



BIBLE

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **11th Grade | Unit 6**

BIBLE 1106

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Author:

Roger Bouwman, M.Div., B.A.

Managing Editor:

Alan Christopherson, M.S.

Editor:

Rachelle Wiersma, M.A., B.A.

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The History of the Canon

Introduction

Our subject in this LIFEPAK® is the Bible. By the term “Bible,” we are referring to the collections of canonical religious writings of Christianity.

Three major collections of writings comprise the Christian Bible. The first of these is the Old Testament. It is comprised primarily of writings included originally in the Jewish, or Hebrew Bible. These are “the Law,” “The Prophets,” and “the Writings,” all of which pre-date the advent of Jesus. The second collection is the New Testament and consists of twenty-seven writings that all date from the first century after Christ. The third collection is the Apocrypha and, because these writings are disputed, is seldom included in Bibles published by, or for, Protestant Christians. The Apocrypha are included in Bibles published by, or for, the Roman Catholic and Greek branches of the Christian Church; this will be discussed more later.

Those who try, find that the Bible defies reading “cover-to-cover” like a novel; of course, it is not a novel. Neither is the Bible a reference book, nor a history book, nor a book of poetry or short stories. The Bible includes writings that may fit in one or another of these genres, but it also includes writings that are a genre unto themselves, like the four Gospels. One probably should think of the Bible as a “library-in-a-book” since no less than sixty-six books are included in it. Moreover, as many as forty different men authored these books over a period of fifteen hundred years. Some of these books were originally written in Greek, some in Hebrew, and still others in Aramaic. Yet by the twenty-first century the Bible, or some portion of it, has been translated into more than 2,300 languages and dialects. No other book shares these claims. The Bible is unique.

Despite the different eras of authorship, the different authors, and the different genres, the Bible presents one central story—the revelation of Jesus, the Christ, our Lord. We are taught who he is, what he did, and why he did it. Moreover, through the person and work of Jesus, we are shown the eternal plan of God, the infinite love of God, and the singular right of God to glory, honor, and worship. This single message provides the first and primary evidence that the Bible is one Book, after all, with a

single author, namely, God Almighty. The testimony of the Christian church, therefore, is that God is the primary author and men were his secondary authors writing his word at his command for people.

Just as God used human authors to write the Bible, he also used people of faith to distribute, preserve, and validate specific books or portions, as well as the whole. Already from the earliest stages of the Bible’s development and continuing to our present era, people of faith have received the Bible as the Word of God. The apostle Paul mentions this fact in his letter to the Christians in Thessalonica: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Another term often used for the Bible, as well as portions of it, is Scripture, or the Holy Scriptures. This term reveals that these writings were regarded as sacred and authoritative. Jesus, when answering contemporary critics, said, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). Jesus repeatedly affirmed the sacred character and the authority of the Scriptures that we refer to now as the Old Testament.

For many people, the Bible is simply an old book. Some may value this old book for historical or literary reasons, but the Bible has no specific authority for either belief or behavior for these people. They frequently consider those who do conduct their lives according to its teachings as living in the past. In fact, they express amazement that anyone living today would voluntarily circumscribe their lives with such ancient ignorance and irrelevance.

Among Christians, too, there are differing levels of regard for the Bible. Some will only allow that the Bible contains the Word of God, but not that it is God’s Word. Many treat the Bible like a supermarket of ancient wisdom and truth, picking “acceptable” sayings and truisms but rejecting its central message as well as its authority. As in previous eras, efforts to diminish the Bible and limit its influence are many in the twenty-first century. However, God

1. THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

You may be wondering why this study is referred to as a **doctrine**. Examine the following definition for “doctrine” from Dictionary.com:

doc-trine—*noun*

1. a particular principle, position, or policy taught or advocated, as of a religion or government: Catholic doctrines; the Monroe Doctrine.
2. something that is taught; teachings collectively: religious doctrine.
3. a body or system of teachings relating to a particular subject: the doctrine of the Catholic Church.¹

People of faith who are seeking trustworthy information on a particular subject always consult the same source—the Bible. Statements and teachings on Christ from the Bible are collected and organized into the Doctrine of Christ, or *Christology*. Similarly, statements and teaching on the Bible and from the Bible are collected and organized into the Doctrine of the Bible, or **bibliology**. Yes, our study will focus on that which the Bible says or teaches about itself.

Since our aim, as stated in the Introduction, “is to learn arguments that can be used in defense of the confidence and trust we place in the Bible as God’s

Word,” it may seem counter-intuitive to derive these arguments from the very book we aim to defend with them. This point has also not been lost on detractors of the Bible and of Christianity—the very critics we are seeking to answer with our arguments. Were the Bible a single writing by a single author over the span of that author’s adult life, the charge of circular argumentation would certainly be valid. The uniqueness of the Bible, however, as reviewed in the Introduction, renders this charge impotent. In fact, the character and claims of the Scriptures, so remarkably similar and consistent despite being written by many different authors in altogether different eras over a period of 1,500 years, become themselves a first argument for placing one’s confidence in this one-of-a-kind book.

In this section, we will be considering five particular doctrines that are part of the Doctrine of the Bible. First, we will examine the doctrine of **revelation**. Second, we will study the doctrine of **inspiration**. Third, we will study God’s work of **illumination**. Fourth, we will examine the doctrine of **interpretation**. Finally, we will consider the **authority** of the Bible. There is a sixth doctrine, namely, **canonicity**. We will examine this doctrine later in Section 3 of this LIFEPAAC.

Section Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Define the doctrines that relate to bibliology.
 - 1.1 Define the doctrine of revelation.
 - 1.2 Describe the doctrine of inspiration.
 - 1.3 Distinguish between the doctrines of illumination and interpretation.
 - 1.4 Describe the doctrine of authority.

Memory Verses

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (2 Timothy 3:16).

Vocabulary

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| apologetics | authority | bibliology | canonicity | doctrine |
| exegesis | hermeneutics | illumination | inerrancy | infallible |
| inspiration | interpretation | plenary | revelation | Torah |

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.



Read Hebrews 1:1–3

REVELATION

The unabridged dictionary provides this definition for revelation:

1. the act of revealing or disclosing; disclosure.
2. something revealed or disclosed, esp. a striking disclosure, as of something not before realized.

Revelation, as we are using the term in bibliology, is God's act of revealing himself, his Christ (Messiah), and his will. The third entry in the dictionary provides the meaning of the term as used in theology:

3. Theology.
 - a. God's disclosure of himself and his will to his creatures.
 - b. an instance of such communication or disclosure.
 - c. something thus communicated or disclosed.
 - d. something that contains such disclosure, as the Bible.²

Revelation makes known to human beings things that would be otherwise undisclosed and unknowable. Human beings have developed and refined many investigative and scientific methods and tools for inquiry into all aspects of the planet on which we live, the varied inhabitants it sustains, and the

solar system which maintains it. Yet human inquiry remains limited to that which is material, sensory, and temporal. This leaves an entire realm of reality undetected and unknown, namely all that is non-material, non-sensory, and eternal. Moreover, the Bible discloses to us that the father of the human race committed an act of treachery and treason at the very dawn of history that has had the effect of closing off human beings to things of God. All human beings participate in a sinful nature that effectively separates them from God, and requiring, on God's part, the supernatural act of revelation to make himself known to humanity. In our study of the doctrine of revelation we must consider the types, methods, and purposes of God's revelation to humanity.

Types of revelation. God's acts of revelation to man include both natural revelation and specific revelation. Natural revelation is that which has been present and available to all human beings regardless of the historical period in which they lived or the region on planet earth which they called home. This natural revelation follows from God's supernatural act of creation—his creation of heaven and earth and all creatures specific to each (Genesis 1). And, following from God's creation of men and women "in his own image" (Genesis 1:27), the human conscience resident in every human being serves also as a venue for God's natural revelation.

God's natural revelation through his created order so impressed the Psalmist David that he wrote Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." The workings of nature on earth, in the atmosphere, and in outer space have been observed and studied by human beings in every age. Manifest to all, in and through these workings of nature, is the testimony of a perfect God who created all things with infinite intelligence and **infallible** wisdom. The writer of Psalm 148 was so moved by the manner in which the created world revealed the Creator that he wrote an entire hymn praising God's creative power.

In Romans 1:20, the apostle Paul testified as to how nature reveals God. He stated: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." According to Paul, every human being has been exposed to the wisdom and power of the eternal God in the course of living out his or her life on earth—his created order.

The apostle Paul would use the truth of natural revelation to introduce the specific revelation he wished to share with people, namely, the gospel. We see this in Paul's opening remarks to the people of Lystra: "... Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:15–17). Similarly, Paul referred to nature as a witness to God when he addressed the Athenians at the Areopagus (Acts 17:16–34).

The following qualities may be noted with respect to natural revelation:

1. Natural revelation is universal, that is, available to all human beings.
2. Natural revelation is perfect since the Creator is perfect.
3. Natural revelation reveals God's eternal creative power and sovereignty.
4. Natural revelation brings human beings an awareness of God.
5. Natural revelation cannot correct or overcome the blindness and unbelief intrinsic to the "fallen" human nature into which all human beings are born.

No discussion of natural revelation is complete without mention of the human conscience, a unique type of natural revelation. Since God created human beings in his own image, each human being has a conscience that ensures that every person possesses an intuitive understanding of right and wrong. The apostle Paul cites this type of natural revelation when he says: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:14–15). While cultural and social standards of conduct vary among the world's people groups—and these do have an effect on the conscience—the fact remains that people attest to the existence and holiness of God every time their conscience intuitively distinguishes between that which is morally right and that which is wrong.



Answer *true* or *false*.

- 1.1 _____ The Bible is easily and usually read “cover-to-cover.”
- 1.2 _____ Forty different authors over 1,500 years, contributed writings to the Bible.
- 1.3 _____ The Bible presents one central story—the revelation of Jesus, the Christ.
- 1.4 _____ Christians frequently need to apologize for God’s Holy Word.
- 1.5 _____ God himself is the single, primary author of the Bible.
- 1.6 _____ Revelation makes known to human beings things that would be otherwise unknowable.
- 1.7 _____ An apologetic is a formal defense of one’s beliefs, or of a specific doctrine.
- 1.8 _____ The human conscience is a unique type of natural revelation.

Complete these activities.

- 1.9 Define doctrine. _____

- 1.10 Define bibliology. _____

- 1.11 Define revelation. _____

- 1.12 Name the three original languages in which the Bible was written.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- 1.13 Name the two types of revelation God uses to reveal himself.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
- 1.14 List the five qualities that apply to natural revelation.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____

1.15 Write 1 Thessalonians 2:13. _____

Although natural revelation and the human conscience can both reveal the power of God, they are incomplete by themselves. They provide no indication as to how an imperfect, finite human being may enjoy an eternal relationship with an infinite, perfect God.

For this information, this Good News, God has provided specific revelation. It is through specific revelation that we learn that the burden of all God's revelation is the redemption of his fallen creation. Specific revelation reveals God's redemptive plan for his creation and for fallen human beings. Under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, specific revelation persuades sinners of their need for salvation and creates faith in Jesus, the Christ, God's anointed Messiah. This specific revelation, the Word of God, is presented in two forms: written, and living. Speaking of the living Word of God, John opens his Gospel with this statement, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). A few verses later John states, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (vs. 14).

This living Word of God, Jesus Christ, is identified and revealed in the written Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. John makes this statement near the close of his Gospel, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). The only way for a human being to become informed about and acquainted with the living Word, Jesus, the Christ, is through the written Word, the Holy Scriptures, also known as the Holy Bible.

Methods of revelation. Since his creation of the universe, God has employed various methods to reveal to people things that they would not otherwise know. When considering God's methods of revelation, it is useful to recognize three specific eras of divine revelation.

At the dawn of human history in the Garden of Eden, God revealed himself *personally* to Adam and Eve, the first human beings. During the fifteen hundred years spanning the formation of the Holy Scriptures, God revealed himself in supernatural ways which in turn became the basis for both oral tradition and written record—*His-story*. Since the close of the New Testament and to the present day, God reveals himself primarily through his *written Word*—the Holy Bible.

According to Genesis 3:8a "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," God would communicate personally and directly to Adam as they walked together in Eden during the first era. Adam could address the Lord directly and received the Lord's direct reply. The covenant God made with Adam, and through him with the human race, at the beginning of history (Genesis 2:15–17) was apparently communicated to him directly by God. However, this direct and personal method of revelation ended when Adam and Eve yielded to temptation and chose to disobey their Creator and covenant partner. This act on the part of our first parents ended such direct, personal



| Adam and Eve's disobedience had immediate and far-reaching consequences.



804 N. 2nd Ave. E.
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