

HERITAGE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD
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THE WORD OF GOD

What are the different forms of the Word of God?

- I. "The Word of God" as a Person: Jesus Christ
- II. "The Word of God" as Speech by God
- III. The Focus of Our Study

Word of God: A phrase that refers to several different things in the Bible, including the Son of God, the decrees of God, God's words of personal address, God's words spoken through human lips, and God's words in written form, the Bible. It is this last form of the Word of God that is the focus of systematic theology, since it is the form that is available for study, for public inspection, for repeated examination, and as a basis for mutual discussion.

I. "The Word of God" as a person: Jesus Christ

- A. *Re 19:11-13* 11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called *The Word of God*.
- B. *Joh 1:1* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- C. *Joh 1:14* And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
- D. *1Jo 1:1* That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—

These verses are the only instances where the Bible refers to God the Son as "the Word" or "The Word of God," so this usage is not common. But it does indicate that among the members of the Trinity it is especially God the Son who in his person as well as in his words has the role of communicating the character of God to us and of expressing the will of God for us.

II. The Word of God” as Speech by God

A. **God Decrees.** Sometimes God’s words take the form of powerful decrees that cause events to happen or even cause things to come into being.

1. *Ge 1:1-3 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*
2. *Ge 1:24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so.*
3. *Ps 33:6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth*
4. *Ro 4:17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed--God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."*

A decree of God is a word of God that causes something to happen.

1. *Heb 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*

B. **God’s Words of Personal Address.** God sometimes communicates with people on earth by speaking directly to them.

1. *Ge 2:16-17 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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."*
2. *Ge 3:16-19 16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."*

3. *Ex 20:1-3* 1 And God spoke all these words, saying: 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 "You shall have no other gods before Me..

The fact that these words are spoken in human language does not limit their divine character or authority in any way: They are still entirely the word of God, spoken by the voice of God himself.

C. God's Word as Speech Through Human Lips. Frequently in Scripture God raises up prophets through whom He speaks.

1. *De 18:18-20* 18'I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. 19 'And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him. 20 'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. 22 "when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.
2. *Jer 1:7* But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.
3. *Jer 1:9* Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

The words spoken through human lips were considered to be just as authoritative and just as true as God's words of personal address. There was no diminishing of the authority of these word when they were spoken through human lips.

D. God's Word in Written Form (the Bible). In addition to God's word of decree, God's word of personal address, and God's words spoken through the lips of human beings, we also find in Scripture several instances where God's words were put in written form.

1. *Ex 31:18* And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

2. *De 31:9-13* 9 So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the 11 "when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 "Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, 13 "and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."
3. *De 31:24-26* 24 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: 26 "Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;
4. *Jos 24:26* Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.
5. *Isa 30:8* ¶ Now go, write it before them on a tablet, And note it on a scroll, That it may be for time to come, Forever and ever:

The promises of Jesus to his disciples:

1. *Joh 14:26* "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.
2. *2Pe 3:1-2* I Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,

It must be noted that these words are still considered to be God's own word, even though they are written down mostly by human beings and always in human language. Still, they are absolutely authoritative and absolutely true.

Benefits of the Written Word of God:

Accurate preservation.

Opportunity for repeated inspection.

Accessibility

II. The Focus of Our Study

It is most profitable for us to study God's words as written in the Bible. It is God's written Word that he commands us to study.

1. *Ps 1:1-2* *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.*
2. *Jos 1:8* *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*
3. *2Ti 3:16* *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*
4. *2Pe 1:19-21* *19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*

Of all the forms of the Word of God, the focus of our study in systematic theology is God's Word in written form, that is, the Bible. This is the form of God's Word that is available for study, for public inspection, for repeated examination, and as a basis for mutual discussion. The Canon of Scripture is closed. All other forms are not suitable as the primary basis for the study of theology.

Systematic theology: Any study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" about any given topic.