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Message: Is the Bible True?

Transcribed Message
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Deuteronomy 29:29

When I was in seminary a long time ago, a man by the name of Harold Lincell wrote a book called *Battle for the Bible*. And in this book his thesis was basically to look at the landscape of the American church scene and see how it was that, in effect, the Word of God was literally under assault within most of the major denominations. The view of God's Word was undergoing significant change. One of the things that he pointed out was no major denomination in the United States had ever changed their view and their understanding of Scripture and moved away from a view of Scripture that was lofty and high and held God's Word in esteem and viewed it as the final authority for faith and practice. Nobody had ever moved away from that position without seeing other significant areas in the life of their denominations and churches begin a very long and slippery slide down the hill. And that has been borne out historically, whether it's a denomination, whether it's an individual church, or even within individual lives.

It's amazing how that has happened. The only exception to that has been the Southern Baptist Convention. The SBC, way back then, was grappling with, how do we view Scripture? And a group of conservative people within the Southern Baptist Convention began to pray and think about how they could move their convention back in a way that was more in line with what we believe the Bible says about itself. And they succeeded in doing that. They're the only denomination that's ever done that in the history of this country.

To illustrate just the significance and the importance of that, the Presbyterian Church USA, as early as the 1920s, was debating how it is that we should view Scripture. There was a battle going on within the Presbyterian Church between what we would simply call the liberal faction and the conservatives. And in that instance, the liberal faction won out, and their view of Scripture changed dramatically over decades of time. Just to

illustrate what happens when that takes place, this summer, the Presbyterian Church USA is going to be voting on a measure that is not going to deal with whether clergy within the Presbyterian Church USA should be heterosexual. They long since have been affirming gay and lesbian pastors, male and female, transgender, the whole thing. What they're going to be dealing with this summer doesn't have anything to do with that. It has to do with relationships that are palimony or polygamous. They're going to adopt, they hope, a resolution that says clergy, whether lesbian, whether homosexual, whether heterosexual, should have only one partner, not multiple partners. And there is already an outcry from within their denomination against what they perceive to be an attempt to push back against on the trend that has been happening within the Presbyterian Church USA. So that just illustrates a little bit about what happens when a denomination, when a church or an individual begins to move away from a view of Scripture that sees the Word of God for what it tells us it is.

What we're going to be doing in these summer weeks is we're going to step away from the exposition of the Gospel of John, and we're going to just pick up some questions for the weeks to come. And the one we want to look at this morning is simply, is the Bible true? And as we look at this matter of is the Bible true, our big idea is really a syllogism. It simply says if God is true, and He is, and the Bible claiming as it does to be the Word of God, and it is, then the Word of God is true. It's this ever-present gift that God has given to us. We are so grateful for the Spirit of God giving us His Word.

Here's what we want to do. We're going to start off by just looking at the Bible as being an extraordinary book. Now, you can put any description in there almost that you want. It's an amazing book. It's an extraordinary book. It's an exceptional book. It's a unique book. All those things would fit. But the Bible is, in fact, extraordinary. It's extraordinary, first of all, because the Bible isn't simply one book, is it? We think of it as one book, but it's really 66 books compiled into one. Amazingly, there is continuity, and there's harmony, and there is consistency all the way through that. If you go to the table of contents of your Bible, which you probably only go there when the pastor says, turn to Habakkuk, or maybe Nahum, or, you know, one of those little minor prophets that you're

not sure where they are. When you just look at a table of contents, you can see that there's something called the Old Testament and something called the New Testament. The word "testament" simply is the idea of covenant. And so you have in the Old Testament the Old Covenant, Moses going to Mount Sinai, receiving the covenant that God had for His people. When you come to the New Testament, the New Covenant moves to the forefront, doesn't it? And it is there that Christ, our Messiah, our Savior, went to Mount Calvary and instituted the New Covenant. But in our Bible, which we have bound up in this beautiful book, we have 66 books that God has given to us to do a work in each of our lives.

Now, secondly, the Bible was written by 40 different human authors over a period of at least 1,500 years. Some think it's maybe as much as 2,000. But if you just look chronologically at the Bible, you would go from Job, which is probably the first chronologically book written, Job living in the time maybe even of Abraham or before, all the way to Revelation. So, 40 different human authors over a period of at least 1,500 years, authors from all different kinds of backgrounds.

Just look again at the list of books in the table of content. As you look at that list and you think about the human authors, you, of course, start with the Pentateuch and Moses. Moses was literally born to Jewish parents but then raised in royalty in the palace in Egypt. And then you go a little bit further, and you have a guy like Ezra who said he was a scribe and Nehemiah who was a cupbearer to the king. And then you've got King David and you've got Daniel who was a politician in Babylon and served as prime minister. Then you go to the New Testament, Matthew is a tax collector, Luke is a doctor, John's a fisherman, as is Peter. All these different men from this wide spectrum of time writing with incredible consistency, with incredible harmony, with incredible unity. And it speaks to us of just the extraordinary nature of this book.

Thirdly, the Bible is written in three different languages. The Old Testament almost exclusively is in Hebrew with 12 verses in the book of Daniel written in Aramaic. The New Testament written, of course, in Greek. We have three languages and we have three different continents: Asia, Africa, Europe. You get something of the breadth of the miracle and the wonder of the Word of God.

And then finally, the Bible is different than any other book. The Bible is different than any other book. It's different, and it's also different than any other religious book. It's different than the Koran. It's different than the Hadith. It's different than the Hindu Vedas. It's different than the Book of Mormon. It's different than the Pearl of Great Price. There's just so much that you can see and discover by reading even these different religious documents that the Word of God just stands out as distinctive and different and unique and extraordinary. And one of the distinguishing things that speaks to us of the uniqueness of this book is how God doesn't protect us and He doesn't just pick perfect people to write His Word.

Isn't that amazing? In giving us His Scriptures, He picked very imperfect people. We just start off with Moses who killed a man in Egypt. You go a little bit further, and David was a serial adulterer who also killed a man. Peter denied his Lord. Just look at the different examples in which God says these are the men that I have chosen to use, and I'm not covering over what their life was like. One of the reasons I think why God did that is because this book isn't about those people, is it? It's not that they're front and center, and so they have to be perfect examples to us in every way. No. They're examples to us of people like us who needed a Savior, who needed forgiveness, who needed another chance, another opportunity. The Bible, I think, is simply different than any other book, and God gives to us His Word and His truth to show that to us.

This morning what we want to do, we want to look at the Bible regarding God's revelation to us, and then this matter of the fact that it is fully inspired. Now, I'll just admit, there is going to be many of the things that I'm going to share this morning and have already shared that I know you are already aware of and that you know. There are just basic things that we're going to be looking at, but sometimes it's just good to go back and be reminded of the foundational principles upon which we build our life, and the Word of God is certainly that. So, let's start by just looking at the doctrine of revelation.

Revelation. One of the great verses of the Old Testament is Deuteronomy 29:29. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do the words of this law. And I love that expression. The

secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us (and then I love this!) and to our children forever. There is a commissioning, isn't there? God's given us His Word, and we take that Word and we share it. We share it with our family. We share it with our children. We share it with anybody that we can.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God. There's the definition of revelation. Revelation is God making known what was before unknown. God making known what was before unknown. God has revealed in His Word things that we would not know by self-discovery. We could sit under a tree for the rest of our life, and we would not uncover and come to know the truth that God reveals in His Word, because revelation is God making known what was before unknown.

I have to say, when I thought of that phrase, God making known what was before unknown, I couldn't help but think of a lot of what we're dealing with today regarding UFOs. Steven Spielberg's movie *Disclosure* just came out this last week. He loves to do movies about aliens. And there's all this conversation, millions and millions evidently of pages of secret documents that the government has. A lot of people are investing a lot of time and a lot of energy, and I'm not against discovery, and I'm not against inquiry, and I'm not against curiosity. But at some point, it's okay to step back and say there are mysteries in our universe that we simply do not understand. There are mysteries in our universe that we cannot explain.

When you look at that diagram, and you see that first circle, the secret things belong to the Lord our God. Now, the first thing we would say is there's no circle that can contain the secret things of the Lord our God, right? That's just an illustrative example. God is immense. He's transcendent. He's infinite. You cannot contain the wisdom and knowledge of God in a circle. But for our sake, we visualize the secret things of God, and He has chosen to reveal certain things to us. Revelation, God making known what was before unknown. It is those things that He has made known to us that we are to concern ourselves with primarily. Primarily. We believe that Christianity is a revealed religion.

We also believe that what God is saying in this verse is if He hasn't told us certain things, we don't need to know those things. If God has not seen fit to reveal certain things to us, then we shouldn't even make inquiry as to what those things are. Just think of the whole broad sweep of the occult, a lot of interest on the part of people at times in occultic things. If God hasn't told us those things, then we don't need to know them. We shouldn't be pursuing them. It's not nearly as relevant as it was, you know, 30, 40 years ago when every newspaper had the horoscope. And a lot of Christians got up in the morning and read their horoscope. For what purpose? You've got the revealed Word of God right here. That's meaningless. That's secret things. We don't need that junk. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do the words written in this law. That's what God has said to us. That's the beauty of it.

God has spoken, and He continues to speak, and He does it in two primary ways. Let's look at the first one, which is general revelation. Now why do you suppose we call it general revelation? Because it is general. It's general, right? Go back to Psalm 19. Jeff read those opening verses of Psalm 19, and in Psalm 19, we see that this first way that God reveals Himself to us in general revelation. It's general in its content, and it's general in its audience.

General revelation. Five things the psalmist tells us in this 19th chapter. The first one in verse 1: the heavens declare the glory of God. The sky above proclaims His handiwork. The first thing general revelation does is it tells us a story. It tells us a story, and the story is about the glory of God. The very reason for our existence is to live for the glory of God. The heavens join us in that, and they tell us of the glory of God. They declare His glory. That is what all of creation is doing. It's not just telling us about creation, it's telling us about the Creator, and it's telling us some things that we would not know otherwise. Paul says the same thing in Romans 1 in verse 20 when he says that the heavens are speaking about the eternal power and the divine nature of our God as Creator. The world of creation is declaring the glory of God.

It's a story that doesn't tell us everything. You can't look at creation and see that God is love necessarily. I guess there are some things you could pull out of that, but you

can't look at creation and say God is gracious, God is merciful, God is kind. You can look at creation, but it doesn't reveal the love of God and the grace of God and the mercy of God. It reveals the power of God. It reveals the majesty of God. It reveals the infinite nature of God, but it is non-redemptive. It doesn't lead to salvation.

But the second thing he says is it's constant. Look at verse 2. Day by day pours out speech and night to night reveals knowledge. The revelation of God is 24/7. You talk about this message going out. There are no breaks in this message. It's going out all the time. It pours out this story of the glory of God every day, everywhere, all around the world. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in one of her poems, captured the essence of it. She said, "Earth's crammed with heaven and every bush aflame with God, but only those who see it take off their shoes. The rest sit round and pluck blackberries." Isn't that our world? The glory of God is being on display every day. People largely pay no attention.

Thirdly, it's inaudible. Verse 3. There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard. The message isn't being conveyed in words. It's not being conveyed in a human language, but it's still clear. It's constant. It's definite, but it's not verbal and it's not written. And Paul says something very similar in Acts 14:17 as he's speaking to those unbelieving folks that he's talking to, and he reminds them that the glory of God and the story of God is all around you all the time in the creation.

The fourth thing is it's universal. Look at the first part of verse 4. Their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. That's why the most isolated people groups in all the world have the opportunity to learn of the majesty, power, greatness, and glory of God. It's on display. Now they're going to decide what they're going to do with it. And largely because the human heart is fallen and separated from God, they take the very things that God reveals that are to put on display His glory, that is, created things, and they turn them into idols, don't they? But it's everywhere, it's universal. Nothing can obscure the witness of this revelation.

And then the last thing, it's dramatic. Look at the last part of verse 4. In them He has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving His chamber and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens and its circuit

to the end of them; there is nothing hidden from its heat. So, the sun shining as it does is like a bridegroom full of joy or a runner full of strength. If people look at these things, and Psalm 14 says the fool has said in his heart, there is no God. They look at the glory of creation, they look at this revelation that is universal, it's constant, it's inaudible, but it's everywhere, and they say there is no God. Or they may say, I don't know if there's a God. They're not any better off than the other person, are they?

But there is another way. There's another way that God bears witness. He bears witness through creation in general revelation. Look at the other way that He does that. The other way that He does that is through our conscience. Our conscience. The conscience bears witness in every human person that God has stamped on each one of us His image and likeness. We're created in the image and likeness of God. There's this divine imprint that is put in each of us. We have this God-shaped vacuum in each one of us. Paul speaks of it in Romans chapter 1 and in verse 32. Paul says, though they know God's righteous decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but they give approval to those who practice them.

And then in chapter 2 and verse 14, he says something similar. For when the Gentiles who do not have the law, by nature, by conscience, do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them. That is the revelation of God that we call general revelation. It comes to us every day in creation. It comes to every human person on the face of this earth every day in the form of their conscience. God bears witness to Himself in that way.

We would call that general revelation volume one, but we need more, don't we? We need something else. We need volume two, and volume two comes to us in the form of special revelation. Special revelation. Special revelation comes to us in two ways. It comes to us in the written Word of God, and it comes to us in the living Word of God. The living Word of God, of course, is the *logos*. That takes us right to John 1:1, doesn't it? In the beginning was the Word, the *logos*, the living Word of God, who was with God and who was

God. We've already been looking at that, but let's look at the written Word of God, which is this first part of special revelation.

What does the Bible claim for itself? What does the Bible claim for itself? The Bible claims for itself to be the Word of God. How many times you ask, does the Bible claim to be the Word of God? Well, I am glad you asked that, because the Bible claims to be the Word of God thousands upon thousands upon thousands upon thousands of times. Over 4,000 times in the Bible, God says things like, and God said, or the Lord said, or God spoke. All of those are bearing witness to the fact that God has revealed Himself. Now someone says, oh, wait a minute. You're saying that the Word of God is the Word of God because it says it's the Word of God. That's not fair. That's inadmissible. You can't put forward a statement that says, we believe the Bible is the Word of God because the Bible says it's the Word of God. That's not fair.

Well, it's absolutely fair. It's absolutely fair. Our whole judicial system is built upon the fact of self-testimony. If you're charged with something, if you're accused of something, you have every right to go to the witness stand and to speak for yourself, don't you? The testimony that you give may either be true or it may be false, but nobody can say it's inadmissible. When we say the Bible is the Word of God because it claims over 4,000 times to be the Word of God, the issue before us is not, that's not fair. The issue before us is that true. Can we back up that claim with support and witness and testimony?

Paul, when he came to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 13, makes this beautiful statement. He begins by saying, I just want to thank God for you because when I came to you, you received the Word of God for what it is, the very Word of God, not the Word of man. Paul recognized in his ministry when he was preaching and proclaiming the truth of God, he wasn't just giving human words. He was thankful that he was giving the very revelation of God. This book that we hold in our hand is extraordinary, it's unique, it's special, it's exceptional, it stands alone. God's message is to us about who He is and about who we are.

And it's even more amazing when you just step back and think about what that means. Who He is, the Creator of all the universe, and He wants to communicate with us

who have rejected Him and have turned away from Him and have sinned. He wants us to know who He is and He wants us to know who we are. And that's the revelation that He has given. If God were to come to you today in some form and He were to speak to you, I want you to understand that whatever He would say to you would be absolutely in harmony and in agreement with what He has said in His Word. And that's why it's so important for you and I as believers living in the 21st century to know the Word of God, to know the doctrines of Scripture, because there's so many false voices out there, there's so many false messages. There are so many people claiming to speak for God that if you and I don't know His Word, we can't discern whether we should be listening and following and doing what that person says.

That's the great need of the hour in the church. We're an illiterate people regarding the Word of God. We have His Word, we have His revelation, we just don't know it to the extent that we think we do. We don't know it to the extent that we should because we're not reading it every day as we need to. Again, that's not to guilt anybody. That's to motivate us to understand if we're going to walk as children of light, in the light, in the midst of a dark and perverse generation, the only way we're going to do that is to be equipped by the Word of God. And the only way we're going to do that is to invite this Word into our life.

Now what did Jesus say about this Word? So, the Word says of itself, it is the Word of God. What about Jesus? Can we call Jesus to speak to this? Remember in John's Gospel, in the 17th chapter (we haven't gotten there yet but we'll get there at some point), but in the 14th verse, this is what Jesus says. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.

Four monosyllabic words. Your word is truth. That's what Jesus says about the Word of God. That is His testimony. The Bible is truth. The Bible is authoritative. The Bible is reliable. The Bible is trustworthy. Just think briefly about how that looked in Jesus' life. When Jesus experienced temptation, He appealed to the authority of the Word of God. He appealed to the authority. This infallible Word is what He appealed to.

When Satan came to Him and said, why don't you turn that stone into bread, Jesus replied that man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Why don't you jump off this temple and call the angels? And Jesus said, you shall not tempt the Lord your God. Well, Jesus, why don't you just bow down and worship me and I'll give you everything. You should not have any other gods before you. Jesus constantly appealed to the Word of God in the face of temptation. He speaks to us of His own confidence in the ability of the Word of God to work in our lives.

The second thing you see is He's always speaking about the fulfillment of Scripture as His own life is bringing that about. The Old Testament Scriptures are all pointing to His life, and He's mindful of that. He's aware of that. He points to that, never more so than in Luke 24 when He's walking with the Emmaus disciples. Luke tells us that He opened the Scriptures, the Old Testament Scriptures. He opened to them the Scriptures in the sense that He showed them from Moses to all the prophets how they prophesied about Him. Then He quoted Scripture from the cross. The greatest point of testing in the life of our Lord, this moment of greatest challenge, He quotes from the Old Testament Psalms. Why do we have such a high view of Scripture? Because Jesus had such a high view of Scripture. He said, Thy Word is truth.

Revelation looks at what it is that God has done. Now let's just look briefly at how it is that He did it. How did He do it? Well, He did it through inspiration. We look at 2 Timothy 3, and in 2 Timothy 3 in verse 16, this is what we read, Paul writing beginning at verse 15: and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God, the woman of God, may be complete and equipped for every good work.

The matter of inspiration. Revelation is God making known what was before unknown. Inspiration is how did He do it? How did He do it? And He tells us that He did it by means of something called inspiration. Inspiration is a compound word, *theonouustos*. God breathed. God breathed out. When we think of inspiration, we think of something inward.

No, it's really expiration. God breathed out His Word. It speaks of the origin of His Word. Moses, as he writes in Genesis 1, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep. God didn't look over Moses' shoulder and go, Moses, that is inspiring! I'm going to put that in my Bible. No, no, the Spirit breathed out that Word as Moses recorded exactly what God wanted Him to. The Bible doesn't say the writers were inspired. The Bible says the Scriptures, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. So, it is God who is the originator of His Word.

The process of that inspiration then takes us to 2 Peter 1, verses 19 and 21, and there we read this: and we have the prophetic Word (that is just the Scriptures) more fully confirmed to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. They were carried along by the Holy Spirit. That same word, carried along, is used in Acts 27 to talk about a ship, a ship that is carried along by the wind and the water. That's how God tells us He gave us His Word. He worked through these men to give us His Word, to breathe out His Word, and He did it in such a way that I don't think it was mechanical dictation.

I don't think it was mechanical dictation. When we read our Bibles, we realize that God used the personalities, the backgrounds, the differences of all these different writers in such a way that their personalities literally come through what they're writing. There's a mystery here for sure that God, by His Spirit, uses the individual authors to give us His Word, to bring that Word to us. It's not like it's God and man, or God in man, it's God through man in this mystery of divine revelation. Sometimes the writers of Scripture didn't even know themselves with full understanding what they were writing. Daniel tells us that in the 12th chapter in verses 8 and 9. He says, I didn't understand the things that I was writing. But he was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, giving us God's Word. So,

when you read your Bible, you're reading the very words that God has written down and recorded for us.

Now, lastly, very quickly, the extent of inspiration is two things. It's the whole Bible, and it's every word of the Bible. It's the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation, not just parts of it. We don't just pick out what we like and what we don't like. It's all of Scripture from beginning to end. We don't sit in judgment on what is the Word of God and what isn't. That's what men want to do. That's the history of denominations in America. Men and women wanting to sit in judgment on what they believe is the Word of God and what isn't, and they'll decide what it is that they have to obey and what they don't have to obey. That's just not the way it works. We don't sit in judgment on God's Word. God's Word sits in judgment on us. So, it's all the Bible, the whole Bible, and it's every word of the Bible, every word.

Back in John 10, we saw Jesus based an argument on one word, one word. Paul does the same thing in Galatians chapter 3, and in verse 16, he builds an argument on a letter, seed or seeds. He builds an argument on one letter. Jesus said in Matthew 5 that not one iota, not one dot of the Word of God will pass away. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not one dot or one iota of Scripture will pass away. Well, a dot is just simply a letter in the Hebrew alphabet that we would think of as the size of a comma. An iota is even a smaller part of a letter. That was the view that Jesus had. Romans 3:4 says, let God be true and every man a liar. God has breathed out His Word, and His Word is truth.

So, what do we take away? God's Word is true. God's Word is dependable, and God's Word is sufficient. Read it and study it. Memorize it. Meditate on it and be changed by it. Psalm 19 gives us a beautiful picture of that. What that Word will ultimately always do, it will always point us to Jesus, because that's what the Word of God does. It always points us to Jesus.

It tells us is that Jesus came to this earth, lived a perfect life, died a terrible death, and He died on that cross for my sin and for yours. He was raised again. And if we believe that, God says He'll give us eternal life. He'll forgive our sins, and we'll enter into a

relationship with Him that will take us into all of eternity forever and ever. Let this book change the trajectory of your life forever.

Let's pray. Father God, we do thank You for this amazing, incredible, extraordinary, unique Word that You've given to us. Thank You that You have revealed Yourself. You have made Yourself known. Things that we couldn't possibly ever know about You, You have told us. Things we couldn't even know, Father, about ourselves. I pray that You will, by Your Spirit, open eyes to the wonder of Your gospel, and open our eyes and our hearts as Your people to the wonder of Your Word. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, O my Lord and my Savior. In Jesus' name, amen.