

# Understanding The Doctrine Of Scripture

## *Systematic Theology*

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## When God Speaks: Understanding the Bible's Authority and Clarity

In a world drowning in opinions, where truth seems to shift with every cultural tide, we face a fundamental question: How do we know what's really true?

There are essentially two ways people navigate this question. The first is what we might call secular reasoning—the belief that we each get to determine our own truth. It sounds open-minded and tolerant, doesn't it? "You have your truth, I have mine." But think about it: nobody really lives this way. Imagine someone declaring, "Gravity works for you, but I've decided it doesn't work for me," before jumping off a building. Absurd, right?

When someone confidently states, "There's no such thing as absolute truth," simply ask them: "Are you absolutely sure about that?" If they answer yes, they've just contradicted themselves. They've claimed an absolute truth while denying absolute truth exists.

The second approach to determining truth is supernatural revelation—the conviction that truth exists independently of our preferences and has been revealed to us by God. This worldview can be summarized in three simple words: **God has spoken.**

## The Most Unique Book Ever Written

The Bible stands alone in human history. Written over approximately 1,500 years, spanning from Babylon to Rome, it involved more than 40 human authors from vastly different backgrounds—kings and peasants, poets and herdsmen, fishermen and scientists, farmers and priests, tent makers and governors. It was written in wilderness settings, dungeons, palaces, prisons, lonely islands, and amid military battles.

Yet despite this incredible diversity of time, place, and authorship, the Bible speaks with remarkable agreement and reliability on hundreds of controversial subjects. From beginning to end, it tells one unified story: God's salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ. No human being could have orchestrated such a work.

The deeper you study Scripture, the more profound it becomes. Those who have spent decades studying the Bible often say the same thing: the more they learn, the more they realize how much they don't know. It's an inexhaustible treasure.

## The Authority of Scripture

Why does the Bible have authority over our lives? The answer lies in its author. Notice that the word "authority" contains the word "author." A book's authority comes from who wrote it. If an ordinary person writes a book, it might interest or entertain us, but it won't have binding authority over our lives. But the Bible's ultimate author is God Himself.

Throughout Scripture, we repeatedly encounter the phrase "Thus saith the Lord." In Exodus 4:22, Moses tells Pharaoh, "This is what the Lord says." Joshua 24:2 begins, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says." Samuel declares in 1 Samuel 10:18, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says."

This phrase signals something crucial: what follows is to be obeyed without question or challenge, not because we like it or agree with it, but because of who said it.

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

The term "God-breathed" literally means exhaled by God. Though every word was written by human hands, the words themselves are not merely human words—they are the very words of God. This passage makes three critical claims:

**First, all Scripture is inspired by God.** Every verse, every chapter, every book—Old Testament and New Testament alike. There's not a single page that isn't breathed by God.

**Second, the entire Bible is profitable and useful.** Even the parts we find difficult or don't particularly enjoy have purpose. God revealed Himself to show us how to live.

**Third, the entire Bible helps us become more like God,** thoroughly equipping us for every good work.

Second Peter 1:20-21 adds another dimension: "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

The Scripture didn't originate from human will. The Holy Spirit moved and directed the writers. Yet remarkably, God didn't erase their personalities or commandeer their minds. He worked through their unique personalities, educations, backgrounds, and experiences to write divine truth. That's why Moses sounds different from Paul, why Luke sounds different from John, why Peter sounds different from David.

This is the miracle of inspiration: God placed His will on top of their will and accomplished His Word while using their distinct voices.

## What the Bible Says About Itself

Scripture makes breathtaking claims about its own nature:

- "The words of the Lord are flawless, like silver purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6)
- "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul" (Psalm 19:7)
- "All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal" (Psalm 119:160)
- "Every word of God is flawless" (Proverbs 30:5)
- "Your word is truth" (John 17:17)

Jesus didn't say God's Word contains truth or talks about truth. He said God's Word *is* truth. Scripture is more than simply true—it is truth itself, the final measure by which everything else is gauged.

As Isaiah 40:8 declares, "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."

The Bible is our final authority. It's our supreme court. When we're trying to figure out what to believe, how to handle situations, what's the correct opinion, the answer is simple: What does the Bible say?

Here's the sobering reality: **If the Bible cannot be trusted, then God cannot be trusted.** Because this is God's Word. When we seek to know and understand the Bible, we're seeking to know and understand God Himself. When we obey Scripture, we're obeying God.

## The Clarity of Scripture

Anyone who reads the Bible seriously realizes some parts are easy to understand while others make us scratch our heads. So what do we mean by the "clarity" of Scripture?

We're not claiming you'll automatically understand everything easily. Even Peter acknowledged that some of Paul's writings are hard to understand. But here's the key: **in its totality, the Bible has a clear message.**

Someone wisely said, "The Bible is shallow enough for a child to wade, but deep enough for an elephant to swim."

You don't need an advanced degree to understand Scripture's teachings. However, you do need to invest time, effort, and have a willingness to obey God's Word.

Deuteronomy 6 reveals God's expectation: He commanded Moses to teach His law to the people so they would understand it, internalize it, and obey it—then teach it to their children, who would do the same. God's Word is meant to be understood and lived.

## **The Secret to Deeper Understanding**

Here's a transformative principle: **If you want to get better at understanding God's Word, focus on obeying God's Word.**

The more you focus on obedience, the more your spirit is ready to say yes, and the more God will reveal to you. There's a direct correlation between your desire to do what God says and His willingness to help you understand His Word.

Think about it: Why would God reveal more to someone who won't obey what they already know? Why would He open your mind to something He knows you won't do?

The Holy Spirit is ultimately our teacher and guide. When you genuinely desire to walk with God and obey Him, you'll be amazed at how deep and rich this Book becomes.

God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. In a world shouting that there's no absolute truth, we must never believe that lie. Instead, may we walk in the truth of God's Word every day, grateful that He's given us His words on a page so we can read how He wants us to live.

The question isn't whether God has spoken. He has. The question is whether we're listening—and more importantly, whether we're willing to obey what we hear.