



II. THE REVELATION OF GOD'S WORD

A. Introduction

1. Definition
 - a. Dictionary—to remove the veil
 - b. Doctrinal—the act of God by which He imparts knowledge to man which man could otherwise never know (Deuteronomy 29:29; Amos 3:7)
 - (1) How could Moses have known and written about the events of creation?
 - (2) How could others write about heaven and hell or the sequence of future events?
 - (3) How could man gain an understanding of the condition of his hear (Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21; Hebrews 4:12)?
2. Divisions
 - a. General revelation—circumstances, conscience, creation
 - b. Special revelation—miracles, coming of Christ, visions, etc.
3. Description
 - a. Revelation consists of secrets made known (Deuteronomy 29:29; Daniel 2:19-23, 27-30, 47; Daniel 10:1).
 - b. Revelation, at least *special revelation*, came in special seasons (1 Samuel 3:1, 7, 21).
 - c. Revelation, at least *special revelation*, came to selected groups and individuals (Amos 3:7; Matthew 11:25).
 - d. Revelation came from a supernatural source (Matthew 16:17; Galatians 1:11-12).
 - e. Revelation came by the work of the Spirit (Luke 2:25-26; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

B. The Nature of Revelation

1. In order to understand God's revelation, one must grasp two great truths.
 - a. Revelation occurred through various means.
 - b. Revelation was progressive in nature.
2. The various means—God revealed Himself through His creation as well as various other means.
 - a. The Lord God revealed Himself to Jacob in a dream (Genesis 28:12).
 - b. He revealed Himself to Abram (Abraham) in a vision (Genesis 15:1).
 - c. He confirmed the identity of His Son with an audible voice in Luke 3:22.
 - d. He revealed Himself to His people through prophets like Isaiah, Hosea, and Malachi.
 - e. And He used various other means as well.



3. The progressive nature
 - a. God revealed the truth in parts; this is commonly known as progressive revelation.
 - b. To understand progressive revelation, consider the facts that Adam and Eve did not understand what Paul understood, Lot did not understand what Peter understood, and Peter and the other apostles did not initially understand the gospel of the grace of God which was fully revealed after the cross (Matthew 16:21-23).
 - c. The history of mankind can be likened to a puzzle being pieced together by the Lord.
 - (1) After the sin of Adam and Eve, mankind witnessed the connection of the first few pieces of the puzzle.
 - (2) In this story, looking back, it can be understood that the fig leaves did not cover the first couple's new sinful nature.
 - (3) Instead, the Lord shed the blood of some animals and clothed His wayward creatures with the hides of those animals.
 - (4) Those alive at the time could not conceive of what is now clearly understood—that God would one day send His “only begotten Son” (John 1:18) to die and shed His own blood to bare “the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2) “in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).
 - (5) That revelation, along with many others throughout history, is progressive.
 - d. Think of a veil that separates God's knowledge from man's understanding.
 - (1) All truth, knowledge, and understanding lie behind that curtain on God's side.
 - (2) Of course, God has the complete revelation.
 - (3) Imagine God graciously opening the veil to allow man to view some new element of the truth.
 - (4) This removing of the veil is God's revelation to man.

C. The Categories of Revelation

1. The doctrine of revelation can be broken down into two categories.
 - a. General revelation
 - b. Special revelation
2. General revelation
 - a. The purpose of general revelation
 - (1) While it may seem odd, the purpose of *general revelation* is not to provide salvation. The fact is that it does not offer enough information for someone to be saved.
 - (2) The simplified purpose of *general revelation* is to remove man's excuse.
 - b. The categories of general revelation
 - (1) Creation
 - a) Because of creation, man is without excuse (Romans 1:20).



- b) Through it, anyone paying attention can see God's invisible qualities along with His eternal and divine nature (Romans 1:20).
 - c) Creation testifies to the greatness of God and the greatness of His work (Psalm 19:1-3). After all, the heavens make known some wonderful things about the Lord.
 - i) They reveal the wonders of His glory—"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1).
 - ii) They teach about the splendour of His work—"and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalm 19:1)
 - iii) They speak at all times, and there are no language barriers which they do not cross—"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:2-3).
- (2) Conscience
- a) Not only can man look without and see God's revelation, but he can also find revelation within, in his conscience.
 - b) The purpose of the conscience as it pertains to revelation is multifold.
 - i) It acknowledges God. Romans 1:19 attests to this truth when it says, "that which may be known of God is manifest in" mankind. In other words, the conscience informs man of God's existence.
 - ii) It discerns right and wrong. How is it that people with no Bible have a basic understanding of right and wrong? Because God has written His law in man's heart (Romans 2:14-15).
- (3) Circumstances; or, providence (Romans 1:18)
- a) While the previous subsections of general revelation are perhaps the strongest, it is also true that God reveals Himself generally in the circumstances of life.
 - b) General information can be obtained about God in light of the rise and fall of nations (Deuteronomy 32:29-43; Psalm 75:6-7; Isaiah 12-13; Jeremiah 50:9-13).
 - c) General information can be obtained regarding the Lord based upon His preservation of Israel (2 Samuel 7:12-18; Jeremiah 31:35-37).
 - d) Much can be learned about the Lord by observing His goodness to all men (Psalm 145:9; Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17).
- c. The limitations of general revelation
- (1) While this revelation is available to all men at all times, it is not without its limitations.
 - (2) The obvious limitation is that it only reveals basic information about the Lord.
 - a) The existence of God



- b) The guilt of man
 - c) The judgment of God
 - d) Etc.
 - (3) In doing so, it provides enough insight to point a person to God's special revelation which can bring the knowledge of salvation.
3. Special revelation
- a. The purpose of special revelation—While the simplified purpose of *general revelation* is to remove man's excuse, *special revelation* is given to man additional and sufficient light to lead him to salvation.
 - b. The categories of special revelation
 - (1) Direct Communication
 - a) Dreams (Genesis 28:10-16)
 - b) Visions (Genesis 15:1)
 - c) Spoken words (Exodus 3:1-10); Most of the Bible was spoken before it was ever written.
 - d) Miracles
 - i) Declaring God's power (Joshua 2:9-11; Joshua 4:23-24)
 - ii) Identifying the Son of God (Matthew 11:1-6; John 5:36; John 10:25; John 14:11)
 - iii) Confirming the word of God (Mark 16:17-20)
 - (2) Incarnation (Matt.11:27; John 1:18; 14:9-10)
 - (3) Written word of God (Exodus 34:27; John 5:39; Romans 1:1-2; Romans 16:25-26)
 - c. The limitations of special revelation—The special revelation of God offers far more insight than the general revelation of God, but is limited in that it was often narrowly given to special people at special times in special places.

D. The Levels of Revelation

- 1. The names of God versus His word
 - a. The names of God, which are many, reveal much about the person, work, and character of God.
 - (1) One of the most commonly used names for God is Lord. This name, associated with our Saviour, signifies a master/servant relationship.
 - (2) His name Almighty teaches that there is no weakness in Him at all; He is all-sufficient (Exodus 6:3).
 - (3) The name Most High plainly declares that there is none higher than God Himself. He is supreme, and He is God over all (Psalm 9:2).
 - b. Yet, the Bible declares that there is something that the Lord Himself has magnified above His name (Psalm 138:2).
 - c. The merit of God's word rests upon His name, and vice versa, but here He pointed out that He has magnified His word above His



name. A man's word is only as good as his name. God's word is only as good as His name(s). If God's word meant nothing, His name(s) would be called into question.

2. The law versus the incarnation
 - a. The law of Moses provides many great truths concerning God's character. One of the main truths is how the law of God uncovers the extent to which God abhors sin.
 - b. Yet, the Lord Jesus Christ used the Law as a foundational truth to give additional insight and a deeper understanding of His truth.
 - c. Most people have an understanding of what constitutes murder, adultery, divorce, swearing, and vengeance. But Jesus took these concepts, as applied by the Law, and expounded upon them to both enrich our understanding of what constitutes a violation of His law as well as His abhorrence of sin.
 - (1) Murder (Matthew 5:21-22)
 - (2) Adultery (Matthew 5:27-28)
 - (3) Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32)
 - (4) Swearing (Matthew 5:33-37)
 - (5) Vengeance (Matthew 5:38-39)
 - d. In each of these passages, the Lord took an Old Testament truth and provided additional or new revelation. In the New Testament, the law is said to be "a shadow of . . . things to come" (Hebrews 10:1), but Christ is called "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).
3. Audible words versus the written word
 - a. Movies that depict the voice of God speaking to man usually employ a deep, bellowing voice. The tonal characteristics of this voice are meant to convey absolute authority. The audible words of God in scripture, too, have great authority.
 - b. Yet, the audible words should never be given greater relevance than God's written word. Peter heard the voice of God from heaven, but observe carefully how he explained it (2 Peter 1:16-20).
 - c. Simon Peter clearly stated that the written word was "more sure" than the very voice of God that he heard from heaven!
 - d. According to scripture, the greatest level of authority for revelation is not found in audible voices, but rather in the written word of God. The Lord Jesus emphasized this in His time of temptation. Three times He made it a point to refer to what was written (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). The authority of the written word of God supersedes anyone's feelings, experiences, and understanding.
 - e. Every doctrine of the Bible hinges upon a pure, undefiled revelation. If God did not perfectly reveal His word to mankind in written form, man has no absolute authority for truth. Truth, by necessity, would then be open to "any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20) because there would be no absolute authority or perfect standard upon which to base doctrine.