



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Psalm 19

“The Bible and Divine Revelation”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Gracious God and heavenly Father, We thank Thee and praise Thee for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon us as we begin the study of the holy Scriptures. May these times of study be times in which the Holy Spirit is our teacher. And may he take the things of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and show them unto us. Give us understanding, and give us open hearts. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.

[Message] Now, I want to turn, first of all, in your Bibles to Psalm 19. Now this is page six hundred and seven in the Scofield edition of the King James Version. This is the Old Testament. Feel free to use your index, Psalm, the Book of Psalm chapter, or Psalm 19. And I'm going to read this Psalm entirely through, beginning with the 1st verse, Psalm 19. Do we all have it? Psalm 19,

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech

nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Now, you'll just notice this that the Psalmist has been speaking about the heavens in the first 6 verses, but in the 7th verse, he begins to speak of the Revelation of God in the Scriptures, or in his word.

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

Now, we are studying, in this course of lessons, God's plan of the ages, and tonight I want to talk to you for a while on “The Bible and Divine Revelation.” This is an extremely important subject. The knowledge of God is the end, and the aim, of life. You remember Phillip, one of the apostles was speaking to the Lord Jesus one day and he said, “Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us.” In other words, Lord if you can show

us God the Father then that is sufficient for us. And he was expressing something of the earning of the human heart to know God. The Lord Jesus, himself, once said, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” And Paul, perhaps the outstanding disciple of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament at least, said this aim in life was to know him, so that the knowledge of God is the end and the aim of human life.

Job expressed it in the Old Testament when he said, “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat,” his throne. So that his longing is common to humanity to know God for we are the creatures of God. Unfortunately, however, God is an infinite being. He is not a finite being, such as we are. And therefore, he cannot be known by human searching. Job also in his book expresses this when he says, “Canst thou by searching find out God?” Man, a finite being, cannot understand the infinite. In fact, there is a Latin expression that goes like this, “Finitum non posit corpora infinitum,” the finite cannot lay hold of, or grasp the infinite. So, man cannot know God by searching after God. Some of you’ll remember when Titov was circling the globe, when he came back, smartly, he said to some who ask him about what he say, he said well, one thing he did not see, he saw no evidence of God nor even of angels. Now, of course, he was expressing something that might seem very smart to an atheist or an agnostic mind because it is true, we cannot by searching find out God.

There was a French astronomer by the name of LaPlace and he took his telescope and he searched the heavens and he, too, said that he could find no evidence of God whatsoever in the heavens. And President [indistinct] said, when he heard about it, “He might just as well have swept his kitchen with a broom, as to expect to find God with the telescope. You see God is an infinite being and we cannot, by searching, find out God. The only way that we can know God is by Divine Revelation.

Now the word “revelation” is a Greek word in its basic form that means “to take off the veil.” *Apokalupsis* is the Greek word. It is, of course, as you know the name for

the last book of the Bible, the apocalypse, or the Revelation. It is the taking off of the veil, and when a veil is taken off of something then you're able to understand that something. So, God must reveal himself if we are to know God. We cannot know him by searching.

When I was in California last year, I had a very interesting experience. I went out to Aerospace, having had a friend who was able to get me in and to take me through the place. I went up to the part of the equipment there which was used to track the flight of some of our astronauts around the globe. It's an amazing amount of IBM equipment in that place in Southern California. And we were talking together about some of the things that the United States was attempting to do in its space program, and one of the men with whom I was talking has, as his duty, the measurement of the surface of the moon. And he is trying to invent and develop some equipment which they may land on the moon and which will be equipment of such a sort as to send us back information about the surface of the moon. And it was interesting to hear him talk about it because he was talking about the scientific methodology that he must follow in order to have an instrument that is able to send back information from the moon. In other words, the Scientific method is adapted to its object. And what he thought about the moon's surface was determining the construction of this machine or this equipment.

Now, I could not understand it, but I knew the methodology that he was following. You see it is proper scientific methodology to investigate an object or a subject on the basis of the character of that object or subject. Whatever we know about that object determines our method of investigation. If we are studying biology, we adapt our Scientific method to the facts that we know about biology, or whatever the science may be. Well in the case of God, we must follow scientific methodology too. But since God is an infinite being, we have no methodology whereby we can investigate him. We cannot take God and put him in a test tube. And so we are limited, since we are finite beings, to Revelation from God. He must make himself known to us. We cannot find

him out by searching for he is beyond our scientific methodology. In fact, it is very unscientific for us to use so called scientific methodology used in other sciences of God because he is an infinite, invisible, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent being, and our Scientific methodology is not able to find out God. So if we are to be scientific in discovering God, we must acknowledge we cannot know him and that he must reveal himself to us.

Now, this is extremely important, and that is why I'm beginning with this tonight because it will help you to understand what we have in the holy Scriptures. Now let me, first of all tonight, say a few words about the sources of Divine Revelation. The sources of revelation, now, we can classify the sources of Divine Revelation in two ways, at least. We may classify them as primary and secondary. If we classify them in this way, the Bible is our primary source and nature, history, providence are secondary sources, or we might classify them as general, in which we would discuss nature, and history, and providence, and conscience, and special, a reference to the holy Scriptures.

Now, we will follow general and special methodology, but omit everything but nature just for the sake of simplicity. It is true that God has revealed himself in history. One famous student of history in the light of God, said, about the Battle of Waterloo, “Waterloo was God,” and he was absolutely right because God does reveal himself in human history. Perhaps you've heard this statement. It's almost trite now. “History is really his story,” and this is true. We could know some things about God if all we knew was human history, but there are many limitations to our knowledge about God from history. But let's look at it from the standpoint of general and special, and under general, consider general revelation of God in nature. And we have looked at this Psalm, the 19th Psalm, for in these opening verses, we have God's Revelation of himself in nature.

Now revelation which is general in nature is addressed to man as a man, just as a man, and God has addressed himself to man in a certain way through nature. Look at this Psalm 19 again at the first verse. Notice it very carefully. “The heavens declare the glory

of God.” The heavens tell forth the glory of God. In other words, if we look at the heavens we are able to see the glory of God, the evidences of his power, the evidences of his divinity, and this glorifies him. We see him in his greatness. “And the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech,” as the days pass and we see the marvels of God in his creation, it is just as if he were speaking to us, the Psalmist says. “And night unto night sheweth knowledge,” as we look at the stars and the stellar heavens we discover other things about God. Mainly, his eternal power and divinity as the Apostle Paul will tell us, and we’ll look at that passage in just a moment. Emmanuel Kant once said, “There are two things of perennial wonder, the starry sky and the moral law.” And there is a sense in which that is true. But now this knowledge, in which the Psalmist speaks of here, is a limited knowledge.

Take your Bibles now, and turn to the New Testament with me, Romans chapter 1. Now remember, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, this is the first of the epistles in the New Testament, and Paul’s 1st epistle as well, page eleven ninety-two in this edition that I have of the King James Version. Now Paul is taking here in Romans chapter 1 and he is speaking especially of the wrath of God as it has been revealed against men because of their rebellion against him. In the 18th verse where this particular section begins, he writes,

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen.”

In other words, those things that were invisible, which we could not see, we are now able to see since the creation of the world. And he defines this, “Being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”

Now, I'm going to stop here, just a moment, and let me warn you, I happen to be a professor of New Testament literature and exegesis. That means that I take the New Testament Greek text, I have one here before me, and I spend my time teaching the Greek New Testament to theological students who are some day, I hope, going out to preach the word. And if I've done this, as I have done it for about twenty years, it is inevitable that I must pass on to you some things that I tell them. I just cannot help but do it, you understand. It's like being in love, you know, it's impossible to conceal it. So, every now and then, I must stop and give you just a little pointer or so from the Greek text, and I'm not going to try to talk down to you because I know you're much more intelligent than I am in your sphere, but this happens to be my specialization. So, I'm going to have to share it with you in spite of yourself.

Now when Paul writes here, in verse 20, “Even his eternal power and Godhead,” you might think from this if you are a Christian and know anything about the Christian trinity, which we later on will discuss, by the way, that Paul is saying that we can look at the creation, and we can know his power, and we can also know the trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. For, does he not say, “Godhead?” Well, there is, of course, in the New Testament, a word that expresses the “Godhead,” but this is not that word. It is one very close to it. In fact, the only difference between this word and the word for “Godhead” is just a little Greek form, which is the “iota,” or our “I.” This word means divinity, not deity, or Godhead. It means, let me put it this way, it does not mean “Godhead” in the sense of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It means, simply, his divinity, his deity, his “Godhood.” That is the real meaning of this word. So let's read it that way, “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 Godhood,” that is, we can look at the creation and we can see that God is powerful and that God is God. But we cannot discern anything about the trinity, looking at God's creation. This is something that we know by reason of the word, his revelation, especially in the holy

Scriptures. But we can know that God is all powerful, and we can know that his is God by looking at the creation.

There is one thing of course that is absent from the revelation of God in nature. We not only cannot know the trinity, but we cannot know his grace and his mercy. We can look at the creation and see that he is powerful. We can see that he is God. But we can never know from the creation that God is a God of grace. We could never know that he is a God of love. In fact, we might argue just the opposite, if we simply had the creation. We might say, “Look that the storms that keep coming against our coasts, and people are killed. Look at the earthquakes and whole cities collapse. And many are suffering because of the disturbances of nature. Look at all types of storms that occur. God is not a good God. God is a God who delights in the sufferings of men,” we might argue, if we only had the creation. So, we can know certain things about God. We can know he is powerful. We can know he is God. But we cannot, from the creation, know that he is a God of love who has spoken to us in grace and mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Joseph Addison has written a hymn that is very well known. It is called “The Spacious Firmament.” And in that hymn there is a stanza that goes like this, “The spacious firmament on high, with all the blue ethereal sky, and spangled heavens, a shining frame, their great Original proclaim. The unwearied sun from day to day does his Creator's power display; and publishes to every land the work of an almighty hand.” And Addison was, of course, writing his hymn on the basis of Psalm 19 and the revelation of God within it. But nature is just volume one of God's book of revelation. There is a second revelation of God which we call special. Nature is his general revelation, but the word of God is his special revelation.

Now turn back to the Psalm, again, 19 and verse 7. In the 7th verse David says, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.” David is talking about the heavens, and here he talks about the law of the Lord. Now if the revelation of God in nature, his

general revelation, is addressed to man as a man, his special revelation, his revelation in the Scriptures, is addressed to man as a sinner, man who is in rebellion against God. So the Scriptures then are addressed to man as a man in rebellion against God. And they reveal how man in rebellion against God may come back into fellowship with God. This Bible which we call the holy Scriptures is the only authorized account of the revelation of God. It is attested, ultimately, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the authority that stands behind the holy Scriptures. He is the eternal Son of God and he has said, “The Scriptures cannot be broken.” Of course, it is true that there are other evidences that support the authority of the Bible. There is the testimony of its history. It is reliable history.

Men have thought down through the years, unbelievers, that the Bible contains false history, and there have been many claims and accusations made against the Bible. I remember some of them in more recent years which have come to mind. For example, it was often thought, by scholars, that the account of the battle in Genesis chapter 14 which Abram fought with Chedorlaomer and others, that this is false because we have no record in archeology of any such kings as are mentioned in the 14th chapter of Genesis. But even in the 20th century, due to archeological discovery in ancient East, we have discovered even the names of some of the kings mentioned in that 14th chapter. And the Bible, in its history, many hundred years before the time of Christ was vindicated.

In the New Testament Luke was long thought, by more modern students, to be faulty in his presentation of history. For example, it was thought that the census mentioned in Luke chapter 2 could not be accurate because the census that we know of in history does not agree with the time that we must have for the 2nd chapter of the Gospel of Luke. But again, in the 20th century, information has been uncovered from archeological discovery which shows us that Luke is an accurate historian. And it's a remarkable thing that several of our important New Testament scholars, for example, Sir William Ramsay and also Professor Cadbury of Harvard, have moved from a position of

doubt with regard to Luke's historical writing to a position in which they have said that he is a very reliable historian. So the Bible is a book that is evidenced as authoritative by its history. It, of course, is evidenced as authoritative by its influence. No book has ever had the influence that the holy Scriptures have had. Everywhere it has gone, the Bible has had an influence upon the lives of men. And even Harry Truman can talk about the wonders of the Sermon on the Mount, you know.

So the Bible is a book that has attested its authority by the influence that it has had among men. The testimony of archeology, I just referred to, Professor Nelson Glick, who is a Jew and not a Christian, has said, and he is one of our foremost archeologists, that never in all of his archeological experience has he ever uncovered one fact that contradicts the history that is recorded in the Old Testament. Now, this is a remarkable statement by a man who is not a Christian. It, of course, testifies to its authority by the ethics that are contained within it. No one has ever taught like Jesus of Nazareth. The teaching found in holy Scriptures, even those who are not Christians and do not acknowledge the deity of Christ say, is the greatest ethical teaching that the world has ever known. I

It has, also, the testimony of unity and continuity. Here is an amazing thing, sixty-six books, and yet there is a unity that moves throughout them. And remember this, the books of the Bible circulated, at one time, separately. All of the New Testament books circulated separately. And they were gathered together by believers over a long period of time. It was not until 397 A.D. at the Third Council of Carthage that the canon was recognized by the Christian church. It was complete when it was written, but it took us a long time to gather them all together. But even though these books circulated separately, and then were gathered together as holy Scriptures, there is a unity that moves throughout the sixty-six books. They speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is continuity in them. The story begins in Genesis, and there is movement and progress all the way through. This is what we are going to be studying when we study God's plan of the ages,

beginning from the beginning and moving through and seeing this continuity and the program of God.

The Bible has, of course, the testimony of Jesus Christ, who said, as I quoted previously, “The Scriptures cannot be broken.” The writers of the New Testament referred to the Old Testament, and they say that the Old Testament is the voice of the Holy Spirit of God. So there is testimony to the Old Testament Scriptures by the New Testament writers. And then there is the testimony of fulfilled prophesy. Isn't it an amazing thing that in the Old Testament, we find many prophesies of the coming of Christ? We are told, for example, that he shall be a son of Abraham. We are told not only that he will be a son of Abraham, but we are told that he would be of the tribe of Judah. And we're not only told that he would be of the tribe of Judah, but we are told that he would be of the family of Jesse in the tribe of Judah. And then we are told, not only that he would be of the family of Jesse in the tribe of Judah, and among the sons of Abraham, we're told that he would be born in Bethlehem, even though his home was in Nazareth. We are told this thing that he will be a Nazarene, and yet he will be born in Bethlehem, something that seems, in itself, contradictory. We're even told the exact time when the Son of man will appear, according to Daniel's prophesy.

So all of these prophesies of the Old Testament converge. A mathematician can tell you how unexpected is the fulfillment of all of these prophesies which have found their uniting in the Lord Jesus Christ. The testimony of fulfilled prophesy testifies strongly to the authority of the revelation of God in holy Scriptures. And, of course, there is also the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. For as we read this word of God, there is someone who tells us that this book is different from other books. I challenge you if you have never read the Bible to just pick up the Bible and begin to read it, and you will sense that this book is not like other books. This is not like Dante. This is not like Shakespeare. You may find books like Shakespeare, with the same kind of English, but there not like the holy Scriptures. Begin reading the Gospel of John. There is no book

like this. The Bible, you see, has the testimony of God the Holy Spirit accompanying it, and as we read it, even if we do not believe it, as I did not for twenty-five years, still there is something deep down in the human heart that says, this is the book of God.

And there is, of course, the testimony of experience. The man who relies upon the teaching of holy Scriptures discovers that there is reality in the promises. There is reality in the life that is offered through the Lord Jesus Christ. It's an interesting thing to think about the apostles. The apostles you know were just ordinary men, such as you and I are, and yet here is an amazing thing about them. They said that the Lord Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead, and they went to the ends of their earth proclaiming that message. As far as we know, they never once turned back from that testimony.

How can you explain the faith of the apostles? How can you explain the change that took place in a man like Peter, for example? In fact I also, I think, could even apply a pragmatic test today. You know if you want to write a poem, and if you should say, “O William Shakespeare, help me!” Nothing happens, you know. Or if you want courage, and you want some strength, a backbone and stamina, and you cry out, if you're British, “O Horatio Nelson, help me,” or “O George Washington, help me!” Nothing happens. But you know when a man comes to the end of himself, spiritually, and he wants spiritual help, and he cries out sincerely, “O God, help me through Jesus Christ!” Something happens immediately. It is an amazing thing, but it is true. This is why the Psalmist says, “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” So there is the testimony of experience.

Well there are many ways in which God has revealed himself in the Bible. He has revealed himself face to face. He spoke to some of the early saints of the Old Testament. He spoke, of course, not in his essence; no man has seen God in his essence, but he appeared before them in human form and spoke to them. He spoke to Moses. He spoke to Abraham, and so on. He revealed himself in dream and vision, in prophesy, above all,

in Jesus Christ and the experience of him. So God has revealed himself in nature. He has revealed himself in the Scriptures.

Nature is able to tell us that God is omnipotent. That he is God. It is the Scriptures that tell us about his love in Jesus Christ. We, today, particularly those of us who live in the south, are Southerners, and living in the so called Bible belt, or just in the United States, where we do accord the Bible some sense of reverence. You know when the preacher comes by, we rush and pull it out and blow off the dust, and put it out, you know, on the table, afraid that perhaps he might call for it. We think that it is common knowledge that God is love. But do you know that in ancient religions, aside from Christianity and influences from it, there is no revelation of God as love.

Take the heathen gods, they're gods who are cruel. They're gods who are strong. They're gods who are brave. But they are not gods who are revealed as love. And even in the gods of the heathen who are revealed as gods who love. They love men only when they are good, or they love good men only. And, of course, that kind of God must love himself, ultimately, because he is the only good. But the Bible contains a revelation of God that is unique. It is that God is love because he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. And when we go around talking about God being love, we are already dependent upon the Christian revelation of God in holy Scripture. We don't realize this often this often. We think that it's common knowledge, but it is not common knowledge. It is borrowed from Christianity. Only here do we have God revealed as love through the revelation of Jesus Christ who died for us upon the cross at Calvary.

Now, then we have then God revealing himself in general revelation. He reveals himself especially in the holy Scriptures. Religion is man's attempt to ignore special revelation. Religion, and I many shock you, and when I talk about religion, I'm not talking about Christianity, Christianity is bound up in a person, it is not a religion, such as the religions of the world, it is unique because it is a relationship to a person, religions are human attempts to ignore that which God has given us in the holy Scriptures. And so

we have legalism and asceticism and rationalism and all types of “isms” which are attempts to ignore what God has said in the Bible concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you to turn now with me to 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 15. For, while Psalm 19 tells us about the fact of special revelation in the Scriptures, 2 Timothy tells us something of the aim of this special revelation. This is on page twelve hundred and eighty-one. This is near the end of the Pauline epistles. Page twelve eighty-one in my text. 2 Timothy follows 1 Timothy, now that’s a profound thought isn’t it? I’m trying to say a few things so that you’ll be able to find it now. Some of you are looking very smugly now. You’ve already found it, and so you’re trying to show the rest of us that you have some extra knowledge of Scripture. You learned it in Sunday school. 2 Timothy 3:15, have you found it? Has everybody found it? Use the index, remember? Don’t be embarrassed. Use the index. In a little while, you won’t have to use the index. You’ll be able to guess and do fairly well. [Laughter] 2 Timothy 3:15, now do we have it?

Now I was talking about general revelation, and I said the fact of general revelation is given us clearly in Psalm 19. That is, “The heavens declare the glory of God.” The limits of general revelation, the revelation of God in nature, and the limits are his eternal power and divinity. We cannot know his grace in Jesus Christ. Now I’ve said that in the Bible we have special revelation of God. What is the aim of this revelation? Well, Paul says here now in 2 Timothy 3 and verse 15 and he’s talking to young Timothy, giving him some pastoral encouragement,

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly (you’ll notice this old English word, “thoroughly” that’s for thoroughly) thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

But notice the 15th verse, the Scriptures are able to make us wise, “unto salvation.” Now we can look at the creation of God and we can see his deity and we can see his power. But we cannot see the plan of salvation. When we look in the holy Scriptures, these are able to make us, “Wise unto salvation through trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.” So the Scriptures are designed by God to speak to men as sinners, and to show them how they may be, if I may use a biblical term, how they may be saved, not delivered from some experience in life, such as from some experience that is unpleasant, like delivered from a fire, or delivered from an accident, but spiritually delivered, or saved. The Scriptures then speak to men as sinners and are designed to give him deliverance from his sin. This is the limit of the testimony of special revelation.

Now let me, since we have about ten or twelve minutes left, let me move on now from the sources to the scheme as is set forth in the Scriptures, the scheme of revelation. When we look at this special revelation of God, we are looking at that which claims to tell us how we may find salvation through the Lord Jesus. Now God has revealed himself, we said, in two ways, generally in nature, especially in the word. When we look at nature, we discover that there is method, plan, and purpose in nature. For example, summer follows spring, fall follows summer, winter follows fall, and without exception. Even in Texas, this is true, where weather is very irregular; still there is this general regularity. One thing I always miss in Texas is the fact that we don't really have much of a fall. It just gradually sneaks up on us. Those of us from the east, southeast, such as I am, in South Carolina, we don't have a whole lot in my hometown, but I lived for a long time in a city in the south, I'm afraid to mention it these days, Birmingham. [Laughter] And in this city, we did have a fall. I miss this in Texas, but nevertheless, it does get cooler as the days go by. There is regularity in God's seasons, and we can see it. There is plan and purpose in God's revelation in the first volume of his book, in nature.

Now we would expect from this that there would be method or plan and purpose in the second volume of God’s revelation. And that is exactly what we find. Now let’s look at it for just a moment outwardly, very quickly, and then inwardly. Outwardly, what is the Bible made up of? Well it is made up of, as we know, of an old covenant and a new covenant. This, of course, is a human designation. God did not say the first thirty-nine books make up the old covenant and the next twenty-seven make up the new covenant. This is a human division. But as far as I can tell is a very wise one.

So we have the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament we have thirty-nine books. In the New Testament we have three times nine books, twenty-seven books, sixty-six books in all. In the Old Testament, of the thirty-nine books, we have seventeen that are historical. We have five that are poetical, and we have seventeen that are prophetic. The interesting thing, as I said previously, is that these seventeen historical and five poetical, and seventeen prophetic maintain throughout a remarkable unity. A Jew once read through the Old Testament, and when he finished the last book of the Old Testament, the first thing that he said was, “Where is he?” You see he saw that throughout the books of the Old Testament, a person was prophesied. And he said, “Where is he?” Now the New Testament gives the answer to that question in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. We have five that are historical, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the Book of Acts, which is a record of the early history of the church of Jesus Christ. Then there are twenty-one books that are doctrinal, including primarily the Epistles of Paul and of others, and finally one prophetic book in the New Testament, the apocalypse, the last book of the Bible. Here, then, are sixty-six books written by approximately forty authors over a period of time of about sixteen centuries, and yet this remarkable unity.

And the Bible, mind you, is also a book of outstanding literature. Densmore once tested the Bible against Shakespeare dramas, against Dante, and against one other, whose name escapes me, famous author. And as a result of his investigation, he concluded that

the Bible contained literature that was far and away better than the literature of these men. So even though there is this story about the Lord, written by forty different authors, there is a remarkable testimony to the greatness of its literary content in the study of it.

Now inwardly, we find plan and purpose throughout. I want you to turn with me to one more passage before we stop tonight. It is in Ephesians chapter 3, Ephesians chapter 3, for here, the Apostle Paul says, very plainly, that there is a plan that is followed throughout the whole of the Bible. Ephesians chapter 3, page twelve hundred and fifty-two. Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, if you're anywhere in those books, you're near. You're getting warm. Have you found it? Ephesians chapter 3, now I want you to notice the 11th verse, and to save time, I'm going to take a text, not out of context, but, simply, look at it in its context without saying a whole lot about the context. It's a very dangerous thing in studying the Bible, of course, to take proofed texts here and there without referring to the context. Now, of course, you'll have to take my word for it, and I think you'll discover, and I don't say this boastfully, but you will discover that most of the time, I am basing my remarks upon a study of the context. Now, you'll have to trust me for a while, until you investigate it for yourself.

But now let's look at the 11th verse, and I want you to see something that Paul says. He has just said, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known through the church (that's by the church) the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In other words, Paul says, there is an eternal purpose. The Greek text says the purpose of the ages in Jesus Christ our Lord. God has had an eternal purpose which is bound up in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

So, just as we see order and plan and purpose in the first creation, in nature, so, we see order and purpose and plan in God's revelation in the holy Scriptures. Just as in nature we see plan so in God's special revelation do we see plan and purpose and it is

bound up in the Lord Jesus Christ. This plan of his is unfolded in a series of divine economies, and various revelations are given in each one of these ages, which are recorded in the Old Testament and in the New. And so we're going to study God's plan of the ages and see how he has unfolded this revelation concerning the Lord Jesus beginning in the beginning of the Old Testament and how this has proceeded through the whole of the Bible with God adding this and adding that as he has gone along until we study the age in which we are living today and hear the things that God has to say to us through the word.

Now it is very valuable for us to study the Bible according to his plan of the ages because this is the way God has given the Bible to us. He did not give the Bible all at once. He gave us the holy Scriptures, part by part, as the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, “In many parts, and in many ways, God spoke in ancient times by the prophets unto the fathers.” So in age after age, he unfolded himself and we're going to study in this way. This will enable us to understand the Bible. This will enable us to, for example, read the Old Testament with understanding and read the New Testament with understanding. Otherwise we'll find hopeless contradiction in the Bible. In the Old Testament it says, for example, that we are to bring offerings when we sin, animal sacrifices. Well why should we not bring animal sacrifices today? What has happened that has done away with the old system of sacrifice? Why is it that today, even though the Bible says when you sin bring a sin offering, why is it that we do not bring the offering? Why is it that in New Testament times we do not have to do this? You see only by understanding God's revelation as found in the Bible in the ages which are unfolded within it are we able to understand such things as these.

Well, our time is just about up. Let me say one final word, and I didn't intend to say much about this anyway, about the third, the substance of revelation. The substance of revelation is very simple. We will be seeing it more and more as we go along. It is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one of whom the Bible speaks. He said in John

chapter 5 and verse 39 to the Jews, “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me.” So the Scriptures testify of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has spoken in his Son. We will never understand the truth of God if we do not understand that they speak of Jesus Christ.

George Headley has written a book about the ministry of the gospel on the campuses of the United States of American. He happens to be Chaplin, or was, at Mills College on the coast. He said that when he was just a little boy and living in china, his father being a missionary, he remembered sitting in a gathering, something like this, while his father showed stereopticon slides of the ministry of Jesus Christ and attempted to explain to these ignorant poor illiterate Chinese people the gospel of the Lord Jesus. And he said he can still remember sitting in the crowd as a little boy and looking up and seeing those very poor figures flashed on, you remember the old, well there are not any of you this old, I suppose, the old magic lantern, and they were flashed on the screen, and he remembered that his father was telling the story of the three crosses, the two thieves, one on either side, and the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst. And he was telling these poor Chinese how that God had sent his son to die for them upon the cross at Calvary, and through the finished work of the Lord Jesus, for he paid for all of our sins, they might have eternal life. And he said as a little boy, I still remember a poor ignorant old Chinese woman getting up in the crowd and stumbling forward, here feet bound with claws, the only shows that she had had, and he remembered her crying out, “I always knew there must be a God like that.”

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]