

- *We are a society struggling to know what is true. What is true politically? Are the electoral processes of our Republic still credible? Many would answer 'of course', but others would express great concern. What about the pandemic? What is true? How deadly is the disease, how effective are masks, are the tradeoffs we have made worth the cost, and should people trust the safety of the vaccine? When it comes to COVID, is our government and public health structure credible? Again, many will answer this with a confident yes, many will be reserved, and others will express concern.*
- *I don't raise the above to take any stance. My point is we are being confronted with the unsettling reality that some things we want to assume are trustworthy have had their credibility and stability challenged. This is nothing new, but the magnitude and widespread nature of uncertainty arising from 2020 is new, at least my lifetime.*
- *In such a time as this, it is essential that we are people who are not afraid to recognize our biases, fully engage our powers of reason, and think. This is true in the realm of politics, economics, and public policy, and it is also true in the realm of our faith.*
- *So, to get to the question. As people who proclaim to stand upon the foundational truth of scripture, how do we know that foundation is true? We may defend the truth of scripture to our death, but are we able to articulate why we believe scripture is true, or even what we mean when we say scripture is true? Consider a few questions.*
 - *God and people... who made whom? Can we discern truth about God on our own? What's the alternative?*
 - *If God is the author of scripture, then how did that even happen? Where did that text on your favorite Bible App come from?*
 - *What do we mean when we say scripture is, well, Scripture? What do we mean when we say scripture is inspired?*
 - *Finally, if we believe that Scripture is indeed of God, and inspired by God, how do we access it? How do we take an ancient document written in an even more ancient language and accurately discern God's Truth in our lives today?*
- *The title of this short series (four messages) is "Bias Aside, Reason Engaged: Why the New Testament Remains Credible." If any of this sounds familiar, it's because I took us through a similar study a year ago, and I did an online only message back in September surrounding the literary history of the New Testament. That said, this is always a valuable topic to consider, and I believe especially relevant as we prepare to get back into Acts.*
- *BUT FIRST... Sunday, January 3rd, 2020... PE, TO, Welcome*

- *To really consider our understanding of the foundation of scripture... TRUTH... START WITH concept of REVELATION (not book!)*
- *The idea of Revelation is exciting, and it's something we can relate to. When there is SOME TRUTH that we want to know, but CAN'T know unless someone takes the initiative to REVEAL it to us.*
- *When it comes to a Biblical worldview- any discussion of scripture itself, the concept of revelation is fundamental and essential.*

– **AND SO, buckle in, because we are going to talk about DOCTRINE.**

† The **DOCTRINE** of revelation

– **Doctrine isn't really scary word. Simply means a belief. Set of beliefs. Even if we don't realize it, we all have our doctrines that inform how we think, see, and interpret the world around us. When we talk about Biblical Doctrine, we're talking about what we BELIEVE the bible to be saying. Shocker, but things not everybody agrees about!! But regardless of what you believe about the Bible, if it holds any weight at all, it HAS TO BE A REVELATION. It is GOD, the creator, CHOOSING TO REVEAL Himself to US, his creation.**

• **As Creator, God is Holy, separate. As created beings, and we cannot know Him unless He CHOOSES to reveal himself**

– **Key Biblical concept- God is APART from us. He is infinitely beyond us. Powerful image of this...**

Isaiah 6:1-5 *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."*

– **CHURCH! Temptation of human condition- flesh- is to diminish God! As Isaiah experienced, God is infinitely beyond us, and ON OUR OWN, we cannot hope to know him. AND YET!!!**

• **God INTENDS to be known by His creation. He has acted in ways to make Himself known.**

• **If God didn't reveal Himself, then He would be our CREATION, not our creator.**

– **This is one of the great temptations of mankind, going all the way back to when Moses went up on Mt. Sinai, and in his absence the Israelites made the Golden calf.. we want to shape God to what we want him to be- we want to choose what is true, we want to choose what it is that we WORSHIP...**

• **True worship demands that God reveal Himself. If He doesn't reveal who He is, we aren't worshipping God, we are worshipping what we have created. This is IDOLATRY.**

– **Central to entire Biblical worldview, is that GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF... He has done this in two ways**

• **God reveals Himself through realities of GENERAL revelation and SPECIAL revelation.**

† **General revelation: The self-revealed knowledge of God given to all people throughout history regardless of culture, education, or locale.**

– **This is idea that we, as rational human beings, can see the reality that God exists, and his essential nature, through observation of creation.**

Psalms 19:1-4 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. ³ They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. ⁴ Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.*

Romans 1:18-20 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

Evidences of God's general revelation

- Commonly held MORAL understanding

- **CS Lewis, 'Mere Christianity'**- no matter where you go, through all of history, basic commonly held moral understanding, sense of right and wrong. (EXAMPLES). You may think its okay to steal, but you don't want people stealing from you.
- **Not only universal moral sense, but we universally fail to keep it. When we don't, we universally recognize that we should have. BUT WAIT-** there are amoral people who don't recognize right and wrong- **YES, and where this is, every society has recognized such a person as unhealthy, even dangerous.**
- **POINT is that the existence of this universal moral code, especially since we fail to keep it, DOES NOT ORIGINATE WITH US. It is placed upon us. Evidence of a Creator.**

- Concept of BEAUTY

- **Art. Music. Nature. Why do we find somethings beautiful, some plain, and some offensive? Where does this come from, especially when this too has universal characteristics. People have all sorts of different tastes in music, but universally recognize concepts of beauty such as harmony. OPPOSITE ALSO TRUE... there is a chord known today as a TRITONE (diminished 5th), but for centuries called the 'devils interval' because it gives the listener, universally, a sense of incompleteness or foreboding. Often used for suspense, forboding.... Was actually forbidden to be used in music in medieval Europe.**

- Evidence of design in NATURE

- **Nature cries out that it is designed. Even the 20th century's most ardent atheist, Richard Dawkins, admitted that the core of the human cell argues for a creator.**
- **He said this in interview with Ben Stein- Expelled. Also in this movie... could be argued that if Darwin could have known what we know today about the complexity of a human cell, he may have rejected his own theories. (if Darwin's cell was a washing machine, today's cell is a cray supercomputer)**
- **MANY OTHERS-** but this only gets us so far. **General revelation testifies that God exists, and that he is GOOD (and reality of the fall) but it tells us nothing of His plan for humanity... THIS LEADS TO OTHER....**

† **Special/specific revelation: The self-revealed knowledge of God given in history through God's specific actions and interactions with specific people.**

- God has revealed Himself through the history of ISRAEL

- God has revealed Himself by the Holy Spirit through the PROPHETS

- **Multiple scriptures that speak to this...**
- **BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, NT world view**

- The object and ultimate expression of God's revelation is JESUS

Hebrews 1:1-3 *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through*

whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

- **CHRIST is the ultimate and complete revelation of God. In John 14 Jesus said "If you know me, you know the father- if you have seen me, you have seen the father"**
- **Here's where it gets really amazing. In Colossians 1, Paul tells us that the fullness of God's revelation to humanity isn't just information/history about Christ, but the miracle- the MYSTERY- that has now been revealed- that through faith, CHRIST DWELLS IN US. UNION**

Colossians 1:25-27 I have become its (the church) servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

- **And here's where we are leading today...**

✠ Reality! The chief, authoritative, and objective revelation of Jesus Christ is what we call SCRIPTURE, or the BIBLE.

- **HUGE POINT! Scripture IS NOT GOD. But in Scripture we have the testimony ABOUT GOD, FROM GOD. Testimony that points us to JESUS**

John 5:39-40 JESUS: You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

- **End with famous verse from Paul's second letter to Timothy- the idea, essential to Christ centered Biblical worldview- that scripture is INSPIRED.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- **TAKE OUT YOUR BIBLE... HOLD IN HAND...**

TAKEAWAY! The objective truth of God's revelation, the Gospel, the story of God's Grace in Jesus Christ, the gift of Holy Scripture, the Bible... it is for YOU!