

Lesson 2: The Source of all Truth

- I. In Lesson 1, we defined our relationship to the Creator by examining the nature of God and the nature of humankind
 - A. From Gen 1, we learned that all physical things came from something Spiritual
 1. And that something was a Spirit, we call God
 2. God willed into existence the entire universe and everything in it
 3. However, unlike the other living creatures, God made humankind to be special
 - a. Possessing not only a physical form of flesh and blood, with a superior intellect
 - b. But also a spirit, being made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26)
 - c. As such, our true identity resides as a spirit, encapsulated within a fleshly body and currently dwelling in this physical realm.
 4. No doubt that spawns many other questions
 - B. So how do we learn more about spiritual things?
 1. Here, we have a problem.
 2. Being flesh and blood, we are confined to this physical realm
 3. On our own, spiritual truths are simply beyond our reach.
 - a. With one exception -
 - b. That exception involves a knowledge of God
 - C. I submit to you that there are only two ways we can know anything about God and the spiritual realm.
 1. One way is through the creation itself and
 2. The second way is if God chooses to tell us.
 - D. So first, how does the creation itself reveal something about God?
 1. The Apostle Paul spoke to that in Rom 1:18-20, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."
 - a. What is the cause for the unrighteousness and ungodliness of these men?
 - 1) It is because they suppress the truth
 - 2) And what is the truth that they suppress?
 - 3) It is the existence of God, which has been made evident to them through the creation
 - b. The point is - God has made Himself known to us through the creation
 - c. God's existence and what the text calls His invisible attributes (namely His eternal power and divine nature) are clearly seen through what God has made
 - 1) The implication is clear; God gave us a brain (with intellect), and He expects us to use it as we observe and learn from the world around us
 - 2) The complexity and vastness of this universe should be sufficient to convince humankind of the existence of an eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omni-present Creator - just as was demonstrated in Lesson 1

- 3) All this couldn't just have happened by chance - it simply defies reason
 - 4) Moreover, this evidence is so convincing that God says He will hold each one of us accountable for knowing this truth, without excuse
 - d. In other words, no man or woman can ever credibly stand before God arguing "I never knew You existed"
 2. In the very beginning, God directed humankind to rule over the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:26, 28)
 3. By authorizing us to take charge of this world, God provided the challenges that have embraced all productive human activities including things like:
 - a. Taking personal responsibility and exercising stewardship over all the things that God has given us
 - b. Studying our world - earth and all the life within
 - c. Discovering the laws of nature that God has imposed on the universe and
 - d. Harnessing the acquired knowledge for our common good
 4. By His directives to humankind, God effectively authorized the foundation of Science and Technology
 - a. This was a very practical and if I may say so, clever way for God to show Himself to humankind and be sure that we would get the chance to see Him
 - b. As Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands"
 - E. Although the creation itself is evidence testifying to the existence of a Creator,
 1. It provides us with no other specific information revealing Spiritual Truths.
 2. Nor does it answer any of the many follow-up questions that quite reasonably come to mind about spiritual things
 3. Fortunately for us, however, because of our special relationship to God, God cared enough to fulfill that need.
 4. This brings us to the second way we know anything about God - namely, if He chooses to tell us
- II. So, has God communicated with humankind over the ages? And if He has, how so?
- A. More importantly, how can I, today, hear from God and obtain answers to my spiritual questions?
 1. How can I know the Truth and
 2. Be certain that I have it.
 - B. The answer to these questions begins in Heb 1:1-2 where the Bible says, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."
 - C. God has always made His presence and His expectations known to humankind
 1. In the beginning, through the age of the patriarchs, God spoke directly to the Fathers - men such as
 - a. Adam in Gen 2:16-17; 3:9-19
 - b. Noah in Gen 6:13-21
 - c. Abraham in Gen 12:1-3

2. Later on, God spoke through many Prophets like
 - a. Samuel as recorded in I Sam 3:21 - 4:1; 8:7-10
 - b. Jeremiah as described in Jer 1
 - c. Jonah in Jonah 1
3. His final revelation to us, however, was made during these last days through His Son
 - a. "who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:6-7)
 - b. This passage describes the nature of Jesus as the incarnation of God
 - 1) Wherein Jesus was empowered to speak to humankind on behalf of God, the Father
 - 2) A fact attested to and affirmed by God during the divine transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain top in the presence of Peter, James and John (Matt 17:1-5)
 - a) There Jesus was visually glorified with His face shining like the sun and His garments as white as light
 - b) And God's voice from the cloud proclaimed: ". . . This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him" (Matt 17:5)
 - 3) It is also noteworthy, that throughout His ministry, Jesus acknowledged this fact over and over again saying that His words were not His own but were from the Father who sent Him (John 12:49; 14:10, 24)
- D. This is all well and good, but it does not explain how I, today, can have access to the same Spiritual Truths revealed by Jesus some 2000 years ago -
 1. After all, I was not there to hear them and
 2. Jesus has long ago departed physically from the earth
- E. The answer to that lies in God's delegated plan of authority
 1. Just as during His time of earth, Jesus was authorized by God the Father to carry out the will of the Father and reveal God's Truth to humankind
 2. So it is that Jesus passed this authority and responsibility to a select group of men known as the Apostles
 3. In the Great commission of Matt 28:18-20, Jesus said: ". . . All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you . . . "
 - a. From His position of total authority, Jesus commanded His Apostles to continue His work -
 - b. And what was that work? It was making disciples of Jesus and teaching them to observe everything that He had taught them
 4. The task of revealing God's Word to all of humankind was to continue through the efforts of these chosen messengers
- F. On first hearing, this plan may actually sound a little foolish and beneath the wisdom of an omniscient God
 1. For we know all too well, the frailty and limitations of humankind

- a. We suffer from faulty memories and are often driven by evil motives, pride, selfishness, envy and the temptation to make followers for ourselves
- b. Any of which could corrupt the message and undermine God's purpose of revealing Spiritual Truths to humankind
2. Well, it should come as no surprise to you that an omniscient God was aware of the potential problems and did account for these things
3. In fact, this is one of those unique opportunities to peer into the mind of God and see how God goes about problem solving
- G. To equip the Apostles properly, Jesus promised to send the Apostles a helper, The Holy Spirit - The Spirit of Truth (John 14:16-17; 16:7)
 1. First of all, this was to provide these selected men a direct and perfect link to the Truth - the exact revelation from God the Father
 - a. Jesus said it this way: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26)
 - b. Further elaboration was provided in John 16:13-15, "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me; for He will take of Mine, and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you"
 - c. This provided assurance that the message proclaimed by the Apostles was the exact Word of God
 2. The second need was to confirm the message and the messengers
 - a. There needed to be some way to prove to all hearers that these words really came from God - not just from the minds and hearts of deceptive men
 - b. That was accomplished by the miraculous signs and wonders executed by the Apostles.
 - c. The Hebrew writer in Heb 2:3-4 confirms that God Himself bore witness; there the text says: ". . . After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will."
 - a. Since God is responsible for the creation and He sustains all natural laws, only God is capable of suspending those laws.
 - b. Hence, when the Apostles performed supernatural events like raising the dead, healing the lame, the blind and the deaf, such things could only be done through the blessing and power of God
 - c. The same power that confirmed the identity and message of Jesus through the miracles He performed was now being employed to endorse the work and teachings of the Apostles
- H. Sure enough, we find the Apostles attributing their knowledge of the Truth directly to the Holy Spirit just as the Apostle Paul wrote in I Cor 2:10-13, "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of

God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in those taught by the Spirit . . . "

1. Paul attributed the Words He spoke to a divine link to God through the Holy Spirit
 2. Moreover, this is exactly how it was perceived by the people who heard the Apostles' teaching - Note I Thess 2:13, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."
- I. Although this establishes the fact that the Apostles were miraculously empowered to continue the task of spreading God's Truth, it does not yet answer the question of how we today access that same information.
1. After all, the original, inspired Apostles passed away nearly two thousand years ago
 2. While this is true, the Word of God has survived through their inspired writings.
 - a. For not only did these men preach the message, they also wrote it down.
 - b. In II Thess 2:15, Paul told the Thessalonians to ". . . stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us"
 - c. By the traditions and teaching of inspired prophets, the Truth was shared verbally and through the written Word
 - d. Paul made a similar point to the Corinthians in I Cor 14:37 saying, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment"
 3. Moreover, these writings were deemed so important that they were read and circulated among the 1st century Church -
 - a. In I Thess 5:27 , the Apostle Paul commanded the Thessalonians: "I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren"
 - b. Note also Paul's instructions in Col 4:16: "When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea"
- III. So today, we have access to God through the writings of the Apostles and the other inspired prophets of God - just as Heb 1:1-2 declared
- A. These Scriptures are inspired by God - that is God breathed or out of the mouth of God
 - B. And as II Pet 1:20-21 say, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."
 - C. The intent of God's revelation to humankind is stated clearly by the Apostle Paul in II Tim 3:16-17 where Paul wrote:

"All Scripture is inspired by 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."

1. God knows that we have questions about spiritual things and the meaning of life.
 2. He gave us the Scriptures to provide answers to those questions and to prepare us for every good work in righteousness before Him
 3. We have been armed with the Spiritual Truth needed to teach, reprove, correct and train ourselves and others to be pleasing and acceptable to God
- D. Through the written Word, God has made His expectations known.
1. And one of those expectations is for us to study that written Word and learn it.
 2. Note the instructions that Paul gave to the evangelist Timothy:
"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of Truth"
(II Tim 2:15)
 - a. What does it take to be an approved workman before God?
 - b. We must avoid shame by handling the Word of Truth accurately
 - c. And that we cannot do, unless we take the time to read and learn it.
 3. It was God's intent that we contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the Saints (Jude verse 3)
 - a. Note this Truth was delivered in the 1st century
 - b. And the fact that it was said to be delivered "once for all" means there was to be no further inspired revelation from God
 - c. There is simply no need since what we have equips us for every good work (II Tim 3:16-17)
- E. It should come as no surprise that because the Scriptures are inspired by God, we are told repeatedly not to add to, take away from or alter that message.
1. We simply do not have that right.
 2. In Rev 22:18-19, John put it this way: "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."
 3. The Apostle Peter warned of the seriousness of tampering with the Word.
 - a. He called out those who are untaught and unstable for distorting Paul's letters and the rest of Scriptures
 - b. Noting that this was said to be to their own spiritual destruction
(II Pet 3:16)
 4. The Apostle Paul put it even stronger saying, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a Gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed" (Gal 1:8)
 5. For emphasis, Paul repeated the same thought again in the following

verse, verse 9 saying "if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that what you received, he is to be accursed".

6. God's Word is immutable, unchangeable representing the ". . . faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude verse 3)

IV. By now, it should be clear that God alone is the source of all Spiritual Truth and He has made that Truth accessible to all humankind for all time through the written word of the Bible.

- A. That means our source for spiritual authority today is not found among friends, family, preachers, Church leaders, university professors, denominational creeds, synods or councils.
 1. Jeremiah the prophet put it this way: "I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps" (Jer 10:23)
 2. If we are all incapable of directing our own steps, how can we possibly direct the steps of others.
 3. We must not fall into the trap of relying on the flawed word of a middle man to know what God wants for us.
 4. Notice Paul even commended the Bereans for being more noble-minded than the Thessalonians because they not only received the word with great eagerness but also examined the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were true. (Acts 17:10-11)
 5. A spiritual message always should be checked against the Holy Scriptures
- B. It is also important to remember that our emotions and feelings do not determine what is right before God.
 1. In Isaiah 55:8-9, God spoke through prophet saying: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways", declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."
 2. We are simply incapable of anticipating the mind and will of God based on our own mind, thoughts and feelings.
- C. Finally, we must also remember that the human conscience cannot be trusted as our assurance of pleasing God.
 1. Our conscience must be trained, and it can be seared (I Tim 4:1-2)
 2. Prov 16:25 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death"
 3. To rely on our own feelings or conscience as the gateway to Truth can lead to Spiritual death
- D. In summary, only God can speak for God
 1. We must be willing to seek out His Spiritual Truths which are freely available to all humankind through the Bible.
 2. By studying the Word for ourselves, we can know the truth and be equipped properly to teach others through the written Word.
 3. This is the method by which God has chosen to reveal Himself to humankind
 4. And it is the basis for everything we shall present in this study.

- E. No wonder Paul tells Christians to put on the full armor of God, calling the word of God the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17)
 - 1. But like any other weapon - our spiritual sword (the word of God) can be misused.
 - 2. Please join me in our next lesson, Lesson 3, where we shall spend some time talking about the design and organization of The Bible and how to use it.