

# Do You Need The Bible?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, this morning we are starting a short new series called God Speaks.! In this we're going to be learning a little bit more about the Bible.

And we're going to aim for four parts. And in these four parts we're going to ask four questions. Do you need the Bible? Can you trust the Bible? Can you understand the Bible? Is the Bible enough? And each of these relate to what we call the doctrine of Scripture. And there's kind of four headings that we have in terms of the doctrine of Scripture. We talk about the necessity of Scripture, the authority of Scripture, the perspicuity of Scripture, and the sufficiency of Scripture.

And we're going to go through each of these over the next couple of weeks in the four parts of our series. So, we're starting with the question, with the necessity of Scripture, with the question, do you need the Bible?

And that's, as we think about that, we're turning back to John 6. And we're going to read again at verse 66 to 69. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

[ 1 : 09 ] So Jesus said to the twelve, do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we've believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

That question, do you need the Bible, is actually a massively important question. Because sometimes the question that we tend to ask everybody in terms of religious faith is, do you believe in God?

And we kind of think that, you know, that sort of separates people into two categories, what we call theists, those who believe in God, atheists, those who don't. And it can sometimes think that these are maybe two fairly even categories.

And maybe in the UK, that might be true. But in terms of history and in terms of the world, these are not two even categories. Because the vast, vast, vast majority believe in God.

They believe that there is a God. But within that group, you can have big differences in terms of what people believe that God to be.

[ 2 : 14 ] And that means that maybe it's the case that the really important question is not, do you believe in God? Most people do. The vast majority of people do. But the really crucial question is, do you need the Bible?

Because lots of people who believe in God have an alternative religious text. And lots of other people who believe in God will think, well, I do believe in God, but I can know him myself, and I don't really need to listen to what the Bible says.

And this has been a massive issue throughout history. It's still a massive question today. It's generally recognised across the Western world that more and more people today are becoming interested in spiritual realities.

More and more people are thinking about these questions of life and faith. But the same crucial question remains, do you need the Bible? And that question, that whole issue of the necessity of Scripture, is really important for us to think about.

Now, as we think about that, I'm going to start with a summary of this whole question of the necessity of Scripture that comes from the Westminster Confession of Faith. Now, it's about a dense paragraph.

[ 3 : 32 ] It's actually the very first paragraph in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Again, the Westminster Confession of Faith was written at the same time as the Catechisms in the 1640s. It's just a summary of what we believe.

And this is the first paragraph. It's all about the necessity of Scripture. Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of

God as to leave men unexcusable, yet they're not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation.

Therefore, it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in diverse manners to reveal Himself and to declare that His will unto the Church. And afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same holy unto writing, as described in the Bible in that sentence, which make it the Holy Scripture to be most necessary. those former ways of God revealing His will unto His people being now seized. Now, as a very dense paragraph, we'll go through aspects of it. Don't worry if some of you are thinking, I don't know what that means.

The key thing is the big point. The big point that that paragraph is making is that if we are going to know God, we absolutely need the Bible.

[ 4 : 57 ] And as we think about that, we're going to look at three things. We're going to think about the nature of ultimate reality, the nature of God and humanity, and the nature of the covenant relationship that lies at the heart of the Bible.

And as we think about each of these, we're going to build a very short, simple, but absolutely crucial statement connected to why we need the Bible.

So, we've got loads to cover in the next 20 minutes. So, let's go. First of all, the nature of ultimate reality. The necessity of Scripture is tied to a much bigger issue than just what someone thinks about religion.

It's actually tied to a whole world view. It's tied to what we believe regarding the nature of ultimate reality. And when we talk about ultimate reality, we're just thinking about the massive questions. What is real? What is true? What is right? And what are all of these things at an absolute level, not just at an individual or personal level? And as we think about that, we need to think about what do we believe is the absolute of ultimate reality?

[ 6 : 06 ] So, the ultimate explanation for everything else that exists. The start point and the end point of everything. And we also need to think, well, whatever that is, how do we relate to it?

And the gateway to thinking about all of that is actually four very simple words, two phrases, I am, you are. I am, you are. Now, these are tiny words, but massive concepts.

And both of these are actually extremely important in the Bible, both these statements. And we'll see more about that in a wee minute. The first big thing is that when we're talking about ultimate reality, you need to think in terms of these two categories, I am and you are.

And the big thing that you need to recognize is that we're not the I. We're the you in these statements. In other words, we need to make sure that in our concept of ultimate reality, we get these categories the right way round.

We are not the I of ultimate reality. We're not the explanation for everything. We're not the center of the universe. We are not anything close to that category.

[ 7 : 15 ] Something else is. So ultimate reality is distinct from us. It's bigger than us. And whatever you believe that ultimate reality to be, whatever anybody believes that ultimate reality to be, we depend on it for our existence.

And that, of course, is just what makes it ultimate reality. Everything else depends upon it. And that means that the fact that we are something and the something that we actually are, that you are, the something that you and I are, is not defined by us.

It's defined by something that's distinct from us and something that's bigger than us. Now, this is both very profound philosophy and it's also basic common sense.

But it's also something that people find hard to accept. Because people want, people want to be able to be the I am, the kind of one who defines my identity and my existence and my purpose and everything.

And people do not like being told, you are. We don't like having things imposed on us. We want to define our own identity. We resist the suggestion that we are dependent upon and defined by something outside of us.

[ 8 : 38 ] But you don't need to be a philosopher to see that that does not make sense. The only way that we can avoid being defined by ultimate reality is if we are ultimate reality ourselves.

And that's clearly not the case. So, we're starting off by arguing that the I am of ultimate reality, whatever that ultimate reality is, whatever the explanation is for material, energy, time, space,

matter, morality, whatever explains all of that, whatever that is, it is transcendent over everything. It's authoritative over everything. And the you are of our existence is dependent and derivative. Now, all of that raises a crucial question.

Can we know what that ultimate reality is? So, whatever, we're here today, we're on the 28th of June, 2026. And above us, around us, beyond us, is an ultimate reality that has existed and will exist forever.

Whatever that might be, can we know what it is? And philosophers have wrestled with that question for centuries. And a very famous philosopher called Immanuel Kant said that you can't know what ultimate reality is.

[ 9 : 56 ] So, it's really easy to remember. Kant said you can't. His name is K-A-N-T. He was German, I think. Lived like 1700s-ish. And he basically said, we can know stuff around us.

We can know the things that are around us in life and the things that we touch and experience. We can learn about that. But ultimate stuff we can't know. It's beyond us.

So, knowing ultimate reality Kant said we can't. But if he's right, then for all the big questions of life, we're just left guessing.

And we're left in ignorance and mystery. And so, many of us believe that we can know what that ultimate reality is. We can know answers to the biggest questions.

But if we can know, then the key question is, how? How do we know? How are we ever going to know who the I am really is?

[ 10 : 59 ] How are we ever going to know what the you are of us and our existence really involves? And the big claim of Christianity is that the only way that can happen is if the I am, the ultimate reality, reveals information to us about who he really is and about what you and I really are.

And Christianity is grounded in the belief that the way that that happens is through the Bible. In other words, information has to go from the I am to the you are.

And the Bible is therefore necessary if we are going to have knowledge of ultimate reality. That takes us to our second point, the nature of God and the nature of humanity.

So, I am, you are, tells us some crucial metaphysical truths about ultimate reality, but there's a lot more we need to know. And so the Bible adds more detail.

The Bible says, I am God and you are people. And again, this is more tiny words, more massive concepts.

[ 12 : 15 ] So the Bible says, I am God. And that's telling us that the absolute of reality is God. God. And that's actually how God himself describes himself in the Bible.

When he reveals himself to Moses in Exodus 3, he says, I am. Moses says, what's your name? If people ask me who it is, he says, I am. And so that whole concept, I am who I am, say to the people of Israel, I am has sent you.

That concept of I am is at the very heart of the nature, both the name and the nature of God. And this is one of the coolest things ever because two of the tiniest words in the English language, I and am, actually reveal, they're like the gateway to some of the richest and most profound theology.

I am speaks of the identity of God, what we call the aseity of God, the fact that he's not dependent on anything else, the sufficiency of God, the simplicity of God, the immutability of God, the immensity of God, simply saying, God is who he is and he always is that.

And so, okay, God is God. So how do we know what he's actually like? And the answer is that he reveals himself.

[ 13 : 29 ] That's, that's what the Westminster Convention of Faith was getting up, the fact that, that there is a created reality that's real around us, the fact that we have a world around us, that tells us that it's come from somewhere, it tells us that God is real.

So, the world around us tells us that God is there, but we need the Bible to tell us what God is like. And that's exactly what God is doing in Scripture. He's telling us about himself.

And that special revelation of God is telling us that God's not this kind of impersonal force, he's not a kind of isolated blob, he's not, none of those things.

Rather, God is personal, relational, and loving. And all of that is bound up with the doctrine of the Trinity, God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And of course, all this rich theology of God as I am is exactly what Jesus is pointing to in John 6. Because there you find one of what we call the I am statements.

[ 14 : 32 ] There's seven of these in John, they're all pointing us to the same thing. Jesus is making a very deliberate and stunning claim to his divinity. In other words, Jesus is not a you are.

He's not derived, dependent, and limited. He's not a creature. Jesus originates as the I am, as the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So God, the I am, is God. But it's also crucial to recognize that you are people. And again, very simple, but very obvious.

We have a specific nature. We are people. But that raises the question, what does it mean to be people? And loads of people have different answers to that question. But central to the Bible's answer to that question is that people are made to be the image of God.

We are the image of God. And that means that we too are personal. We too are relational. We too know what it means to love. In fact, we know that love is actually the thing that is the most important thing in our lives.

[ 15 : 39 ] That's all because we're made in the image of God. That's why we know that love is more important than survival. That's a God-like quality. Now, the image of God, to be image of God, means, that indicates astonishing status.

So we're made to be like Him. And that's why we have so many remarkable qualities and characteristics and capabilities. We've got God-like qualities. But at the same time, we've got to remember that image of God means that we're not God.

We're just the image. And so, there's unavoidable limitations. We're nothing less than the image of God, but we're still only an image.

And that means that we're creatures. that means that we exist in the context of what we call finitude. So we're not infinite. We're not the I am. We are dependent, finite creatures.

Now, what we call our image-bearing finitude means two crucial things. It means that we need to know what God is like in order to be at His image.

[ 16 : 49 ] But on our own and in our limitations, we don't know what God is like. So in order to learn what God is like, we need to be told what God is like. So we need to know, that's the first crucial thing, we need to be told, that's the Keshe, second crucial thing.

We need to know, we need to be told, that's exactly what the Bible's doing. In the Bible, the being who is God speaks to the creatures who are people.

In other words, I know that I'm kind of bombarding you with information and I hope that what I'm saying is making sense. What I'm trying to say is this, that to actually be people, to be what it really means to be people, that means we need to bear the image of God.

That's what it means to be a person, to be a human, to be what we've been made to be. God has to communicate to us. And in the Bible, that's exactly what He's doing.

Or to put it another way, imagine that we were believing in a God who never told us anything about Himself. That God, okay, we believe in God, but He doesn't tell us anything about Himself.

[ 17 : 59 ] We would be completely lost. We would have no sense of orientation, no sense of clarity, no understanding of what is real and true and right.

The Bible is necessary to be true, image-bearing humanity. If that's what we're going to be. All of this is just to say that as people, we live in a position of what I'm going to call astoundingly privileged entire dependence.

We live in a position of, in a condition of astoundingly privileged entire dependence. So astoundingly privileged because we get to know God and we get to image God.

But that's also a position of entire dependence because we have no hope or chance of doing that unless God speaks to us and helps us.

And all of this is exactly what Jesus is talking about in John 6. And so when He calls Himself the bread of life in verses 41 to 50, that image of bread is not about getting a good meal.

[ 19 : 08 ] It's about our total dependence on Jesus for existence. So much so, you go to verse 53, you go on, it speaks in really stark, stark terms about how dependent we are upon Jesus.

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, drink His blood, you've got no life in you. Without Him, we have got nothing. But unsurprisingly, the people who are around Him then and people who hear this today did not appreciate what Jesus was saying.

And so even at its best, humanity is finite, we don't know it all, we need God, the I Am, to speak to us, we need God's Word, we need the Bible, but for the people in John 6 in verses 59 to 63, you'll see that this is a hard saying.

You see it in verse 60. And as you read on, you see the kind of astonishing reaction where the people who are confronted by Jesus' identity, confronted by the reality of their own finitude, the fact that He is God, that they're completely dependent on Him, they're confronted by all of that, and they do not like it.

And so they walk away. And that's one of the astonishing things about these verses. The hardness of the saying, the magnitude of what Jesus is teaching about His fullness and our finitude, about His divinity and our dependence, all of that is why we need to run to Jesus and to hang on to every life-giving word that He gives.

[ 20 : 46 ] And yet the people walked away. And it's a reminder that ever since Genesis 3, you are people doesn't just involve finitude, it involves sin.

So finitude means that as people, we don't know it all and we need God to speak. Sin means that even though He does speak, we do not want to listen to what He's saying.

So, to recap, we're nearly there, let's just recap it all. I am, you are is getting us to think about ultimate reality. What is the ultimate is of reality?

And that ultimate reality defines what we are. The great claim of the Bible is that that ultimate reality is God and He's revealing Himself and He reveals Himself to be the personal Tyune God, Father, Son and Spirit and the Bible also reveals who we are.

We are people created by Him, created for Him, dependent upon Him. But the Bible also reveals what our day-to-day experience confirms, that although God has made us and spoken to us and revealed Himself to us, we have rebelled against Him in sin.

[ 22 : 08 ] And so, even though we are people, very often we actually want to live as though we are God, that we're in charge and that we don't need Him.

So, where does that leave us? Well, that takes us to our final point, the nature of the covenant relationship that lies at the heart of the Bible. So, I am reveals ultimate reality, so I am, you are, reveals ultimate reality and our place in it.

I am God, you are people, reveals the identity of God as the ultimate reality, it reveals the nature of humanity as His image bearer. All of these are revealed in the Bible, without the Bible we would not know any of it.

But that's not all that the Bible reveals, in fact, this is not actually the main thing that the Bible reveals because the main message of the Bible, if we're going to get to the main message of the Bible, we have to add two more words to our statement and it's these, I am your God and you are my people.

This is what makes the Bible so amazing. The whole point of it is because God, the ultimate reality, the ultimate I am of everything, He's created you to be His very own.

[ 23 : 30 ] And even though we have rejected Him so foolishly and even though we have messed up so badly, He is not giving up. And at the heart of the Bible is a covenant relationship.

That's really what the Bible is. It's a covenant making, it's the covenant making, covenant keeping word of the covenant making, covenant keeping God. The Bible is the covenant making and covenant keeping word of the covenant making and covenant keeping God.

And everything that Jesus says in John 6 is unpacking this great purpose. And Jesus is echoing the language of the Exodus where God provided manna in the wilderness. He's highlighting all the things that took place back in the Exodus to show that what's promised in the Old Testament, the Old Covenant is now being fulfilled in the New, that God in the Old Testament provided what they needed.

You see that in 30 to 33, He provided, the people were saying, what sign did you perform? Our Father saved manna in the wilderness. And Jesus is saying, well, it was not Moses who gave you that bread, it was my Father.

And He gives you true bread from heaven. Jesus is pointing towards the fact that He's the fulfillment of it all. Verse 47 to 50, He culminates saying, I am the bread of life.

[ 24 : 46 ] Your Father saved manna in the wilderness, they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. He's pointing to Himself. General revelation tells us that there's a God. Special revelation in the Bible tells us what that God wants and what God wants is for you to be His people.

And for that to happen, we are Savior. And in Jesus, that's exactly what we have. Savior is promised in the Old Testament, that salvation is accomplished in the New, it's recorded in the Bible,

God's covenant promises are both delivered to us and distributed through us.

And this takes us back to the Westminster Confession of Faith that we started with. You think, super complicated paragraph, and it's emplied, it's loads of important truths. Well, my pen's not working, but if my pen was working, I would highlight the three words in the middle where it says there, that His will, to declare that His will unto the church.

And so, we have the Bible because of what God wants, His will. And what is His will? His will is that you will be His.

That you would be His people. And that's the great message that Jesus declared and that we now distribute.

[ 26 : 18 ] You see in verse 47 again, whoever believes has eternal life. That's the great message of God's covenant promise through which God is accomplishing His purposes.

And if we're going to have any part in that, we need to know it. And in order to know it, we need to hear it. And in order to hear it, we need to have it. And in order to have it, we absolutely need the Bible.

In it, God is revealing His perfect covenant promise of salvation. But the last point is this. We don't just need to have the Bible.

We need to respond to it. And that's exactly where John 6 takes us. Because the necessity of Scripture Scripture has a crucial consequence.

If the Bible is a necessity, it means that there's no neutral ground in front of it. And everybody in John 6 realised that.

[ 27 : 30 ] Everybody realised that what Jesus was saying left no neutral middle ground. and for some people, when they realised that, they walked away.

And so Jesus turned to His disciples and He asked the question that He's asking of every one of us. Do you want to go away as well? And Simon Peter understood the necessity of God's revelation when He said, Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. So do you need the Bible? Yes, you need the Bible. Because in it are covenant promises of a covenant keeping God.

In other words, in the Bible are the words of eternal life. And I want to say this, I have been so patient and I have kind of bombarded you with probably too much information as usual.

Do not worry if you didn't absorb all that. And do not worry if you think, man, there's loads I don't know. All matters is that you follow Jesus and He'll teach you the rest as He leads you in His way.

[ 28 : 55 ] And praise you.