

Major Bible Themes

52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained

Adapted from the book *Major Bible Themes*
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The Bible: As a Divine Revelation

- Forms of Divine Revelation
 - The Bible is intended to be a revelation of the being, works and program of God.
 - Revelation of God in creation:
 - ✦ The eternal power and divine nature of God are revealed by the things which He created (Rom 1:20).
 - ✦ The revelation of God through nature has its limitations as there is no clear disclosure of the love of God or the holiness of God.
 - ✦ The revelation of God in nature is sufficient to make His creatures aware of their Creator, but it does not reveal the way of salvation by which sinners can be reconciled to a holy God.
 - Revelation in Christ:
 - ✦ A supreme revelation of God was provided in the person and work of Christ (Heb 1:1-3).
 - ✦ By His becoming man in the act of the incarnation, facts about God which otherwise would have been difficult for man to understand are translated into the limited range of human comprehension.
 - ✦ In Christ, not only is the power and wisdom of God revealed, but also the love of God, His holiness and His grace.
 - ✦ If you know Jesus Christ you know God the Father (John 14:9).
 - Revelation in the written Word:
 - ✦ The Bible not only teaches us about Jesus Christ, but also discloses God's plan and program for Israel, for the nations and for the Church, and deals with many related subjects as the history of mankind and the universe unfolds.
 - ✦ The Bible enlarges the divine revelation into great detail regarding God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, angels, demons, man, sin, salvation, grace and glory.
 - ✦ Accordingly, the Bible may be regarded as completing the intended divine revelation of God which is partially revealed in nature, more fully revealed in Jesus Christ and completely revealed in the written Word.
- Special Revelation

- Many instances are recorded in Scripture of God speaking directly to man as He did in the Garden of Eden or to the prophets of the O.T. or the apostles in the N.T.
- Upon completion of the sixty-six books of the Bible this type of special revelation has ceased.
- Today, the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures to make the teachings of the Bible clear. In addition, the Holy Spirit provides guidance by taking general truths of the Bible and applying them to the particular needs of an individual.
- Apart from this teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, no man can truly understand the Bible because it is “of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:10-14).
- Interpretation
 - While there is reliance upon the Holy Spirit for instruction in the Word of God, certain principles of interpretation (or hermeneutics) may be enumerated.
 - ✦ The purpose of the Bible as whole.
 - In interpreting the Bible, every text must be taken in light of the overall context of Scripture.
 - In no case does the Bible contradict itself.
 - ✦ The particular message of each book of the Bible.
 - The purpose of each book must be taken into consideration and the interpretation must be in keeping with that purpose.
 - Accordingly, a study of Ecclesiastes is quite different from a study of Revelation or the Psalms.
 - ✦ To whom addressed.
 - The question must be raised concerning who is in view in a particular passage.
 - Primary and secondary application must be distinguished.
 - Example: passages given to Israel are primarily for Israel and not the Church, yet there are certainly secondary applications for us today.
 - It is important to consider and allow for the particulars which are necessarily different in the secondary application.
 - ✦ The context.
 - The immediate context often gives us a clue as to what was intended by a particular statement.
 - Scripture which immediately precedes and follows any given text helps the reader understand the verse.
 - Beyond the immediate context, consider the theme of a given chapter or chapters and the overall message of the book.
 - ✦ Similar teachings elsewhere in the Word of God.
 - Any theological statement made in one verse should be harmonized with other similar statements elsewhere.

- Clearer passages help explain those that are less clear.
- ✧ Accurate exegesis of the words of a particular text.
 - The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.
 - While a good English translation is sufficient for most purposes, the full meaning of the Bible can only be derived from study of the original texts.
- ✧ Literal interpretation.
 - The land promised to Israel is land, not a reference to heaven.
 - A text should be viewed as literal in meaning unless the context clearly indicates that a figure of speech or allegory is intended.
- ✧ Guard against prejudice.
 - Understanding which comes from the study of the entire Bible is proper to consider when interpreting a passage.
 - Preconceived notions which arise from extra-Biblical sources or an incomplete knowledge of the Bible must be avoided.

- Questions
 - Why is it reasonable to assume that God would reveal Himself to man?
 - What is the extent and the limitation of revelation in nature?
 - To what extent is Christ a revelation of God?
 - Why was the written Word necessary to reveal God completely?
 - What are some of the major subjects of divine revelation which could not be learned in nature?
 - What is meant by special revelation?
 - What work of the Spirit has replaced special revelation today, and why is this necessary?
 - Why must the purpose of the Bible as a whole, as well as the particular message of each book of the Bible, be taken into consideration?
 - What are the dangers of misapplying Scripture, and why must primary and secondary application be distinguished?
 - What is contributed by the context of any passage?
 - Why must interpretation of one text be in harmony with other Biblical passages?
 - To what extent is accurate exegesis required?
 - To what extent should the normal reading of words determine the meaning of the passage?
 - What are the dangers of prejudice in interpreting Scripture?