

The Doctrine of Revelation

How Does God Reveal Himself to us?

Recommended Resources:

Christian Beliefs (Grudem), Taking God at His Word (Kevin DeYoung), ESV Study Bible.

Memory Verse:

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV)

1. General Revelation

“The revelation God has given to all people at all times.”¹

i) External: Created world

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun,” (Psalm 19:1–4, ESV)

ii) Internal: Conscience

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:19–20, ESV)

This is evidenced by the fact that, even people who *don't* have the Scriptures have some sense, in their conscience, of God's moral character and their guilt:

“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them” (Romans 2:14–15, ESV)

Insufficient: General revelation is *insufficient* for people to know God *savingly*:

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without

¹ ESV Study Bible, *Biblical Doctrine: An Overview*

someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:14–17, ESV)

Q: Do all people, who have been given general revelation, ‘hear’?

Q: What is needed to ‘hear’? How does hearing come?

2. Special Revelation

Revelation that is required to know God savingly. God’s written word, and God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

D) God’s Written Word: Scripture

Inspired by God: Scripture is the word of God

*“and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture is breathed out by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy 3:15–17, ESV)

Q: What are ‘able to make you wise for salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus’?

“knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20–21, ESV)

Inerrant: “The bible does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact”

*“in hope of eternal life, which God, **who never lies**, promised before the ages began”* (Titus 1:2, ESV)

“And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.” (2 Samuel 7:28, ESV)

Spiritually Discerned:

“Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the

kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:3–6, ESV)

“these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:10–16, ESV)

Characteristics of Scripture:

A) Authority: “The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve and disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”²

Q: *Who should I listen to?*

“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:16–21, ESV)

Q: What is ‘more fully confirmed’ than being an ‘eye-witness’ and ‘hearing’ the voice of God? What is ‘more sure’ than our experience? **A:** Prophetic word more fully confirmed/prophecy of Scripture.

Q: Why is it more sure?

B) Clarity:

Q: *Can we really know God through Scripture? Has he spoken clearly?*

i) Some things in the Bible are hard to understand (but not impossible):

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. Page 73.

“And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.” (2 Peter 3:15–16, ESV)

-There is still a moral responsibility to understand them, and not to twist them.

ii) God has given us all we need for life and godliness:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.” (2 Peter 1:3–4, ESV)

Q: Where do we find ‘knowledge of God, and his precious promises? A: Scripture.

-Therefore, we can understand enough for life and godliness in Scripture.

C) Necessity: ³The bible is necessary for knowing the Gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will...”

Q: Do we need word of God to know God? Aren’t there other ways?

i) Necessary to know the Gospel: Jesus is the only way to be saved, and we can only come to know Jesus Christ through the Gospel:

Cf. Romans 10:13-17

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6, ESV)

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12, ESV)

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” (1 Timothy 2:5–6, ESV)

Old Testament Saints: They were saved by trusting in Christ from afar:

*“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having **seen them and greeted them from afar**, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”* (Hebrews 11:13, ESV)

Moses: *“choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.”* (Hebrews 11:25–26, ESV)

³ Grudem, Page 116.

“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”” (John 8:56, ESV)

“But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”” (Matthew 4:4, ESV)

“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—” (1 Peter 2:2, ESV)

-Context is ‘the living and enduring word of God’ (1:23-25).

D) Sufficiency: Scripture contains all the words of God that he requires for us to trust and believe, to know him and become like him.

Q: *Is God’s word enough for me to know him and live a godly life?*

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16–17, ESV)

II) Jesus: Word of God

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” (Hebrews 1:1–3, ESV)

i) The purpose of Scripture is to ‘bear witness to Christ’:

*“and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. **You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,** yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”* (John 5:38–40, ESV)

ii) All of Scripture bears witness to Christ:

*“And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” **And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.**”* (Luke 24:25–27, ESV)

Application:

i) We read the bible, the written word of God, to see and know and believe Jesus Christ

Conclusion:

“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” (Acts 17:11, ESV)

If we are going to be followers of Jesus Christ, we need to be ‘people of the Book’. It is in the Scriptures, through faith, that we see, hear, know God, and Jesus Christ, his final and full revelation of himself.