**Genesis and the Truth – God’s Revelation 05/29/22**

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 A. It is completely true, or it is not.

 To date, we have affirmed the importance of Genesis regarding our understanding of God, of the creation of an environment for mankind, the creation of mankind, of sin and consequence, and of the nature of our relationship to God. We’ve gotten a lot done, and hopefully the net effect has been that we have enlarged our perception of God, placed ourselves in a correct position in relation to God’s position, and hopefully, we have begun to see Genesis as more than a book of sort of interesting stories that may or may not be literally true.

 Having noted all of this, I have to tell you that I have failed you. Today I’m going to back it all up and talk to you about something that I should have dealt with months ago. With the Lord’s help and guidance, I am trying to build something here. I am trying, as a new pastor, to construct a solid foundation for all sermons to come. This, I believe, is a worthy thing to do, but in order to do it I cannot get ahead of myself. I have to take it slow, and do a good, thorough job to begin with. Together, we have to build a foundation of belief, a solid, unshakeable platform from which we can go forward in the confidence that God is always correct.

 The basis, the bedrock of this foundation that I’m talking about is the Bible. We must first be willing to believe what it says to us, everything it says to us, and then know what it says. Let me shock you a little.

SLIDE 1

 In two recent (2018 and 2020) studies conducted by Ligonier Ministries, 3,000 people who self-identify as Evangelical, Born-Again Christians were surveyed. They were asked a variety of doctrinal questions. Here are some results. 52%, a majority, said that most people are good by nature. 51% said that God accepts the worship of all religions.78% said that Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God. 69% agreed that the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation. 58% said that worshiping alone is a valid replacement for regularly attending church. 59% said that the Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being and member of the Trinity. In another survey of self-proclaimed evangelicals, one third of the respondents did not believe that Jesus is God! 12 % of the people in this study believe that one needs more than faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved, and 18% believe that the Holy Spirit can instruct people to do things that are counter to scripture. 22% believe that gender identity is a choice. 39% believe that “God will aways reward true faith with material blessings in this life.” Also, 18% believe that the Bible is not literally true, and 17% believe that science disproves the Bible. That’s nearly 1 in 5 “Evangelical Christians!” - 2020 Ligonier Ministries State of Theology Survey

 I think better of our church. I know we have a fairly firm grasp on what the Bible says, and that the Bible is inerrant and infallible. But just in case…

 SLIDE 2

 As Christians, we must always keep 1 Peter 5:8 in mind. It says, **“Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”**

 An important aspect of this watchfulness has to do with understanding what’s going on in our heads and hearts. The nature of deception is that you don’t realize you’re deceived. There is a war going on inside all of us between our regenerated spirit and our fallen flesh. Aside from this, we are constantly, and I mean constantly, bombarded with the word of man and we are contaminated from outside with his thinking, philosophy and rebellion against God. Understand folks that there is nothing neutral out there. EVERYTHING is either affirming biblical truth or undermining it.

 Now what about this war within? It rages constantly, insistently picking at you, working to turn you against God and against His truth. Romans 1:18 tells us, **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness…”**

 The effort to suppress the truth is happening inside of us constantly. Doubt is a funny thing, and by funny, I mean incredibly destructive. We want to doubt more than we want to believe. Why is this? Because the way of doubt is self-reliance and lack of accountability. The way of belief is humility and accountability. Those two things don’t come naturally to us, folks.

In Ephesians 4:17-24 Paul instructs God’s people, ”T**his I tell you, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20But you have not so learned Christ, 21if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”**

Fight the fight! Put off the old man and put on the new!

Part of fighting this war for your heart, mind, and soul is recognizing what your enemy is doing. What is he up to? What are his tactics? In this context, we have three agenda items.

Slide 3

 First item up is that sin must be defended at all times. This says “We MUST not be subject to accountability for our actions,” or in other words, We must make the world safe for sinners.” Why do you think Romans 1:32 says of those in active, ongoing sin, **“who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.**

This agenda item has to do with creating an environment that is sin-friendly and that encourages rebellion against God. Is this the world we live in?

 The second war tactic is to create an atmosphere of chaos. Since God has revealed Himself to us in a systematic, orderly way, the best way to trivialize Him is to attack origins. We’ll get deeply into this next week, but for now just understand that the opposite of orderliness is chaos and confusion. One way to create this uncertainty is to attack the only source in the entire world that explains how things are and how they came to be using order and intellect. The Bible is the only book that claims to be truth, to be the word of God, and that claims to be absolutely, unquestionably correct about everything in it. It explains the astonishing order we find in the universe, and the devil will not stand for this. He will compel men to denigrate God’s word. Isaiah 5:20 says, **“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness…”** This is a fight, folks.

 The third tactic the devil uses to wage war on Christianity is to discredit scripture. This is a more subtle version of the second tactic, but it is devastating. It doesn’t necessarily manifest itself as an attack. What’s wrong with just asking questions? The serpent said to Eve, **“Has God indeed said…?”** (Genesis 3:1) As for God’s word, is it too much to ask that a grandiose, all-knowing book of truth simply satisfy the demands of science? You see if a document that claims to be 100% true can be proven to be even 1% false, then it’s game over. “We’ve proven the Bible false in this one aspect or claim, so what else is false? Who knows?” No book has ever sold as many copies as the Bible, but no book has ever been so highly scrutinized, either. My question is, “If it’s not true, then what’s the big deal about it? If it doesn’t matter, why does it matter?”

Remember, I’ve characterized this as a war. This means there is another side. We are to not simply accept getting beat up by our old sinful self. We are to fight back, but how?

Slide 4

 First, we must either recognize and submit to God’s authority, or not. If not, zip up your Bible and head on out. Have a nice day. If you are not going to submit to God’s authority, why are you wasting your time? If you recognize God’s authority, you recognize the unassailable truth of the Bible. Basically, you’re either in or you’re out. Decide. Either submit to His authority, or submit to your own. Everybody gets all bent out of shape about free will. Fair enough. You can exercise that free will that you have been given by God any way you wish. Know this though. All will bow. **“*As* I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God.” (Romans 14:11)**

 If you decided to recognize God’s authority over you and everything else, there’s a second step. Now it’s time to kill. Crush your unbelief. You’ll be needing help for this. In Mark 9:24, the man with the demon possessed son says, **“Lord I believe, help me in my unbelief!”** This has to be one of the most honest statements in the Bible! So how do we kill our unbelief? Remember that verse in Ephesians we just read? Take off the old man and put on the new. You have a choice. You can walk or operate or live in newness of life, or you can wallow around in the mud with your old buddy, the flesh. Hey, at least the expectations are low, right? I read on the internet, which we know NEVER lies, that we make upwards of 35,000 choices per day. I wonder how many of these have to do with making sure I’m wearing the right man? That’s an interesting thought. How many times do I have to choose between God’s way and mine? Help us, Holy Spirit.

 The third tactic in our battle is to trust the truth. You know what faith is? It is not blind. It’s not a best guess. Faith is trust, which is tied to belief. The thing about it is, everyone has faith. Faith in something or someone. For instance, I have decided (with lots of help from the Holy Spirit) to place my faith, my trust, in God and His word. His word is the Bible. Therefore, I have faith or trust in the Bible. I believe it to be absolutely true. Every word. This causes me problems sometimes, since I want to place my faith, or my trust, in me and what I think. Like I said, everyone has faith. Everyone places their trust in something. The thing is, we have the choice to either place our trust in God and what He says, or ourselves and what we say. Even if we think we are trusting someone else, we put the final stamp of approval on it. We are our own bosses, unless we literally designate God as our authority. There are only two paths. John 14:6 sheds light on this. It’s either Jesus, or you. You either place your trust in Him, or yourself. That’s it. Simple. What will it be?

 When faced with this question, you can decide how to move forward, but what about your past? How have you come through the battle so far? How can you know the extent of the damage that’s been done to you? One way to do damage assessment is to examine what you currently believe in regard to the Bible and to theological issues surrounding it. Remember the survey? Where are you on these issues. An exercise you can do is to go through our doctrinal statement which is posted on our website (wheatlandbible.com) under the about tab. Do you agree with the assertions on the statement? If not, why not?

 By the way, some disagreement is okay. Let’s take a quick side trip here.

SLIDE 5

 When it comes to what you believe in terms of Bible teaching, there are three buckets, or categories into which you can file your beliefs. First, there is dogma, or dogmatic theology. This category is comprised of non-negotiable, or “bullet” doctrines. These are the things that form the bedrock or foundation of your faith. Things for which you would take a bullet to defend or uphold. For us, that would be something like, Jesus is God, and belief in Him is the only means of salvation. I would die for that.

 Secondly, we have doctrine, or doctrinal theology. This is stuff we believe the Bible teaches, but there may be some doubt. In other words, I believe this to be true based on careful study of scripture, but I allow that this particular interpretation of scripture could be off a little. For instance, I personally hold to a pre-tribulation rapture of Jesus’ church, but I wouldn’t necessarily die to defend that position.

 Thirdly, we have biblical opinion. This is the position that a certain aspect of theology is a best guess. Scripture isn’t crystal clear or may even be vague, and that’s okay. An example of this might be found in Genesis 6:4. Who were the Nephilim? What is their purpose? Any position on this passage wouldn’t necessarily be a mountain to die on, so to speak. Same thing with a controversial verse like 1 Peter 3:19. We must be careful with these texts, since while God’s word is 100% truth, we don’t always have the means to apprehend this truth. Therefore, we should keep in mind the cautionary instruction in 2 Timothy 2:23, which tells us**, “…avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.”**

Alright, back to your personal battle damage report. All your life you have been engaged in a battle for your mind, emotions, and soul. Most likely, you didn’t even know that the battle mentioned in Ephesians chapter 6 was raging inside you. Actually, in all likelihood, it hasn’t been much of a battle, since most of us don’t put up much of a fight. We just take the abuse. So the way to go about this damage assessment is to take a look at what you believe. As I mentioned, it’s worthwhile to assess what you believe about theological issues, and as you inventory them, to notice which of the three buckets you put them in. Your self-evaluation should go deeper, though. There is a reason why you think the things you think. We all have a fallen, corrupt mind. We are all prone to suppressing the truth in our natural state, or in our flesh. Refer back to Romans 1:18 and remember it applies to ALL people.

 Let’s introduce a term here. The word is “Presupposition.” What do we pre-suppose to be true? What to us “Goes without saying?” Another way of discovering your presuppositions are to think about what you assume to be true. For instance, I have a presupposition that the airplane I’m about to board is flight-worthy and will not crash. If I was 95% sure it wouldn’t crash, but I thought there was a 5% probability that it would crash, I would not get on the plane.

 So what about our presuppositions regarding things like God and the Bible. Let’s take a look at how these play out in the attitudes of people and their opinion of the Bible.

Video

 Interesting, huh? How about you? What do you think about the Bible? Do you think it’s true? What do you believe about it, and how do you know that’s what you believe? Here’s an interesting test. Let me give you two verses pertaining to who Jesus claims to be:

1. “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6.

What is the claim being made here? One way, One truth, One life, One path to God. Do you believe it? Remember the survey? Over half of evangelical Christians surveyed would deny the truth of this verse. Here’s another one.

2. “Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” Here Jesus is quite literally and unquestionably claiming to be God. Remember the survey revealed that 78% of evangelical Christians believe that Jesus was created by God, which means that He cannot be God.

 What does scripture say of itself? In other words, what should we believe to be true about the Bible? 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for [[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+3&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-29870c)]instruction in righteousness.” Without doing an exhaustive word study (we’ll save that for another time), what is meant here is that the entire Bible was breathed out by God, or spoken by Him. The physical manifestation of this is Jesus. Jesus is the Word (John 1:1) Recall that Jesus referred to Himself as “the Truth.” Do you see how it all connects? I am dogmatic about this. If someone were to put a gun to my temple and demand that I deny that every word of the Bible is the truth, or they would pull the trigger, I would tell them that Jesus loves them and I would be instantly transported into His presence following the report of that gun.

 So challenge yourself. Ask yourself, “What do I believe goes without saying? What do I believe to be true? But here is where we must be the most careful. What do I mean? I’ll pose another question. “Who is the Judge?” The very act of asking yourself what you believe to be true about the Bible exposes the most insidious or damning presupposition. The presupposition here is, “I get to decide whether or not God is truth, and whether or not the Bible is truth.” In other words, I am the judge. I decide. We have a chance at this point to recognize this heretical, satanic view, and to change it. The correct presupposition here is that God says in His Word that it came from Him and He is truth. Therefore, the Bible is all truth, and my opinion regarding this fact does not matter. This places me under the judgment of God and His word, instead of over it. Do you see the difference here? Hopefully I haven’t lost you.

 You see, I had to come to the place where I abandoned my thinking and my opinion. I had to recognize that I am by nature fallen, and that no matter what I believe to be true, God is always true. His word is more reliable than any created thing, and I must be subject to its authority. So that question, “What do you think about the Bible?’ is based on a presupposition that it matters what you think, that the Bible is subject to your acceptance or rejection. It is not. It is what it is. Our job is to submit to it. We must get our presuppositions in order. Or, as I’ve always said to my football players, Let’s get our minds right!

 We come now to the third point of this message. First we acknowledged the war within us, second we assessed our own presuppositions, or the battle damage report, and now we will look at some of the claims made in early Genesis and see how our presuppositions affect the way we view these claims.

SLIDE 7

 The first claim in the entire Bible comes in verse 1. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1 – Based on this, we should develop some presets. Beliefs based on God’s Word. From this verse we get that God is eternally preexisting, self-existing (uncreated), All-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, totally sovereign, in total authority, not to be questioned, and different from us, not just greater.

The next claim is that He created man in His own image and likeness. (Genesis 1:27) – From this we can know that He created all of us, and that He used Himself as a template or pattern. He created us to be like Him, but not Him. As His image and likeness, we are above EVERY other created thing. Our view of mankind should be very high, but not like that of God.

 Third, Genesis 1:31 says, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” The claim here is that after six literal days God was finished creating everything and proclaimed that it was perfect. Our presupposition should now be that God is so powerful and awesome that it is not only possible for him to create all that exists in six days, but that is exactly what happened. Also, things are not now the way they were intended to be from the start. We should hold to a young earth.

 Genesis 2:2 tells us “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. **3**Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” These verses claim that God is finished creating, thus creation is not ongoing. The implication here is that any theory of evolution, or ongoing creation of new things, is biblically false. Let’s check in here. So far so good? Or are our presuppositions getting in the way of accepting these basic lessons from Genesis?

 The fifth claim I pulled from Genesis is found in chapter 2, verse 17. “…but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” The claim here is that if man disobeys God, death is the result. My presupposition should be that I cannot disobey God without serious consequences. Also, there are things that are allowable, and things that are not. This means that I am subject to an authority outside myself.

 Sixth, verse 22 of chapter 2 claims that women and men are the same in substance and essence, but different in nature. It reads, “Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.” She was made from him but brought by God to him. I must presuppose that God made men and women the same but different. I must presuppose that there are two kinds, otherwise God would have made two of the same kind that could help one another to begin with. He did not do this. If we read ahead, He made them different, but made them able to “cleave” together and become one, and He enabled them to multiply in this way. This affects several other presuppositions, but we’ll leave that there for now.

 The next claim is given in Genesis 3:7. “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” The claim here is that when we sin, we are shown good and evil, right and wrong, and we are convicted of our sin. We also are shown our propensity for covering up our sin. The presupposition here is that I understand that there is consequence in regard to my sin.

 Number eight drives home the result of disobedience to and rebellion against God. In these verses, God tells those who have done wrong that the reason they will be suffering is sin. We cannot escape God’s judgment. My understanding of this drives my presupposition that I need Jesus. Are we seeing how this works? If I don’t accept this literally, I have to find some philosophical or existential reason to believe in Jesus, and since I have no underlying reason to put my trust in Him, I am not committed to any belief that I can drum up. I can take Him or leave Him.

 Genesis 3:24 claims that God drove man from His presence. The garden was a paradise where man and God could be together. This verse says, “So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” The claim here is that access to God is off-limits. That man has been separated. Again, I have to presuppose based on this that in order for me to be close to God, some provision has to have been made.

 Finally, Genesis 4:7 informs us that “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.” The claim here is that sin is real and active, and wants to overtake us. My presupposition should be that there is danger out there, but it can be overcome. My presupposition should also be that I ought to do well. The devil is waiting for me to fall.

 This is a very partial list of truths from the early chapters of Genesis. How we respond to these claims, these verses, will tell us much of what we suppose to be true deep down. There really isn’t much difference between a presupposition and a belief. The difference is that a presupposition lies under the surface, embedded in the subconscious, and goes without say. It is an assumption, and it colors or determines what we believe. Do we believe deep down that God must answer to us? Do we believe that His word must conform to what we already believe?

 Our beliefs as Christians must be shaped by something. What is that? Should it just be that each person is allowed to come up with their own opinions? Let’s go back to the beginning, back to where we started this morning. There is a war raging within each of us. It is constant. We are prone to suppressing the truth, and we are bombarded every day all day by the thinking and attitudes of those who reject God’s authority.

 Dark forces are persuading us daily to defend sin, embrace chaos, and discredit scripture. Gradually, we are persuaded to accept presuppositions that rebel agains truth. How can we possibly fight this? First we must realize it is happening inside us. Ask the Lord to root out deception.

 Here are some practical ways you can fight, or launch a counterattack against your enemy.

SLIDE 7

1. Recognize God’s Authority – James 4:7 tells us, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” We must develop a preset that accepts and welcomes God’s authority over us.

2. Kill Your Unbelief – Okay, but how? Romans 12:2 tells us, “…do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Okay, you may say, but how do I renew my mind? First off, end the bombing that you have been under for so long. Turn off the media input from the unbelieving world. Stop listening to what the devil has to say to you. Next, saturate your conscious with God’s Word. What if we all spent more time in God’s word than we do listening to the world? We would be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and our presuppositions, our presets, would begin to line up with those of the Lord.

3. Trust His Truth. – My favorite verse since I was a kid is Proverbs 3:5. It says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” This verse points to one of the most basic presuppositions. Is God most trustworthy, or am I? Should I rely on Him, or me?

I ask you. Will you trust Him completely? Or will you trust yourself?

 If you are sitting out there and you haven’t been able to let go and trust Jesus, I’m asking you to do that today. He loves you, and to be honest He is the only one who can keep you from facing the punishment you deserve. All of your life you have doubted God and rebelled against Him. The penalty for your disobedience is death. But you can place all of your trust in Jesus, and He will save you and give you an incredible eternal life that is beyond your imagination. It’s all there waiting for you, just put your faith, your trust, in Jesus. Trust me on this one. He saved me, He wants to save you, too.