

LIVING WORD UGANDA
AMT 2021 LECTURES: BIBLE OVERVIEW
22nd Feb 2021 9:30am – 4:30pm

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Objective;

The Bible is God's word. But Christians find the Bible daunting and hard to understand.

The aim of the Bible Overview is;

1. To equip apprentices to better **READ, UNDERSTAND, and APPLY** the bible.
2. To demonstrate that the Bible isn't just a **collection of random stories**, but the **unfolding story** of God's relationship with the world.
3. To explain how various Bible books relate to each other and the chronology of events therein.
4. To Preach the Bible; articulate purpose of God, plan of God, the pleasure of God

Big Challenge: Prejudice

Qn: who threw down his staff to become a snake before Pharaoh? Exodus 7:9-10

To teach people who know, or think that they know. Such people have some knowledge of the subject. They have something to affirm, prove or defend.

Because of the Christian heritage, which we thank God for, we think we know until we discover we are sometimes misguided or actually don't know.

So what is the Bible?

1. The Bible is a REVELATION Not a RESEARCH piece

RESEARCH: The purpose of research is to enhance society by advancing **KNOWLEDGE** through the development of scientific theories, concepts and ideas. A research purpose is met through forming hypotheses, collecting data, analysing results, forming conclusions, implementing findings into real-life applications and forming new research questions.

The Bible is not advancing Knowledge or developing some useful theories, concepts and ideas about morality and human co-existence. The Bible is introducing a personal, sovereign being who founded the universe for a specific purpose and is orchestrating all events to achieve his set purpose for his personal pleasure.

REVELATION is defines as:

- a) The term "revelation" comes from the Greek word "*apokalupsis*", which means "a disclosure" or "an unveiling." The word was used in other contexts to describe the unveiling of a statute upon its completion. It has the idea of disclosing something that was previously unknown
- b) A surprising and previously unknown fact that has been disclosed to others. (*synonym; Disclosure*)
- c) The divine or supernatural disclosure to humans of something relating to human existence

Revelation is "God's supernatural self-disclosure to human beings revealing the truth they would not otherwise know and

are incapable of discovering on their own." It is a sovereign act of God to make himself known to his creation.

It is the very opposite of research.

It consists of God progressively unfolding His character, mighty acts, and purposes in history. It can broadly be divided into two Categories;

i) **General revelation**

General revelation is something that all humanity has received. It is general in that it reaches all people in all times and in every place-nobody is without general revelation. Ps 19, Romans 1: 19; *“since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”*

Therefore general revelation is worldwide in scope. No one is ignorant of God's general revelation.

ii) **Special revelation**

Special revelation is a supernatural communication from God that has been given to humanity either in oral or written form, whose truths could not be known through unwritten tradition, nature, providence, history, our conscience, or any by reasoning process. God makes this known directly to us.

Although God has generally revealed himself in nature, He chose to reveal Himself more fully revealed in the written word, the Bible. The various ways in which he made himself know to humanity have been documented an in the

Bible. Scripture tells us everything we could know about God and everything we need to know.

Examples of Special revelation

The Bible lists the many ways in which God has made Himself known in history;

- **God Directly Communicated To Humanity with an Audible Voice**

God spoke audibly in a way that human beings could hear his voice and understand. We read, “The Lord Said...” *Gen 2:18*, “He made a covenant with...” *Gen 15:18*

- **Casting of Lots;**

Prov 16:33; “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”

While the Bible records the use of the lot by Jesus' disciples (*Acts 1:21 – 26*), there is some question as to whether they were led by the Holy Spirit to choose the twelfth disciple in this manner. Today we would not highly regard the use of the lot. However, in the past, it did sometimes serve to communicate the mind of God to humanity.

- **God wrote with a huge hand on a wall. (*Dan 5:5*)**

God revealed himself through dreams – A common experience of God revealing his truth Numbers 12:6, ⁶ he said, “Listen to my words:

“When there is a prophet among you,
I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions,
I speak to them in dreams.

- **God gave visions to many people Isaiah 1:1**

There is some distinction between dreams and visions. Dreams happen while we are asleep. A vision can occur while the person is awake. Furthermore, in a dream the emphasis seems to be more on what is seen, while in a vision the emphasis seems to be on what is heard

- **Paul was transported into the spirit world 2 Cor 12:2-4**

²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴ was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell

- **God dictated the truth**

Rev 2:1-3 “To the angel^[a] of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ²I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³ You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

- **He used angels to bring the message; Luke 2:10-11**

- **God used Miracles to perform his power Acts 2:22,**

John 20:30-32; Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this

book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe^[a] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- **God Spoke through Prophets**
- **Finally God spoke through his son**

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

- **The Bible records all these (*and more that we have not mentioned*)**

HOWEVER, the Bible is not merely the record of the **revelations from God**. The Scripture also contains additional truth not revealed by these other sources. Thus the Bible is the record of different aspects of special revelation as well as special revelation itself.

2. What BIBLE THE CLAIMS about itself

The 66 books (*OT 39 and NT 27*) that make up the Bible were written over a span of approximately 1,500 years by about 40 human authors.

The Bible makes great claims about itself;

- a) **Author:** It clearly presents its author as God – the creator of the Universe. It claims to reveal this God; His Purpose, Plan and pleasure for human kind.

b) Inspiration: The linchpin of the doctrines of Scripture is that it is inspired. *Inspiration means that all the words of Scripture are God's words (2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Rom 15:4)*

c) Authority: *Because Scripture is God's Word, it is authoritative. It carries the weight of God's command as ruler over all creation. The Scripture is "given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life" (referencing Luke 16:29, 31; Eph. 2:20, Rev. 22:18–19; and 2 Tim. 3:16).*

Luke 16:29, 31; ²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'they have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' ³¹ "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Eph. 2:20¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Rev. 22:18–19 ¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

d) Infallibility: **Scripture is** incapable of making mistakes or being wrong; it is never failing; always effective.

In the Roman Catholic Church, they believe in papal infallibility,

Because Scripture is God's Word, and God cannot lie, Scripture is incapable of erring (Ps. 119:43, 142, 151, 160). 'The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.' God's very nature is truth, so his word tells the truth.

As Jesus prays for his disciples and by extension prays for you and me, he tells the father in John 17:17, “¹⁷ Sanctify them by^[a] the truth; your word is truth.”

e) Inerrancy: Closely related (and hotly debated), *inerrancy traditionally holds that Scripture is free from error.*

Stated positively, Scripture is completely truthful. Most people who deny inerrancy do so outright; naturally, non-Christians have no reason to confess inerrancy. But when Christians debate the topic, often they end up exploring the relationship between precision and truth. Does inerrancy require that the Bible speak with absolute precision about every detail?

John Frame offers this wisdom: “[Scripture] has a level of precision sufficient for its own purposes, not for the purposes for which some readers might employ it.”

f) Clarity: *In brief, Christians can make sense of Scripture. (Ps.19:7, 119:105, 130)*

Ps.19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple

If it is perfect, trustworthy and plain, how come people find contradictions?

2 Pet. 3:16; *“¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain **some things that are hard to understand**, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction”*

People who are ignorant of God (don't know God's will, Purpose and plan) are bound not only to see contradictions but also to take offence at God.

g) Sufficiency: *“Scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life.”* For example, Scripture is sufficient to reveal God, save, and teach one to live righteously (2 Tim 3:15–16, 2 Peter 1:3).

The *“Westminster divines”* explain with wonderful precision and nuance:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. (2 Tim. 3:15–17, Gal. 1:8–9, 2 Thess. 2:2)

Gal. 1:8–9: *⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to*

you, let them be under God's curse! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

In regard to the gospel; knowing God's will, purpose, plan and pleasure there is no need for vision, dream, rema-word, word of wisdom etc.

For all of life, we acknowledge the necessity on the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: (John 6:45, 1 Cor 2:9–12) and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed. (1 Cor. 11:13–14, 1 Cor. 14:26, 40)

h) Necessity: Related to sufficiency, but slightly different, this doctrine holds that *“the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws”* Scripture alone provides special revelation: knowledge of God's will and salvation (Rom. 10:13–17, Acts 4:12).

Scripture claims these things about itself, why should we believe it?

- a) The amazing unity of its message in spite of having about 40 human authors over a period of approximately 1,500 years.
- b) Its miraculous preservation over the years
- c) Archaeological discoveries of ancient manuscripts
- d) The precise fulfillment of its prophecies

3. STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION of the Bible

- **Chronological order – OT**
- **Chronological Order – NT**
- **Types of Literature;** narrative/stories 43%, poetry 33%, discourse/prose 24%
- **Books of the Bible as we have them**

4. THE STORY AND MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE

- **OT – Anticipation**
God's promise of a savior and a rest
- **Gospels – Manifestation**
The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- **Acts – Proclamation**
The Birth of the Church and the good news to the gentiles
- **Epistles – Explanation**
New life as a follower of Jesus Christ

- Revelation – Consummation

Sin is perished and abolished; New heaven and new earth.
The full and eternal rest for the faithful in the eternal Reign
of Jesus the king of Kings.

5. PREACHING THE BIBLE MESSAGE

**So what is God saying to us today? A safe framework to
approach the Bible;**

What is God up to?

- What is God's perfect impression of mankind?**
- What is the problem in the world?**
- Why did Jesus come on earth?**
- How can any body be saved?**
- How do we know all this?**

a) God's perfect impression of mankind;

(Gen 1:26, 27, Rom 8:28 – 29, Eph 1:4)

**To make man in his own image, holy and blameless before
his sight, for his own glory.**

Rather than making man merely happy, healthy and wealthy

b) The problem in the world

(Rom 3:23, Rom 3:9 – 12)

The problem is SIN.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

NOT: *Poverty, illiteracy, disease, war, hunger, sanitation, environmental degradation and segregation against women*

c) Jesus came to Save

(Mathew 1:21, John 1:29, John 17:1-4)

To save MEN from their SIN

NOT to resolve *Poverty, illiteracy, disease, war, hunger, water & sanitation, environmental degradation and segregation against women etc.*

d) How can any-body be saved?

(Eph 2: 5, Eph 2: 8 – 9, Rom 4:16, 1 Peter 1:5)

We are saved by God's grace alone (this is a free gift) through faith alone (not any of our efforts and works)

NO amount of human effort in spiritual enterprise can surface; sacrificial giving, prayer, fasting, etc

e) How do we know all this?

(2 Tim 3: 16 – 17, 2 Timothy 3:10, 1 Peter 1:19 – 21, 1 Peter 1:3)

God's word enjoys the supreme place of authority in informing Christian faith and Practice

Other sources may possess some value, but are mere myths as fur as faith in God is concerned

f) The “Good news”

We are saved;

- By God's **GRACE ALONE**
- Through **FAITH ALONE**
- In Jesus **CHRIST ALONE**
- For the **GLORY OF GOD ALONE**
- We know this from **SCRIPTURE ALONE**

(Martin Luther's 5 Solas)

END