

SCRIPTURES: THE GREAT BOOKS IN WHICH WE MEET GOD.

(A BRIEF OVERVIEW)

What is REVELATION?

There are many ways God reveals himself to us. Through revelation He gives us the opportunity to better understand him in the events of life. He is a God of Creation – a God of Salvation - a God of Conscience – a God of History – a God to Be Praised. In the various books of the Bible, through men and events of the Old Testament we have come to know God's plan for mankind. In the New Testament God fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ and his teachings. Over the centuries the Church in the life of the Spirit has continued to bring new insights into his teaching in the present here and now.

What is INSPIRATION?

The ways we express our understanding of God of in the scriptures is inspiration. God uses our own thoughts and literary skills to give us a better understanding of the nature of God - people use their own words and understanding to express the word of God which had come to them.

Myth, poetry, historical events, prophetic insights, parables, satires, stories, - "break through events" of our salvation in which God speaks. Whenever the Biblical author writes it is an expression of faith which uses the various literary tools to bring that image forward.

The Biblical Focus is on the Gift of Faith, not necessary historical Facts.

Today when we write we focus on the facts first and then we draw out the theological/social meaning of the text. Often the Biblical author draws upon an historical event - not meant to be accurate in the same expectation, we insist upon today but to give us a sense of God's mighty intervention in Salvation history.

The JOURNEY OF FAITH. – is always a growing understanding of our relationship with God – there are times were very faithful – there are times where we were very sinful - God never abandoned his covenant with his people.

In the OLD TESTAMENT

There are **46 books** in the Jewish Tradition which they believed God spoke clearly in their Jewish understanding of their God in salvation history.

These are the books of the O.T. in the order of their appearance in the Bible.

The Pentateuch, the first five books-*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy-also called the Law (Torah)*

This begins with a primitive history of mankind presented in a mythological setting. It continues with God's choice of his people, given in an historical setting. Its high point is the making of the old covenant. It also contains religious legislation covering the way of life of God's chosen people.

The Historical Narratives

*Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel (1 Kings), 2 Samuel (2 Kings), 1 Kings, 2 Kings
1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, and Esther-*

These books give a general history of Israel. They tell us of the conquest of the promised land, Canaan; the development of the kingdom of Israel as an ancient world power under the reign of Kings David and Solomon; the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah; the destruction of these kingdoms, followed by the captivity in Babylon, and finally the return and attempt to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple to their former glory.

Wisdom, Literature and Poetry

*Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (Canticle of Canticles),
Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus}---*

Historically these books have been classified as "the seven books," or collections of wisdom sayings, though they contain poetry, prayer, liturgy, and love songs as well.

The Written Prophets

*Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos,
Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum: Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah-*

These men of God are unique not only among the men of ancient times but in the entire literary history of the world. They were the men of conscience. Their office was not filled by human choice by God. Occasionally and rarely predictors of the future, their main concern was the current situation among God's people. Extraordinary preachers who dramatically exhorted, inspired, and tried to reform God's people at times of great crisis.

In the NEW TESTAMENT - There are 27 Books

In the Early Church - the Christian community was known as the WAY. They tried to live out the teaching of Jesus from the perspective in the beginning of the Jewish tradition. Even though they began to challenge the Jewish tradition on the identity of Jesus, they were still connected. Over a period of time the early church moved away or was forced away from their Jewish brothers and sisters. The church moved forward as a missionary Church with a vision of Cosmic Christ, one who came to save all of mankind.

The community was also expecting the coming of the final times and as this began to drag on, they began the task of gathering the various accounts of the stories around the life of Jesus.

There were three documents which the community drew upon to help them in their understanding of Jesus - **Didachi** (teaching of the 12) & **Q source, the Shepherd of Hermas** (stories of Jesus, prayers, catechesis) contained reflection on the teaching of Jesus – all of these texts have been lost in history.

MARK

Oldest & shortest Gospel- written around 65-70AD to the community of Rome - (Interpreter of Peter). Mark wrote that he drew heavily from the three above sources. His gospel is very descriptive, and is mainly concerned to show that God has come and saved us in Jesus; everything leads up to the climax: Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection.

MATTHEW

This Gospel was written particularly to show that Christ is the promised- Messiah, the new Moses. It stresses how Christ fulfilled the messianic prophecies, and it arranges things according to five booklets as does the Pentateuch. Matthew wrote to a Jewish/Christian community. Jesus is the new Moses, giving us a new covenant on a new Mt. Sinai. He is the son of David; the Messiah the Jews could recognize. He brings the Law to perfect fulfillment. His central theme is the Kingdom of God, the rule of God in our hearts & minds.

When Matthew wrote, he drew a lot from Mark and was able to draw some from the Q source. The gospel was probably written in Syria or Palestine in the 75-80's A.D. Both Matthew and Luke show that they got much material from Mark, and one material from another source which is now lost (designated LS "Q," from the German word **quelle** = source).

Matthew is the first gospel in the sense that it was the one most widely read in Christian assemblies and so did more than any other gospel to form the Christian image of Jesus.

LUKE (70-85AD)

Luke was described as a physician and disciple of Paul, shows Christ as the friend of the poor, the sinner, the sufferer. He stresses the universal nature of God. His is the most complete of the gospels, and has something about almost everybody. Jesus is very human, compassionate, sympathetic and merciful. This gospel was probably written at about the same time as Matthew, perhaps at Rome, but unlike Matthew it has in mind Gentile Christian readers.

JOHN - written (90-100 AD)

This gospel was written from the viewpoint of one who loved Christ very much and is the loftiest of the gospels. It is quite different from the other three. Its purpose is to show that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and shows a developing Christian theology about Christ –hence it probably comes from the last decade of the first century. It stresses Christ's “signs” and particularly the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Written by Luke (80-85AD), takes us where the Gospel of Luke stops. It tells about the outstanding circumstances in the beginning of the early Church. The 2nd part chiefly concerns with the missionary journeys of Paul.

Letters of St. Paul

The early writings were the pastoral letters of St. Paul, written to specific communities. They offered guidance, correction, admonition - to strengthen the early Christian community on the faith and responsibilities to one another. They were either dictated by Paul himself, or were written by his followers from the teaching he gave. There are **14 Letters**, but most scripture scholars feel that not all of them were written by Paul.

There are 7 “catholic” epistles (pastoral letters) addressed to the church in general- *1 of James, 2 of Peter, 3 of John and one of Jude* - identify theological reflections of Jesus & the role of the church.

Much, much later: **Book of Revelation** - gives a series of biblical visions in symbolic and O.T. Apocalyptic language. It was a book written to a community undergoing persecution - giving them the courage to not lose faith in difficult times.

Not a book on the end times

Not a book about a vindictive God

Not a book on the devil

It was written as a pastoral letter offering encouragement to a Church undergoing suffering and persecution.