

## What is Revelation?

The English word “revelation” is indirectly derived from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which means \_\_\_\_\_. Thus, the last book of the Bible is named after the second coming of Jesus Christ and his disclosure to the world.

However, in this session, we will be speaking more broadly in theological terms about how God reveals Himself to humanity.

In what ways does God make Himself \_\_\_\_\_ to us?

How can we know that the God we believe in is the \_\_\_\_\_ God?

“Revelation involves both a Revealer and the recipients of the revelation.... Divine revelation has come to humans in their total human situation. Its recipients have lived amid their quest for \_\_\_\_\_, man’s grandeur and misery, man’s \_\_\_\_\_ and guilt, man’s eagerness to know his origin and his \_\_\_\_\_, man’s capacity for God and his kinship to the animals, and man’s mortality and yearning for \_\_\_\_\_. But human self-understanding, including a grasp of one’s origin, nature, and destiny, is actually dependent upon a ‘breakthrough’ from the outside.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Christian faith, God’s revelation not only means that He reveals knowledge about Himself to us, but that He brings us into a \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge/relationship with Himself.

## General Revelation

**General revelation** is the disclosure of God that all humans possess through \_\_\_\_\_ and through the inner human \_\_\_\_\_, while **special revelation** is the disclosure of God to the people of Israel and especially in \_\_\_\_\_, which we know about in God’s Word (the Bible).

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<sup>1</sup> Garrett, J. L., Jr. (2014). *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Fourth Edition, Vol. 1, pp. 50–51). Wipf & Stock.

## General revelation in nature

\_\_\_\_\_ - This psalm continues in vv. 7-11 to discuss the special revelation of God in His Law.

\_\_\_\_\_ - The following truths are discussed in this passage:

1. Since the \_\_\_\_\_ of humanity, there has been a revelation of God through the created universe (v. 20).
2. God's revelation of Himself is \_\_\_\_\_; that is, it extends to all humans (v. 18).
3. This revelation \_\_\_\_\_ God's "eternal power and divine nature" (v. 20).
4. This revelation gives humans a serious \_\_\_\_\_ to respond to it (v. 20c).
5. God's revelation has been rejected and \_\_\_\_\_ by humans (vv. 18, 21-32).
6. Due to man's rejection of this revelation, the created universe by which God reveals himself has become the object of human \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 25).

\_\_\_\_\_ - This was Paul's first sermon to a pagan audience, in which he directed them to the Creator instead of false idols.

## General revelation in the inner conscience

\_\_\_\_\_ - Paul likely quotes a poem from the Stoic sage Epimenides (6th cent. BC), who implied that man depends entirely on God; therefore, why should Paul's audience give credence to idols?

\_\_\_\_\_ - Those without the Law of God still have a type of law within themselves that point them to a knowledge of God, which will ultimately be judged in the light of the gospel of Christ.

**Key Question: Can a general revelation of God through nature and inner conscience \_\_\_\_\_, or does salvation \_\_\_\_\_ come through special revelation through Christ?**

Scripture teaches that although God reveals Himself both in creation (general revelation) and in redemption (special revelation), general revelation is adequate only to \_\_\_\_\_ and not to \_\_\_\_\_.

To be clear, condemnation does not come solely *because* God reveals Himself in creation but rather because man has rebelled against God in *spite* of His revelation of Himself. To be saved from condemnation, man needs more than a general knowledge of God.

### **Seven Major Worldviews**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ - The denial of the existence of God
2. \_\_\_\_\_ - The denial of the possibility of knowing God with certainty
3. \_\_\_\_\_ - The identification of God and the material world ("God is all")
4. \_\_\_\_\_ - Matter as the ultimate reality
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Materialism - The historical interaction of opposite economic forces as ultimate reality. Under dialectical materialism there is no possibility of an ultimate spiritual Being and hence no possibility of his self-disclosure. Economics is the foundation of truth as well as of society. Religion, ethics, and social institutions are part of its superstructure. Hence religion is determined by economics and can be called "the opiate of the people." Key proponents: Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ - The meaningfulness of an idea determined by its practical results. Pragmatism is not concerned with ultimate truth or reality but with the experience of utility and practicality. Religion is valuable in "bringing persons together in a unity of communication, of shared life and shared experience."
7. \_\_\_\_\_ - Truth obtainable by commencing with the concerns of the self. It excessively subjectivizes truth, making it the "truth for me." It has difficulty supporting its values and ethical judgments.

## Special Revelation

### Special revelation to and through Israel under the Old Covenant

"The basis of revelation under the Old Covenant is God's choice of a special people, Israel, out of God's sovereign love and with a view to the blessing of all humankind through Israel. Yahweh's choice of Israel was dramatized and particularized in his deliverance of Israel from Egypt (the Exodus), was symbolized and formalized by his covenant with Israel through Moses, and was to be fulfilled in the eschatological kingdom of God.

"The covenant was intended to be a distinct blessing to Abram's seed and to result in blessing to all peoples on earth (Gen. 12:1-3). The covenant, conditioned on obedience and covenant-faithfulness, was offered to the people of Israel through Moses and called for their affirmative response (Exod. 19:3-8). Israel was to know the presence of the invisible God (Exod. 33:12-23) and to receive the land of Canaan devoid of idolatry (Exod. 34:10-17). But Yahweh's choice of Israel as his people was not based on Israel's population or other qualifications but on his electing love and promises to the patriarchs (Deut. 7:6-11). This election did not exclude Yahweh's sovereignty over all the nations, as the Old Testament prophets often made clear. But the covenant must be renewed by subsequent generations of Israelites (Deut. 29; 2 Kings 23:1-3; also 2 Chr. 34:29-33)."<sup>2</sup>

### ***How did God reveal Himself under the Old Covenant?***

Theophanies, \_\_\_\_\_, dreams, oracles (e.g., Urim and Thummim), visions, natural phenomena, historical events, guidance to individuals and groups, divine speech, \_\_\_\_\_, moral mandates within the Torah, and the words and deeds of the \_\_\_\_\_. These are all known as modalities of divine revelation.

Dangers associated with modalities:

1. A false prophet can use a true modality.
2. There are wrong kinds of modalities that God forbids, such as witchcraft, \_\_\_\_\_, and necromancy.

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<sup>2</sup> Garrett, Vol. 1, pp. 105-106.

### ***Unique concepts in God's revelation to Israel***

\_\_\_\_\_ - Israel was to be devoted to Yahweh as the one and only God for all mankind. This is a sharp distinction from both \_\_\_\_\_ (worship of many gods) and \_\_\_\_\_ (one deity for each nation or culture)

\_\_\_\_\_ of Yahweh - God revealed to Israel many of His unique characteristics, including holiness, righteousness, love, and faithfulness.

\_\_\_\_\_ - Only Israel understood that God's redemption of humanity from sin would occur in history through a Messiah that would come from David's line.

### ***Limitations of God's Revelation to Israel under the Old Covenant***

1. The Law became a \_\_\_\_\_ code as Israel kept adding interpretations and qualifications to it, especially during the intertestamental period.
2. The Old Covenant provision for sin was \_\_\_\_\_. Sacrifices had to be repeated, and they were only effective for inadvertent sins (Lev. 4:2, 22, 27; 5:18; Num. 15:22-29), not for sins "with a high hand" (Num. 15:30).<sup>3</sup>
3. Unless Yahweh came to interact with man, He was extremely \_\_\_\_\_. He could only be approached through angels and mediaries.
4. The Messiah had not yet appeared to Israel, leaving all of their expectations \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Hebrew doctrine of \_\_\_\_\_ (death/the grave) consisted of a shadowy, vague survival of humans without a clear ongoing relationship to God.
6. The Jewish understanding of the Old Covenant tended to exclude \_\_\_\_\_, unless those Gentiles sought to adopt the Old Covenant themselves.
7. Israel repeatedly was \_\_\_\_\_ in their covenant with Yahweh, which had the effect of obscuring God's revelation of Himself.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1: "The Sin Offering" for more information about inadvertent, intentional, and high-handed sins.

## Special Revelation in Jesus Christ under the New Covenant

One of the key ways that Christianity is differentiated from Judaism is that God has made a New Covenant in Jesus Christ that \_\_\_\_\_ and supersedes the Old Covenant with Israel. At the same time, the Christian faith affirms that the Old Covenant was essential to salvation history, and that the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) are to be included in the canon of the Christian Scriptures.

### ***Key features of revelation in Jesus Christ***

1. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the revelation through Israel (cf \_\_\_\_\_).
2. Revelation in Jesus Christ includes revelation by the \_\_\_\_\_ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). We receive God's revelation through faith.
3. Revelation in Jesus Christ to later Christians is dependent upon the witness of the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Revelation in Jesus Christ is \_\_\_\_\_. He is described as the "Word of God" (John 1:1; 14-18), the "image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4); "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), and "the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb. 1:3). Any teaching that proclaims additional revelation of God beyond Jesus Christ as shown in the New Testament is false.

## Biblical Inspiration

### ***What is inspiration?***

Inspiration can be defined as "that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of God."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983-85), p. 199.

There are two principal texts that speak to how the New Testament writers viewed the inspiration of the Scriptures:

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Texts that speak to the \_\_\_\_\_ authorship of the Scriptures include:

- Luke 4:12; Heb. 3:15 - "It is written"
- Acts 13:35; Heb. 1:7; 3:7 - "he [God] says" or "as the Holy Spirit says"
- Gal. 3:16; Rom. 15:10; 1 Cor. 6:16; 2 Cor. 6:2; Eph. 4:8 - "says" or "it is said"

Texts that speak to the \_\_\_\_\_ authorship of the Scriptures include:

- Mark 12:36 - "David himself said in the Holy Spirit..."
- 1 Cor. 7:10, 12, 25, 40 - Paul gives commands about things Jesus did not address.
- 1 Cor. 14:37 - Paul gives commands about things Jesus did address.

### ***The dependability or truthfulness of the Bible***

The books of the Bible are able to be depended upon and are worthy of \_\_\_\_\_ with respect to all that God intends in and through the Holy Scriptures. They are completely adequate and sufficient "to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 2: "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" and Appendix 3: "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" for a more thorough understanding of the inerrancy of the Scriptures and how to interpret the Scriptures.

### ***Jesus' view of the Bible***

1. Jesus believed in the \_\_\_\_\_ inspiration of the Scriptures, which means that every single word of the Scriptures is the Word of God (cf. Matt. 19:4-5; 22:29-32).
2. Jesus believed in the \_\_\_\_\_ inspiration of the Scriptures, which means that the entirety of the Scriptures is the Word of God (cf. Luke 24:25-27).
3. Jesus believed in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Scriptures, which means that the Scriptures can be trusted and will not lead one astray (cf. John 5:39-47).
4. Jesus believed in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Scriptures, which means that the Scriptures contain no falsehood or mistake (cf. Matt. 5:18).

Question: Since Jesus was referring to the Old Testament (the New Testament had not yet been written), is there \_\_\_\_\_ that the New Testament should also be considered inerrant?

Yes. in 2 Peter 1:12-21, Peter says that he has not followed "myths" (v. 16), but that he possesses a word "more sure" (v. 19) than his experience when Jesus was transfigured, in which he was an "eyewitness" (v. 16) and actually "heard" (v. 18) God the Father speak. This level of certainty can only be possible because Scripture is not given to the world through men ("one's own interpretation" - v. 20) or made by "the will of man" (v. 21), but "men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (v. 22).

Also, in 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter views \_\_\_\_\_ writings as being Scripture from God.