, he, there's speaking about himself, sorry, he may give eternal life, and this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. God the Father wants us to know him, and that is why Jesus came. And there, in his prayer, he is connecting, interestingly, eternal life with knowing God and knowing Jesus, saving knowledge. Because again, as I've touched on, Adam and Eve ate the fruit, we had the curse on the ground, mankind is in a fallen state, and the relationship is broken to the extent that we call it death. It's death. And God, who is the author of life, to be cut off from him, that is death, spiritually speaking. And so relationship isn't possible. General revelation can show us a lot about God, but it cannot show us how to have a relationship with him. It cannot show us how to be restored. All it can really do is tell us that the fall sucks. That's about it. We need the special revelation of God to show us how to be saved, how to know him. Okay, that's the why. Now, check out the slide I found. I got this on Creation Ministries International. I will try and send down the slide so you can zoom in a little bit on this one, because there is a lot of detail on there.

This slide is the history of the Bible, the timeline of the Bible, all the way from creation, right the way through to Jesus Christ and just after. Now, we don't know exactly when the earth was created, when the universe was created. The date today is the 29th of Nisan, the year 5785.

[15 : 30] And what does that mean, Hebrew calendar? Well, as far as the Hebrew calendar is concerned, it is the 5785th year since creation. Maybe? I don't know. The dates on this timeline, and we normally say about 6,000 years ago, that these are actually based on the 17th century book, The Annals of the World by James Usher. And he proposed a creation year of 4004 BC, based purely on his own research and the biblical texts. And Answers in Genesis and Creation Ministries broadly agree. You can't really know for sure, because sometimes generations are not included.

Sometimes generations happen to overlap, and you just don't know. But that roughly is the timeline in the Bible. And isn't it amazing? So obviously, the red bar is there. That's the pre-flood gentleman, from Adam through Noah at the top. And did you know that Adam lived long enough to see Noah's father, Lameh? And or that Noah was still alive when Abraham's father, Terah, was born? Amazing. Although Shem was still alive. You know, Shem, who was on the ark, was still alive when Isaac was born to Abraham. Amazing how far these guys overlapped.

So that's the timeline. And so now I wanted to show you, through the different eras, how God's revelation works. And we're going to start by looking at how did it work pre-law?

And if you look at the timeline, that means everything before Moses. I can't quite get around to see Moses, but it's more than halfway across. You can see where the Exodus is there, just at the end of, well, Genesis.

[17:27] So this is more than half of the Old Testament time, chronologically speaking. So pre-law, or prior to Moses, about 2,600 years.

How did God's revelation work? How did God make himself known to people? And the first one is, well, he did it by direct speech, by talking to people. I could show you a bunch of examples. Obviously, we have already talked about Adam and Eve.

Let me, I'll show you how God spoke to Noah here in Genesis 6, verse 12 to 13. It says this, God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for humanity had corrupted its way upon the earth. And then God said to Noah, The end of humanity has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence because of people. Not much has changed. And behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

And then God goes on to give Noah very precise instructions for the ark. I almost imagine Noah writing down on his blueprints the dimensions and the decks and the window at the top.

[18:41] God gives it all, and by all accounts, it's very straightforward, verbal. God is just telling Noah what to do. We could look at Genesis 12, where the Lord speaks with Abram or Abraham.

And it's very matter of fact. Hey, get out of your country. Go to the place I'm going to show you. So we could look at a bunch of those. But the sum of it is, God communicated verbally, directly with some people, and they would have a conversation.

What else do we see? Well, another way is through a vision. Through a vision. God will communicate with people through a vision. That's what we see. Again, this is pre-Moses.

Genesis chapter 15, verse 1. It says this. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Do not fear, Abram.

I am a shield to you. Your reward shall be very great. A vision. And again, God and Abraham go on to have a conversation. And that conversation concludes with this very mysterious covenant being cut.

[19:51] And you may remember the story of the smoking pot. And you're thinking, huh, is this all in the vision? Another one we could look at would be Jacob.

In Genesis 46, it says that he had visions of the night in which God spoke to him. But again, so there are visions, and they seem to be a little bit more mysterious, but it's still clear enough. It's still clear enough. At least in this time, Abram, Jacob, they understand what God is trying to say to them. Thirdly, as we review it, we see dreams used.

We see dreams. I think the first example of a dream being used as a mode of communication is actually a guy called Abimelech.

So not even one of the covenant people. This is in Genesis chapter 20. The story here is that Abraham and Sarah are lodging in a place called Gerar. And Sarah is unusually beautiful.

[20:58] And in order to avoid the risk of being killed out of a fit of jealousy, Abraham habitually says that Sarah is his sister rather than his wife. And so Abimelech, the king, believes that Sarah is single and he wants to marry her.

But God, Genesis 20 verse 3, But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night and said to him, Behold, you're a dead man. Because of the woman whom you have taken, Fishy, is married. And interestingly, they go on to have a conversation and Abimelech is like, But I didn't know. And so dreams are a method that God uses to speak. And again, in this case, it's quite straightforward. Speak, speak. Hear, understand. But then, if you read forward in Genesis, you come to a guy called Joseph. Now Joseph had some dreams. And if you read Genesis 28 verse 10 and following, Then you'll read this...

Oh, sorry, I beg your pardon. I'm getting ahead of myself. That one is Jacob dreaming about this divine ladder. And then there's Joseph. And you get on now to examples that are not clear.

[22:09] It's not a case of, here's the message. There's an interpretation that's required. In Genesis 37 verses 6 through 8, You've got Joseph speaking about his dreams.

And he says this. He says, Not straightforward.

This isn't a message. This isn't a conversation. This is an experience. It's a pictorial thing. However, then his brother said to him, Are you actually going to reign over us?

Or are you really going to rule over us? So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. So we observe that the dream doesn't contain direct communication. And it needed interpretation.

However, they didn't seem to have much trouble interpreting it. They interpret it well enough. And the dreams are proven to be prophetic. I'm sure you have read the story.

[23 : 13] As we go through Genesis, They do ultimately bow down to him. So dreams is a method that God uses. And we're starting to see that it's not always straightforward now. And the last one I wanted to show you is a theophany.

Fancy word. Anyone know what theophany means? It's an appearance or a picture of God. Theo or Christophany would be of Christ. Theophany, an appearance of God.

Christophany, an appearance of Christ. And we could look at a few examples of these. We could look at Genesis 16, Where there's a lady called Hagar and her son Ishmael.

And God appears and speaks to her. Abraham has got three different examples I could find. For example, there are three men who come to him.

One of whom is identified as, I think, the angel of the Lord. Or certainly turns out to be God. The one who is going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. And another famous example is in Genesis 32, Where Jacob wrestles this man.

[24 : 17] And it's really quite a strange scene. But he's someone who turns out to be, Why do you ask my name? It's wonderful. And generally it is believed and accepted that that is a theophany.

An Old Testament's appearance of God. So God appears. God appears. And he will communicate. Sometimes verbally. Sometimes through wrestling.

So, to sum all that up then. Pre-law revelation. Before Moses came. God's special revelation. How God spoke to mankind.

Seemed to be done. Primarily through speech. Or through some kind of experience. And this, again, is half of the Old Testament timeline.

And the thing that really struck me as I stood back from that. Is how rarely it seems that God spoke. Or people heard from God. Abraham lived 175 years.

[25 : 21] And it seems that God spoke to him maybe a dozen times. Now, of course, it is possible that there were other instances that weren't recorded.

Of course that's possible. But I certainly would maintain that hearing from God is not common. It's not common, it seems to me. Now, Moses.

Things change with Moses. Now, how was Moses called, first of all? How did God call Moses?

Well, the answer is, God appeared to him in an experience.

You may know the story from Exodus 3. The burning bush. It says that the angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord. Which is usually, that would normally be speaking of the singular angel of the Lord.

Which is to say, God or Jesus Christ pre-incarnate. But the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of the bush. And he looked and behold, the bush was burning with fire.

[26 : 21] And yet the bush was not being consumed. What's interesting is that Moses just happened to be on the mountain. He just happened to be out with the sheep. And God appeared to him.

An experience. God appeared to him. And much like the earlier examples, there is a conversation. I think it's a long conversation. Something like a chapter and a half of God and Moses speaking.

With Moses effectively making excuses for why he doesn't have to obey. But again, how do they speak? It just seems to be words spoken and shared.

But as we read through the rest of the books of Moses, the five books of the Torah, we quickly discover that Moses had a unique relationship.

Check this out. This is Numbers 12, verses 5 through 8. And it says this. The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent.

[27 : 23] And he called Aaron and Miriam. When they had both come forward, he said, Now hear my words. If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known to him in a vision.

I will speak to him in a dream. It is not this way for my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my household. With him, I speak mouth to mouth.

That is, openly and not using mysterious language. And he beholds the form of the Lord. So why were you not afraid to speak against my servants, against Moses?

And I just think that's a fascinating thing for God to say. Because it shows, well, it shows a few things, doesn't it? It shows how God would normally speak to prophets. Moses, which is, what was the language now?

Mysterious language in a vision. And it's like, it's not that way with Moses. I just speak to him with words. It's plain. It's straightforward. And he is uniquely blessed in that regard.

[28 : 30] Mysterious language is basically, it means a riddle. A riddle. Another passage you might look at would be Exodus 33.

Which I think, just in the interest of time, I'm going to skip that. But that's the one where it speaks about how God would come down and meet with Moses in a tent of meeting. And all the people would wait and see. And it says that the Lord would speak to Moses face to face.

Face to face. As a man speaks with his friend. I can't find the verse now. Excuse me for tipping the sides there. So again, we see this favoured relationship that Moses had.

This closeness that Moses enjoyed. It's amazing. And so, what about everybody else then? What about everybody else? How did they hear from God? And in Exodus chapter 18, what we discover. This is after the Exodus. After Moses has led the people out. And we read about how Moses would sit there all day. And they would all come to him. Everybody would come to Moses. And Moses gets some advice.

[29 : 36] He's like, this is not sustainable. You need to appoint some other judges to sit and tell there and speak God's will. But ultimately, of course, where we're heading is that we will start to see it written down.

The written law. God wrote Moses. God will write down. Moses will write God's words down for all to hear. So, in Exodus 17, verse 40.

This was the first place I could find where it speaks of writing being commanded. This is after this decisive battle with Amalek. And the Lord said to Moses, write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly wipe out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

So, write it down. The battle happened. Write it down so that it is remembered. For the sake of remembrance. So that you can remember what God did. Now, of course, the first written law, the Ten Commandments, was written by God himself.

God himself wrote those Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20. And then we get to chapter 21. And this is how it opens. Chapter 21, verse 1.

[30 : 54] These are the ordinances which you are to set before them. So God is commanding Moses. I'm going to give you some laws. You need to set them before the people. I reveal it to you.

You write it down. And speak it. Exodus 34, verse 27 says this. The Lord said to Moses, write down these words.

In accordance with these words, I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. So we start to see in Moses' day, we're moving from just purely verbal communication, purely verbal revelation to written word.

This is the word of God. And it's written down so that it can be read and understood by the common people. You know, it's interesting. I was thinking, how many people could read?

Was this really available to everybody? And then I came across... Well, actually, you could read Deuteronomy 6 and Deuteronomy 11 on this. But this is an important one from Deuteronomy 11, verses 18 to 21.

[31 : 57] Where Moses is speaking here. And he says, You shall therefore take these words of mine to heart and to soul, and you shall tie them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets on your forehead.

You shall also teach them to your sons, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your sons may be increased on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to give them as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Which is quite a long time. So they're all to write it down. They are all to know, to study, to just converse about it, and to write it down.

So I take from this that these generations, they were literate. They could read. They could write. They were able to have, to some extent at least, their own copies. Maybe a family copy, I'm not sure.

But they would read them together. They would teach them to the children. They would recite. They would memorize. You know, and there was a whole communal aspect to this.

[33 : 07] Deuteronomy chapter 31 verse 10, it says there that the whole of the Torah, the whole of the law was to be read together when they gathered for the Feast of Booths. It must have taken a little while.

But that's what it said. So there was this, they were always reading. How did God communicate? Well, they were starting to read what God had said and read it together. So it's a big shift. It's a big shift.

God's commandments and promises are now permanently written down, preserved. Awesome stuff. All right. I think so anyway. What happens after Moses?

Well, of course, God had some more to say. He would give leaders some specific guidance. So immediately after the death of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, we have the book of Joshua. And it opens with God giving Joshua guidance immediately. God spoke to Joshua to command him. And we see a theophany or possibly a Christophany at the end of Joshua chapter 5.

[34 : 09] There's an appearance of the angel of the Lord coming to guide. And then in Joshua chapter 7, there's a fascinating story where there's a defeat.

Israel are defeated in the promised land. Why? God, why did this happen? And God's like, stand up. I'll tell you why. It's because there's sin. So it's given verbally.

God speaks directly to Joshua. There is sin in the camp. But then what happens is they go through this whole process of drawing lots to show who it is. And I was thinking, why didn't God just say, by the way, it was that dude Achan?

And I thought, well, it's because God wanted to communicate in a way that everyone will be able to see. No one will be able to dispute that the lots were drawn and they fell to Achan. So God is starting to speak in another way.

Now, let me show you a few other verses from this period. First, Samuel chapter 3, which of course we've looked at in the past. It says that the boy Samuel was attending to the service of the Lord before Eli.

[35 : 19] And word from the Lord was rare in those days. Visions were infrequent. So Samuel came, you'll remember, at the end of the time of the judges.

And this sad verse is saying people didn't hear from God very much. Yes, they had the law. But we know that their obedience was waning.

And so was it being read? Did people know? Were people hearing the law of God? The word of the Lord was rare in those days. Visions were infrequent.

And then another verse that I thought gives a bit of insight into how the Lord spoke to people is this one from 1 Samuel 28, verse 6. This is Saul. And it says, Saul inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

So Saul wanted to hear from God. Lord, I want you to speak to me with the sincerity that he could muster at that time at least. And it says that God didn't answer him either by either of these three methods.

[36 : 24] Dreams, Urim, which just means it's just the Hebrew word for lights. And that's usually understood to be referring to the breast piece and the method of discerning God's will and word through the high priest.

The detail of that is lost. We don't really know. But it was a way that God would speak. Or by the prophets. And again, Samuel was the first prophet, as I spoke.

And he was installing a number of prophets and training them up. But the Lord would not speak to Saul. So now let's look back to the timeline of the Bible.

So now as we move into the time of the prophets, how does God speak? Things are starting to change. Samuel was bringing in this new time. He was the one who brought in the time of the kings. Remember, we've been through the book. And he was installing the first two kings and also raising up prophets. And if you look back at the timeline here, you can see, hopefully, you can see the books of the prophets over there on the far left.

[37 : 33] So during this period, the period of the prophets, God would speak to his people through the prophets. And if you just pick a random book of the prophets and open up to the beginning, you will find something like the beginning of Isaiah chapter one, verse one, where it says, The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of

Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

So a vision. Isaiah had visions. And he wrote it down. Or maybe you would look at Hosea, chapter one, verse one, where it says, The word of the Lord came to Hosea, the son of Beerai, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, same kings.

And during the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel. The word of the Lord came. Hosea heard the word of the Lord and he wrote it down. Now, so God wants to communicate to the nation.

He chooses to do it through special revelation, through a message to a specific generation. And he called these men to write it down. Isaiah 30, verse eight says, it has God commanding it to be written down.

Go write it on a tablet in their presence. Inscribe it on a scroll that it may serve in the time to come as a witness forever. So in the days of the prophets, God is speaking through visions, through dreams, verbally to the prophets.

[39 : 05] And they are writing it down. Generally, they are writing it down to preserve it. And so that it can be read for generations to come. Because a lot of what they were saying was for future generations.

Now, I wanted to show you one thing. This is from Zechariah 7, verse 12.

Look at what it says. It says, the verse says, Zechariah 8, verse 12.

The law, the Torah, is being put on, it's been spoken of in the same breath as the former prophets. The prophets who have spoken beforehand. So they're all on equal footing.

So what this says to me and what this says to us is that immediately the words of the prophets were regarded as the word of God. They were regarded as the revealed word of God which should be preserved just as the law of Moses was, the Torah was.

[40 : 34] Right. I haven't left myself long for this. So we'll see how we get on now. Because I've got a little bit to say about Christ and the New Testament before we come to a close. Now, you may know after Malachi, the final prophet, we've got these so-called 400 silent years in which there were no prophets and no further scripture was written.

Now, there was a lot written down. And we'll probably touch on some of the Apocrypha in a future session. So there was stuff written down, but it wasn't the word of God.

So with the close of the Old Testament or the Tanakh, God has said everything that he needs to say until now. And what the Old Testament does for us is it reveals the holy, powerful, mighty character of God as one who is intolerant of sin.

And yet who is at the same time forgiving and merciful. And he longs to bring the repentance to him. And it paints this very vivid picture of the problem of sin with perfect clarity.

And it shows the dreadful effects of sin. And it shows that it's only through sacrifice and shed blood that there can be forgiveness. And even that is only temporary.

[41 : 53] And then it goes on to present for us many, many prophecies and predictions as to how God will permanently resolve sin. And this is all of what the Old Testament says.

And we'll get into some detail on this later. But Daniel 9 gives us the timing of when Jesus will come. Genesis 3, Zechariah 9 give us the mission. The king coming with salvation to crush the head of the serpent.

Isaiah 53, Psalm 22. They show us the pierced hands and feet and the bearing of our iniquity. So it's all there in advance. God has written it all down. He says it's going to come.

And then we come to the New Testament. And we immediately encounter the one whom the Apostle John calls the Word. The Word. The Word of God.

And he says that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory. Glory is of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. So Christ came as the embodiment of the revelation of God.

[42 : 57] It's amazing. Hebrews 1 begins with this. Hebrews says, God, after he spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days, he has spoken to us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also made the world.

And you could unpack that verse forever. Beautiful, beautiful. But it shows you that progression, doesn't it? We now have the Son. We have the Son of God who is now speaking to us.

So in the lifetime of Christ, God's revelation was living and breathing. And Christ called men to be with him, to spend time with him, to record what he said.

Matthew, you may know, he was a tax collector. He was like an administrator. He would have been fluent with shorthand. And that's why Matthew's gospel has got so much dialogue.

Monologue might be better. He recorded all that Jesus said because he was equipped and skilled to do it. Christ called the right man to record his words.

[44 : 10] And then, of course, after Christ's ascension, they were then led by the Holy Spirit to write various letters, which became the rest of the New Testament.

And just one thing I'll show you from 2 Peter 3.15. These were immediately considered to be scripture as well. 2 Peter 3.15. He says, Peter says, Just as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which there are some things that are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the scriptures to their own destruction.

So what this verse is proving is Peter, the apostle Peter, considered that Paul's letters were scripture.

This is the proof. In Peter's lifetime, the writings of Paul, and I think that we can infer the other apostles as well, they were already accepted as God's revelation.

And with the completion of the scriptures then, we have at last the complete special revelation of God, which is today the primary way that we know God.

[45 : 29] And the last book, of course, the book of Revelation, it concludes with a couple of verses that say, you better not add anything or take anything away from this, because it's complete.

We are done. And what I want to do next week is to focus on how were the scriptures assembled, what were the languages used, what do we still have.

But I wanted to, I wasn't sure how to wrap up today. And I went out, I was sort of pondering, how am I going to close this sermon?

And I went out for a run yesterday, and I was praying on it. I was thinking, Lord, how do I close the sermon? He just said, this is the point. You can come out for a run, and you can talk to me, and we can talk about this.

I was like, oh yeah, you're right. That's the point. We can have a close relationship with God today. And I just thought, man, when you look at that timeline, and you think that there was a rareness in hearing from God, and there was nothing written.

[46 : 33] And we have, we've now got the Holy Spirit. John 14, 26, there's the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name. He will teach you all things and remind you of what I've said.

And John 16, 13 says that he will guide us in all truth. It's brilliant. I thought, what a privilege we have in this era to have that kind of relationship and have that access to be able to speak with God. You know, when it's not always straightforward. I don't mean to say it's always straightforward, but I think that we should expect to be able to hear from God and speak to him and hear from him through the word, by the Spirit.

And also, in these days, these last days, the access that we have to the Bible is unheard of. You know, I was listening to an audio book on the formation of the Scriptures, and it was sort of saying how in the Middle Ages, the cost of a Bible was roughly the same as the cost of a house.

People didn't have them. The Bible would live in the church, and that was it. And here I am with multiple copies in different translations, and I've got all my tablets, and we've all got the internet.

[47 : 50] And I was like, wow, you know, unprecedented access to God's word and all of these tools and resources to dig into it. And I just thought, amazing, amazing.

What a blessing. You know, you've got Saul. I've lost my donkeys. I'm going to have to go and find Samuel and pay him the seer's toll. You know, he couldn't just pray for guidance the same way that we can.

So, Hebrews 10. So, Hebrews 10, verse 19. And I want to close with this little passage here.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let's approach God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Praise you, Lord, for the access that we have to you. Praise you, Lord God, for the way that you have revealed yourself over the course of history and through the pages of the scriptures.

[49 : 10] Lord, it's amazing to see how you have gradually revealed your character, your nature, who you are, and you've revealed gradually the way of salvation, Lord, so that in these days we can have such a confidence, we can know for sure how to be saved through Jesus Christ.

We can have our hearts sprinkled clean by his blood. Lord, I do pray as we continue over the next few weeks looking at the scriptures, I pray, Lord, that you would keep in our hearts a sense of awe and wonder in what you've achieved.

Lord, it's just amazing. And I do pray, Lord, that you would encourage all of us to seek you, to pursue you, to know you better. Lord, we thank you for your word, and I pray that we would all of us be encouraged to seek you daily in your pages.

I pray that we would seek you in prayer, that we would wrestle with you like Jacob did with these scriptures. And Lord, that we would hear your just, we would all just get used to those aha moments where we hear your spirit speak truth.

Oh God, it's just amazing to know that you want us to know you. You want us to have that relationship. We pray, Lord, that it would become more and more normal for us to hear your voice into our lives.

[50 : 26] I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Bless you guys.