My parents moved into their house a couple years before I was born, and from the minute they moved in, their house was always under construction. There was always at least one room of the house that was currently being worked on. There were often sheets of plastic hanging from the ceiling, tools laying all over the house. Their house has an entirely different interior layout than it did when they moved in, and they are still working on parts of it, changing it to make it what they want it to be.

I remember one of the most frustrating things for my dad was that nothing in that house started out square. Whenever he would start a new project, his first task was to figure out how all the things he wanted to do would end up square and level. If you go down into the crawl space of their house you will see all the different places where he had to fix the foundation, jack up a part of structure of the house, or fix a sagging part of the floor. My kids and my nieces and nephews will never know the joy of roller skating through the dip in my parents dining room floor, because my dad spent a whole day fixing the sagging floor and foundation in that one spot.

The problem with their house is that the foundation is out of whack. The foundation, that holds up the rest of the house is just a little bit off, and it affects the entire house. That’s why foundations are so important, because they determine how square, or how true the rest of the house will be. There are ways to fix a bad foundation, but the surest way to make sure that a house is square and true, is by making sure that a good foundation is laid from the start.

The same thing is true of our belief systems. If the foundation of our beliefs is off, even by a little bit, then we will forever be frustrated trying to match up what we believe with what the Bible says. But when our foundation is sure and true, then we can safely build from there.

We talked last week about what we believe about God, that God is one God, and he is a personal God. What we believe about God is the foundation of our belief system, our worldview. What we believe about God is one of the most important things we have to get right, because it shapes everything else in our worldview. If your beliefs about God are not true, if they are not biblical, then everything else in your belief system, and everything else that you hold to, will be out of whack, just like a foundation that is out of square.

Another big part of that foundation of our faith is what we believe about the Bible. Because most of what we can know about God comes from the pages of the Bible. There is a serious lack of literacy when it comes to the Bible. Like George Barna found in one study, less than 10% of people in the church actually believe what the Bible says to be true and let it shape how they view the world around them. That means that over 90% of Christians don’t have a biblical foundation to their faith. They are building their worldview on a foundation that is not quite right.

Last week we talked about how we can only know God because he chose to reveal himself to us. The Bible talks about that idea of God revealing himself to us throughout its entirety- and it uses a lot of different words to talk about that, several ways God reveals himself to us.

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are **revealed** belong to us and to our children forever…

Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV

This is the Hebrew word גָּלָה (galah) – which means to uncover, or to lay bare.

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has **made known** to us.”

Luke 2:15 ESV

That’s the Greek word γνωρίζω (gnorizo) – which means to make known. This comes from the word gnosis, or knowledge, so God wants us to know about him.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has **shown** it to them.

Romans 1:19 ESV

Paul uses the word φανερόω (phaneroo) which means unveil or to uncover something, so God is unveiling himself to us, showing us something we couldn’t know otherwise.

These things God has **revealed** to us through the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:10 ESV

Here Paul uses the word ἀποκαλύπτω (apokalypto) – which means make something known or clear that was hidden or unclear before. This is where we get our word apocalypse, which usually brings to mind the end of the world. But here’s why: the first words of the book of Revelation are “The revelation of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1 ESV). That word is actually the noun form of this word apokalypto, which didn’t mean the end of the world, until people began to associate it with the events of the book of Revelation. This is another word for the way that God has revealed himself to us, shown us things about himself that we could never know unless God made the first move.

God has chosen to reveal himself to us three different ways. First is through what we call general revelation. And that is simply what we can know about God through observing his creation. We can know that God is creative, that he is powerful, that he is in control and Sovereign. Paul said in Romans 1 that God’s eternal power and divine nature could be clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world. That’s general revelation.

But there is a limit to what we can know through simply observing Creation, and there is a lot about God that we need to know that we cannot find out unless he tells us. An example is:

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6 ESV

We can’t find that out through general revelation, we can’t know how to be made right with God, and we can’t know the grace of Jesus. We need the second way that God reveals himself to us, which is called special revelation. These are the times when God makes a special effort to be involved in people’s lives, and he unveils a little more about himself to us each time that he does.

Sometimes that happened in the form of God speaking in an audible voice, like when he spoke to Moses, or when he spoke at Jesus’ baptism and transfiguration. Sometimes that happened through something called a theophany, which means that God manifested himself in a physical form of some kind. When God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush, he was manifesting himself to Moses, showing himself to Moses, through that burning bush. That was a theophany. When he led the Israelites out in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, those were theophanies. When a dove descended and landed on Jesus when he was baptized, that was a manifestation of the spirit of God in the form of a dove. That was a theophany.

God can choose to reveal himself to us in any form he chooses, and we learn a little bit more about him each time he does. And that’s a part of special revelation.

The most significant way that God chose to reveal himself was when he chose to come to earth as a man, and live among us. When Jesus came, it was a kind of theophany, but it was more than that. When Jesus came to earth as a human being, it was not just God manifesting himself in a physical form. Jesus was God incarnate, which means it was God himself coming to live among us. This is far more than just a temporary physical manifestation of God. God was actually here walking among us. We learn more about God and the nature of God from Jesus than we do from anywhere else.

But the most accessible form of special revelation that we have today is what God revealed about himself in the pages of Scripture. It is in Scripture that we have recorded all those times that God audibly spoke to people throughout history. It is in Scripture that we have records of all those theophanies, all the times God manifested himself to people somehow. It is primarily through Scripture that we learn about Jesus Christ and all that he did and taught while he was here on earth. Scripture is the way that we can most easily access the special revelation of God. It is the way that we can most easily learn about the nature of God and who he is. And it is the primary way that God speaks to us.

If what we believe about God forms the foundation of our worldview and our beliefs, then what we believe about Scripture forms the next layer. Especially because it is mostly through the pages of the Bible that we learn about who God is and what he is like.

To be clear, not everything in the Bible is revelation from God. We have things like the personal notes and greetings to people in Paul’s letters. There are things the authors of Scripture learned in other ways, from other documents, or personal experience, or testimony of others. When Paul tells of his experience with Christ, that didn’t have to be revealed to Paul, because he experienced it himself. The Gospels are accounts from eyewitnesses. John was there and experienced what he wrote about. Luke says that he wrote his Gospel from accounts of eyewitnesses who delivered that message to him.

But even though not everything in the Bible was revealed by God, everything in the Bible was inspired by God, and that’s an important thing for us to understand. What does it mean that the Bible was inspired by God?. The word that is translated ‘inspired’ in many of our Bibles is a Greek word that literally means God breathed, or breathed out by God. We talk about inspiration today in terms of being inspired by something like a poem, or an act of kindness, or a heroic act, or a moving speech. And what we mean is that those things spurred us on to do something, they motivated us in some way to do something specific. Like a beautiful sunset inspires someone to paint a picture. Or a moving commencement speech inspires someone to follow a certain career path.

But the inspiration of Scripture is something else entirely. See this was God’s communication, God’s revelation to us, and so God had to make sure that it was done right. God had to make sure that whatever was written down as Scripture was perfect, exactly what he wanted to say. So the inspiration of Scripture is a supernatural thing. It is a supernatural event where God used the Holy Spirit to influence the prophets, apostles, and other writers of Scripture to write and communicate exactly what God wanted us to know. And because God inspired these men to write what he wanted to be communicated, we can accurately call the Bible the Word of God.

This isn’t just something that a bunch of guys a few thousand years ago wrote down and somebody said, “Hey that sounds good, let’s make it Scripture”. No, Scripture is the message that God wanted communicated to us. This is the message that he made sure was written down, and he used the men who authored the Bible as tools to accomplish that task.

When we say that Paul wrote the letters we have in the New Testament, but it’s still the Word of God, there is no conflict there, there’s no contradiction there, because Paul’s hand wrote it, or dictated it in some cases, but it was God who inspired Paul to write exactly what he did. Those men and their audiences understood that they were speaking with the authority of God when they wrote. God is the one who decided what would be written, not Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, not Moses, or David, or Samuel. It was God who authored the content of the Scripture that we hold in our hands today

He used people to do it, but he didn’t override who those people were, so we see their marks and their personalities come out in their writing. Luke was a doctor, so his writing is very formal, very educated, and very thorough. Peter was a Galilean fisherman, and his writing is very grammatically poor in the Greek. You can tell, if you know Greek well enough, that Peter was less educated and less sophisticated than Luke. But that doesn’t change the fact that the message God wanted written down is accurate and true.

Throughout history, there have been a lot of people who want to limit what the inspiration of God applies to. Some have said inspiration only applied to the authors themselves, not their message. Some have said it only applies to the authors thoughts, and not to their writings. Some have said it only applies to the theological or teaching parts of the Bible, and not the historical or geographical information it provides. But whenever you start trying to limit what God’s inspiration applies to, you immediately start to weaken the power and truth of Scripture. What we read in the Bible is the fact that everything in the Bible, every bit of it, was inspired by God, and therefore accurate, true, and trustworthy. Paul talks about this as he writes to a young pastor who he mentored.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

2 Timothy 3:16 ESV

This is that word inspired, or God breathed. The words that we read here are not just something that random people came up with and wrote down. They are the words of God that were breathed out by God himself. God spoke these words and had men who were faithful to him write them down for future generations to know and learn from. But Paul doesn’t say that only a part of these words were breathed out by God. He says that all Scripture is the word of God, all Scripture is useful for teaching, for correcting, for rebuking, and for training people to live according to God’s instructions.

…knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20–21 ESV

Peter tells us here that the people who wrote down Scripture didn’t just write what they wanted to. It wasn’t their own personal thoughts and ideas, and it wasn’t just God dictating it to people who then wrote it down. The men who wrote Scripture down only did so because they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. None of this is somebody’s individual ideas, it is all the Word of God. That’s why when we teach and preach, we don’t just give you our own thoughts and ideas about things. We teach what Scripture says, because this is God’s word, not what Rod or I come up with in our own heads.

The fact that God inspired the words of the Bible, and he was the author of the content also means that there are no errors, and no contradictions in the Bible. You’ll hear people talk all the time about the different contradictions that they think they have found in the pages of the Bible, and usually it’s because they are doing a very poor job of interpreting the Bible. You will not find any contradictions or any errors that hold up to any kind of scrutiny, because these are the messages that God wanted us to hear and to read, and he did not make any mistakes.

That means that what the Bible says is trustworthy and true, because it comes directly from the one who is trustworthy and true. And the fact that God inspired the entirety of Scripture also means that the entirety of Scripture is true and without error. That’s what is called inerrancy. The problem with inerrancy is that some people think it means that everything in Scripture is to be taken literally. So they believe the seven days of Creation to be seven 24 hour days. They believe that whenever a number is mentioned in Scripture, it is exactly that number and cannot be anything else. So, when Jesus fed the 5000, there were exactly 5000 men there, and when 3000 people were saved on the day of Pentecost, there were exactly that many people saved. That’s called biblical literalism, and it is not the same as inerrancy. It doesn’t take into account that writers in ancient times, especially Hebrew authors, used hyperbole, symbolism, and round numbers in their writing. Inerrancy simply means that Scripture is trustworthy, that it is true, that it is the Word of God, and he didn’t make mistakes.

Here’s the catch to all of that: both the inspiration of Scripture and the inerrancy of Scripture apply only to the original writings, in the original languages. Only the original written copy of each book of Scripture was inspired and inerrant, not the hundreds of copies that came afterward. Only the original letters written by Paul’s hand, or the original writings of the Gospels were inspired and inerrant, not the hundreds of copies that came afterwards. We don’t have any of the original writings left today. They were either lost, destroyed, or just slowly decayed over time, and we don’t have any of them left.

Now sometimes people hear this for the first time, and all of a sudden, they think they can’t trust their Bible. Let me tell you why you can trust the Bible that you read today, and why you shouldn’t worry about whether it is accurate or not. We don’t have the original texts of the Bible, but what we do have are hundreds of manuscripts. Hundreds of copies of what was originally inspired and inerrant. The amazing thing is that the majority of those manuscripts agree exactly with the Greek and Hebrew texts that we have today.

Over thousands of years, you would expect some major changes, some major mistakes in translation, in copies. But the vast majority of the manuscripts that we have from thousands of years ago, match up with what we have in our Bibles today. That’s because the scribes who copied Scripture were so careful that if they even messed up one letter, they would throw the whole scroll away and start again. Inspiration and inerrancy only apply to the original writings of Scripture, but we can still accurately call what we have today the Word of God, and we can still trust it, because it is such a faithful representation of the original.

Maybe you have heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls before. They play a huge part in this. Up until the 1940’s, the earliest manuscripts we had were from the 10th century AD, just about 1100 years ago. Then in the 1946, a shepherd near the Dead Sea found a series of caves with Scrolls in them. And over the next decade they found 981 different scrolls, and around 40% of them were copies of biblical texts. They found multiple copies and fragments of every book of the Old Testament except the book of Esther. And they date back to around 200 BC, or 200 years before Jesus came.

What they found out when they studied those scrolls is just how accurately the words of Scripture had been copied and translated over time. They found manuscripts 1000 years older than any we had before, that matched up almost perfectly with what we have today. The accuracy of Scripture and its copies is not the same as inspiration, but I have to believe there is something supernatural about it.

Play a game of telephone with people in the same room, and you often end up with something completely different down the line. But somehow we have Scripture that has been copied over and over again over thousands of years, and they are still a faithful and accurate representation of what was originally written. It is nothing like a game of telephone. It is the inspired word of God.

You can trust the Bible you hold in your hands, as long as you remember what you have. What you have is a translation of copies, from the original that we no longer have. But it is an incredibly accurate version that still brings you the same message that God inspired thousands of years ago.

The other thing to remember is that unless you are reading Greek or Hebrew script, you are reading a translation. Every English translation out there has its strengths and its weaknesses, and sometimes things get lost in translation. So, my encouragement to you is this, don’t just read one version of the Bible, read as many as you can find, and compare what they say. I think that you’ll find that in the end, you have a much stronger grasp of what the Bible has to say.

Ultimately, whether you read one version, or ten, make sure that what you believe is coming from the truth of Scripture, and not something from the minds of men. These are the words of God written down for us to know. They hold the authority of God because they come straight from him. This book lays out the way that we should live, the way that we should treat other people, the way that we should worship God, and have a relationship with Him.

What God reveals to us in these pages is the foundation of our faith, the foundation of what we believe, and how we see the world around us. If you don’t build your faith on the truth of Scripture, then you will always find that things are off, that they are out of whack, just like a house with a foundation that is not level and square.

Bumps and dips in the floor may be fun for kids with roller skates, but they do not make a well-built house. Sure, it’s easier to leave them in place than to go through the hard work to fix them and make things right, but the work is worth it. Ideas and beliefs that are not in line with Scripture may be easier to hold. And it’s certainly easier to leave them alone and not go through the hard work of making sure your beliefs are biblical. But trust me, the hard work is worth it. Because only way to make sure that you have a biblical worldview is to make sure that you are building your faith on that foundation of the truth of Scripture, and to make sure that everything you believe lines up with what God reveals to us in these pages.