

God And The Bible
Isaiah 55:6-11
Pastor John Miller

I'm going to read the whole passage. I'm going to read Isaiah 55:6-11.

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater. So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

I heard the story of a mother who found her seven-year-old daughter going through her brand-new Bible circling the word "God" everywhere she found it. When her mother asked her what she was doing, the little girl replied, "I want to know where I can find God when I need Him." I love that. Now I don't know if I want my seven-year-old scribbling in my Bible or marking "God," but I want my seven-year-old to be able to find God when they need to.

So my question to you is: Where do you find God? The answer is that God is found in His Word, the Bible. We used to sing in Sunday School,

The B-i-b-l-e,

Yes, that's the book for me.

I stand alone on the Word of God,

The B-i-b-l-e.

What a great song. We need to bring that into the sanctuary. We find God in His holy Word.

Why do we need the Bible? Let me give you a couple of reasons as we launch into this series. Number one, we need God's Word, because God reveals Himself in the Bible. That's going to be our topic today. It's called the "doctrine of revelation"; God reveals Himself in the Bible. Number two, we need the Bible because life's greatest questions are answered in the Bible. Where do we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? What happens after we die? Is there a heaven? Is there a hell? Is Jesus Christ truly the Savior? Is there a God?

You know, if you just open the Bible to the first book, the first chapter and the first verse, what

does it say? “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Right off the bat—you don’t have to go very far. In the first book, first chapter, first verse, it says, “In the beginning God...” Is there a God? Yes, there is a God. Genesis 1:1. Did God create us? Yes, God created the heaven and the earth. What is man? The Bible says that God created man in His image and in His likeness. We have an eternal soul that can be redeemed and saved and can go to heaven.

So everything we need to know about life and death. The Bible tells us what marriage is. The Bible explains how we should live. What is right and what is wrong. How to get right and how to stay right with God. It’s all discovered in this book we call the Bible.

Thirdly, the Bible also tells us how to get to heaven. I love that. You want to know how to get to heaven when you die? You want to know how to spend eternity with God? It’s all found in the pages of this book we call the Bible, the Word of God.

But today I want to focus on what’s called “the doctrine of revelation.” The Bible is a revelation of God from God Himself. Our text is Isaiah 55, and there are three important points I want to make about divine revelation. We’ll look at them individually, but first we’re going to learn that we need revelation. The point is that we need God to reveal Himself. Secondly, we’re going to look at how God reveals Himself. Thirdly, I want to look at why God has chosen to reveal Himself in the pages of this book we call the Bible.

Number one, we need divine revelation. This is why we need divine revelation, in verses 8-9. God said, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ saith the Lord.” Then He gives a little illustration: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

I want you to notice in the text—it’s so very important—who the speaker is in verse 8. The answer is the Lord; “...saith the Lord.” The word “Lord” there is in all capital letters. Whenever you find that, it is an indication of the name Jehovah or Yahweh. So it’s Jehovah or the Lord God, the Covenant-keeping God. God is speaking in this passage. That’s one of the reasons why I picked this text; because we actually have the Lord Himself speaking in this passage. These are the very words from the mouth of the Lord.

What does the word “revelation” mean? We have a book in the Bible—the last book of the Bible—called The Revelation. It is the Greek word “apocalypse,” and it means “unveiling.” It means the disclosure. If we had a statue that was covered with a cloth, and we were going to present it to the public and took the cloth off, we unveiled the statue. That would be an apocalypse, an unveiling. So what we have in the Bible is God unveiling Himself; that God is not far away, God is not silent, God is near, God speaks to us and God discloses Himself. I like to use that word “disclosure”; God is explaining Himself and disclosing Himself in the Bible.

Let me make an important point: God cannot be known apart from this revelation, this self-disclosure. If you want to get to know somebody, what do they have to do? Talk to you. Have

you ever been with somebody who's really quiet? Creepy quiet? It's like, What are you thinking? Or you're with somebody and they're just looking at you and it's like, Well, what are you thinking? And you can't really know what they're thinking—sometimes that's a very good thing—unless they open their mouth. We use the expression, "I gave them a piece of my mind! I just spoke my heart!"—usually a piece we can't afford to lose. So God speaks so we can know Him. "What are You thinking right now?" You have to communicate in words to find out what people are thinking, because we can't read their thoughts. How much more does it pertain to God. How can I know God or understand God unless God speaks to me, or God reveals Himself.

The reasons we cannot know God apart from revelation are many, but let me give you a couple of them. First of all, God is transcendent. Transcendent means that God is beyond or above or outside of us. God is not limited by our physical time or space dominion. God is outside of us. He is above us and beyond us.

Secondly, we need God to reveal Himself to us, because God is infinite. God has no limits.

Thirdly, because of man, God is finite. So God is transcendent, God is limitless, but man is finite, or man is limited.

Think of us in a box, and we're looking and searching for God. We're looking in this corner, trying to find God. We look over here, trying to find God. We're doing everything we can do to try to find God, but God's outside the box. We do not have the ability or the capacity to get outside that box to find God. In the oldest book in the Bible, Job, this question is asked: "Can you, by searching, find God?"

I think about back in my Hippie days, when all my friends were dropping LSD. They actually thought they were experiencing God. They would go on an acid trip and sit around for hours and look at the dirt and contemplate the universe. All kinds of crazy stuff. You can't find God when you're in your right mind, let alone when you're high on LSD. You can't drop acid and find God. How stupid is that.

Or people would smoke drugs and say, "Ah, I met God" or "I experienced God." No you didn't. You just got wasted; that's all. You didn't find God. And then you get rid of the drugs and you sit in a lotus position, and you contemplate your navel. You're not going to find God. You might find lint, but you won't find God. Try as you might, with your own self effort—"Well, maybe it's from religion. Maybe if I become religious; if I shave my head and I put on beads and I chant and I dance and go through the motions, maybe I can find God."

"Can thou, by searching, find God?" No. We went through that whole time in our lives where we said, "Maybe God's in this. Or maybe God's in that. We're trying to find God." We realized that we can't know God unless God chooses to disclose Himself to us. We are finite, and God is transcendent and infinite.

Humans of every age are baffled by the mysteries of life. The human experience. We must

admit the limitations and our need for wisdom outside of ourselves. No one can tell you, other than God, what happens when you die. No one can tell you what lies beyond the grave, what lies beyond the bars of death, other than God's authoritative Word. Even Plato spoke of sailing the seas of darkness and doubt in a little draft of our own understanding. We're adrift without any compass, without any light, without any direction without God and His Word.

In verses 8-9 in our passage, God says, "For My thoughts..." which indicates that He's a personal God. He's not some force. He's not just the wind, or He's not just one with His creation. But God has thoughts that "...are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways..."—God has ways—"...saith the Lord." And then He gives an illustration of this. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." The Lord is the One Who is speaking here. So God is actually telling us that He is transcendent above us. We can't know or understand Him.

Now in the context of Isaiah 55—and it starts way back in verse 1, where God calls people to come who are thirsty, to come to salvation. This whole passage is about salvation. He says that His ways aren't our ways and His thoughts aren't our thoughts, so, in context, I believe that He's saying that "The way I save people is not the way the world thinks people are saved. You're not saved by human effort; you're saved by My mercy and by My grace. If you seek Me while I'm near and you can find Me, I'll pardon your sins." So He's saying that His thoughts are higher than yours. You can't think your way to God or meditate your way to God or work your way to God by good deeds. God is above and beyond us.

So we need to know God's thoughts and know God's ways, and unless God takes the initiative and discloses what He's like and what He's thinking, we'll never know God. But here's my point: God has taken the initiative. And the reason is because God is love and God is light. God is many things as to His nature and character. But the Bible makes it clear that "God is love," and because God loves us, He wants to know us and speak to us. He wants a relationship with us.

But our sins have separated us from God. God made Adam and Eve innocent, and He had fellowship with them in the Garden, but when they disobeyed Him, sin came into the picture, and man was driven from the Garden and God became separate from man. The Bible teaches that everyone born since Adam and Eve is born separated from God. The Bible calls it "dead in our sins." The word "dead" means "separation." Physical death occurs when my spirit separates from my physical body. It doesn't mean the cessation of existence; it just means I leave my body. Spiritually dead means I'm separated from God. The only way to be brought back to God is through Jesus Christ. He's the One Who comes to redeem us and to bring us back to God.

But we need to understand that we don't know God by our own strength or our own knowledge. He is beyond us and outside of us, and our sins separate us from God. But because God is love, He's provided a way.

God is also light. It means the very nature of God is that God wants to reveal Himself. I talk to people who say, "If there really is a God out there, why doesn't He show His face? Why doesn't He just reveal Himself? Why doesn't He say something? Why doesn't He come down?" And I'm thinking, Well, He has. It's called the person of Christ. His name is Emmanuel or "God with us." He came to reveal the Father. He came as the living Word. He came to show us the grace and mercy of God, and then He died so we could be brought back into a relationship with God.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-12, I want to show you some amazing verses that are important for the subject. "But as it is written..."—Paul is quoting from Isaiah 64:4—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Simply stated, you can't, in your natural state—with your eyes and your ears—find God or know God or discover God.

He's not talking about heaven, by the way. He's not saying that heaven's going to be amazing, and that when we get there it's going to blow our minds. God hasn't revealed it to us. We can't wait to find out what it's going to be like. No. Because if you read verse 10, it says, "But God hath..."—Here's our word—"...revealed them unto us..."—How?—"...by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God..."—notice that—"...knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

I read this text to enforce what I'm trying to say from Isaiah, and that is that we, in ourselves, cannot find God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." It's never entered into the heart of man. Without God's revelation, we make up our own gods. I meet people all the time who say, "Well, if I were God, I'd do this. If I were God, I'd do that. How could a God of love do that? Why would God do that?" I thought, How convenient for you to make up your own god. Just create your own god to fit your own fancy. The Bible says that God created man in His image and likeness, so someone said that man has returned the favor; we create our own god. That's craziness. We can't create our own god.

As a matter of fact, as God has chosen to reveal Himself to us, we have to, in all humility, submit to that revelation. We have to submit to the revelation of what He has revealed of Himself. He uses an illustration in 1 Corinthians 2:11. He says you can't know a person unless that person shares his heart. How do you know what's going on in a person's mind or thoughts? Their own spirit has to reveal that to you. "Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." God has freely given to us this revelation, this understanding. So what he's talking about there is both revelation and illumination. The Spirit of God, I believe, speaks in the Word of God to reveal God to us. So finite man cannot know the infinite, transcendent God, apart from God's Spirit revealing what His thoughts and ways are. We need a revelation from God.

Back to Isaiah 55. My second point is the "how." How does God reveal Himself? It is necessary for God to reveal Himself. It is reasonable to think that God would reveal Himself.

He is loving and He is light. Let me give you a simple answer to a very deep, theological subject. We could spend weeks talking about revelation. God reveals Himself in two ways: by His works and by His words.

People use art to express themselves. People use words—poetry—to express themselves. People write songs to express themselves. So God expresses Himself by His works and by His words. This is called “general revelation in nature” and “special revelation in Scripture.” These two categories could be subdivided into several smaller categories. God’s works are called “general revelation in nature”; God reveals Himself generally to everyone in creation. And then also by “special revelation in Scripture.”

As far as general revelation in nature, let me give you a classic passage. It’s Psalm 19:1-3. The psalmist says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” So God is speaking, and God is revealing Himself through creation. “There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.” So God’s universal revelation in creation.

This is why evolution is so bad. It denies creation; that God created. There’s a creation and there’s a creator. It didn’t happen by accident. It wasn’t just some random “big bang,” and we all evolved over billions of years. Anyone, just thinking for a moment, would ask, “Well, what caused the big bang? Whatever it was that exploded—where did the material come from that?” You either believe in an eternally existent matter, or you believe in an eternally existent God. One or the other.

You ask, “Well, how can God be just self existent?” Because He is God! God can be self existent. He’s eternal. No one ever created Him. No one ever made Him. Have you ever had a little child ask you where God came from? That’s when I do the, “Go away, kid. You’re bothering me.”

Years ago I was with my son, Jared, on the back porch. We were looking at a worm. He said, “Dad, do worms have brains?” I totally spaced out. “I don’t know.” I mean, how do you get a brain in a little worm like that? It’s amazing. I mean, “Man, if I don’t know if worms have brains, how do I know if there’s a God of the universe?” This is trippy. Let’s just forget the worm and throw it over the fence. But to think that God would reveal Himself in creation.

A little footnote to this. Isn’t creation beautiful? I love a seascape or a landscape or a mountain. Who doesn’t want to see the mountains covered with snow and the clouds and the stars? Or an eagle in flight? Isn’t creation beautiful? Guess what. It’s made by God. That means God’s beautiful. You go to the zoo and see this bird with all of its beautiful, colored feathers and you say, “That’s amazing! Look at how beautiful they are! Look at how they all match.” God did that. God made that. God is a God of beauty and awe and a God of wonder!

But we have to move from general revelation in nature to special revelation in Scripture, because it’s in Scripture that we learn about the love of God and the mercy of God and the

grace of God. Creation says that God is powerful, God is beautiful and God is awesome. But the Bible tells me that God is love and that God cares about me. I love that passage in Peter where it says, "...casting all your cares on Him, for He cares for you." Isn't that awesome? God actually cares about you. So often I don't care about me. But God does; God cares about me. God's thinking about me.

I want you to see that special revelation in verse 10 of Isaiah 55. The Lord is speaking. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." Here's the application: "So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth." Just as rain comes down and snow comes down, and it waters the earth and brings forth fruit, so God sends down His Word. It comes out of His mouth.

So we move in our text from the thoughts in the mind of God, verses 8-9, to the words in the mouth of God, verse 11. We have the thoughts and the ways of God—He's a personal God Who thinks and speaks—and now God speaks His Word, the Bible. The Bible is God's Word written.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, it says, "All Scripture is given by..."—What?—"...inspiration of God." What he means by "inspiration" is that it is literally "God breathed." It means that God breathed it. The Greek word indicates that God "breathed out" Scripture. But you say, "Don't you know that the Bible was written by men? How do you have the Bible being the Word of God if it is written by men?" 2 Peter 1:21 answers that question. It says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man..."—In other words, they were not just writing off the top of their heads—"...but holy men of God spake as they were moved..."—or "carried along"—"...by the Holy Ghost."

This was a great week for me; I went surfing twice. Praise God! I hadn't surfed in about three weeks, so I took Monday off and Friday morning off. I got to surf. I was in the ocean, and both days were beautiful. I had so much fun not only surfing, but I was watching the sailboats. I thought, When I get really, really old and I can't surf anymore, I'm going to be a sailor. I'm going sailing. To see those sails filled with wind and carrying those beautiful boats over the ocean just thrilled my heart. They were so beautiful. To see the wind fill their sails and just carry them along was such a cool sight. To be out on the water and the wind fills the sails, and you're going along. That's the very same concept used by Peter when he said, "Holy men of God..." were carried along. How? By the wind of God's breath; "...by the Holy Ghost." The Holy Spirit carried them along. So they weren't writing out of their own thoughts or out of their own minds.

This is how I define "inspiration": that God superintended human authors, so that the very words they wrote, were the words of God. Yes, they were human authors. And yes, their personality came through. God used their style of writing. But God superintended that the very words that they wrote were the very words of God. So when you read your Bible—when you open your Bible and you read the Scriptures, this is the very Word of God. This is God breathed. God carried them along as they penned the words that we read in the Scriptures. The Bible can be trusted. God, Who cannot lie, has spoken in His Word, and it is true.

We live today in a world of secularism and existentialism and humanism, relativism and pluralism and hedonism. When I think of hedonism, which means pleasure is the chief good of life, I was struck by the news this week that Hugh Hefner died. I'm observing how people are freaking out about it. "Oh, Hugh Hefner died! What will we do without Hugh Hefner?" I don't know; we're done for. He was the icon of the sexual revolution. I don't know where he went in eternity. I have my guess where Hugh Hefner is right now, and I wouldn't want to be him. But I wouldn't want to leave that influence on the culture today; the icon of the sexual revolution. We live in a hedonistic culture today; "Do what feels good. Do what pleasures you. Do what satisfies you. Live for yourself." That's the best ingredient for a miserable, miserable life.

Then we open God's Word, and Jesus said, "Deny yourself. Take up your cross daily and follow Me." We were made to know God, and the greatest pleasure in life is knowing God and loving God and living for God and not to indulge in my pleasures, but to live for others and to live for the glory of God. So we have God's immovable rock to stand on.

Jesus told the parable of the wise and foolish builder. The foolish builder built his house on sand, and when the winds came and the rain beat upon the house, it fell. The wise man built his house upon the rock, and when the winds came and the floods came, it stood strong. Jesus actually explained that the wise builder was the one who heard His Word and then built his life in obedience to His Word. So that's how we need to live; we need to build our lives upon God's Word.

So we need God to reveal Himself. God has revealed Himself in the Bible. Thirdly, I want to point out the purpose, the why of divine revelation. Why has God given us the Bible? Why has God spoken and revealed Himself in the Scriptures? The answer is in Isaiah 55, the last half of verse 11. It says, "...it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The whole passage indicates that God has a purpose, that God has a plan, that God has a design. "I speak My Word, and like the rain and the snow bring forth fruit, My Word won't return void. My Word will produce what I purpose it to produce, My plan."

What is that? God gave us His Word not just to teach us. Does it teach us? Yes. But not just to instruct us. But here's the point: He gave us His Word to save us. The Bible tells us about a Savior. You know what the number one theme of the Bible is? From Genesis to Revelation? The number one theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is Jesus Christ. On almost every page of almost every chapter, every book, you can find Jesus in the Bible. It all points to Him: the promises, the Savior's coming, the fulfillment, the Savior has come. And in the early church, they preached in the book of Acts the Lord and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 2 Timothy 3:15, it says to young Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." That's what the Bible will do. The Bible will make you wise, and it will bring you to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Creation speaks of God's power, but the Bible speaks of God's love and mercy, God's grace and ability to save us. That's only found in the

Bible.

In Isaiah 55:6-7, it says, “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts...”—which are not God’s thoughts—“...and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” What an amazing passage. As I said, this whole text is an appeal for God’s people, the nation of Israel, to come to God to be saved. God says, “Return to Me. Come to Me. Seek me. Call upon Me.” In verse 6, it says, “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” In verse 7 we are to forsake our sinful ways and thoughts. Verse 7, we are to return to the Lord. Again, verse 7, God will give you mercy. He’ll not give you what you deserve. He’ll abundantly pardon you.

Have you had that experience? Have you found the Lord in the Bible? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior? Through the Bible, God’s Word, we come to see the living Word, the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the living Word, came to show us God and save us from our sins. Jesus told the Pharisees and the religious folks of His day, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in just searching the Scriptures, you have eternal life. But the Scriptures testify of Me. But you won’t come to Me, that you might have life.”

You can read the Bible all you want, but if you don’t come to Jesus Christ, you’re not saved. Reading the Bible, coming to church, being religious, believing in God doesn’t save anyone. You have to personally, individually come humbly and trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and as your Lord. That’s the only way to be saved. The Bible’s all about that one purpose, that one design. It is God’s message of love. “For God so loved the world...”—that’s you and me—“...that He gave His only begotten Son...”—that’s Jesus—“...that whosoever believes in Him...”—that’s trusting Jesus as your Savior—“...will not perish...”—you won’t go to hell—“...but have everlasting life.” That’s the whole Bible in one verse. You’ll come to know God. You’ll have the life of God in your soul. When you die, you’ll go to heaven for all eternity. That’s good news. You know where we find that out? In the Bible. Thank God for the Bible.

But you may not be a Christian. Maybe you haven’t trusted Jesus Christ. I want to give you that opportunity. You say, “Pastor Miller, I don’t know if I’m really saved. I don’t know that if I died, I’d go to heaven. I believe the Bible’s a good book. I believe the Bible’s a book from God, but I don’t know if it’s the Word of God.”

Jesus died for your sins. Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus ascended back into heaven, and He lives to save. Unless you repent, you’ll perish. If you turn from your sin and “seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near”—if you do that, God will hear your cry, He’ll have mercy on you, and He’ll pardon your sins.

You can be forgiven today. You have a burden of guilt and shame. You have no peace in your heart. You don’t know that if you died, you’d go to heaven. You can become a changed person. Your sins can all be forgiven. You can know that if you die, you can go to heaven. You can become God’s child if you trust Jesus Christ right now as your Lord and Savior.