

## LESSON 2

### THE BIBLE AND REVELATION

#### Introduction

Religion concerns finite man's reaching out in an attempt to relate to the invisible God. Man has a natural hunger for fellowship with God. The forces of nature and death are too great for him to face alone; therefore, he is forced to seek help. Man's life is filled with frustration and difficulty because he fails to use either his limited or extensive knowledge of God and His will in a responsible way. How can man know God in a personal and beneficial way? This vital question is at the centre of the study of the Bible and revelation.

#### The Meaning of the Word Revelation

The Old Testament word *galah* and the New Testament word *apocalypse* mean "revelation." These words refer to a hidden truth, fact, or person that is made known or brought to light. The Latin root of our English word revelation means "to unveil" or "to uncover." The New Testament Greek word *apocalypse* describes the drawing back of a curtain in order that the audience may follow the action in the play. One book of the New Testament is known by the descriptive title "Revelation."

God's act of revelation means that He is drawing back the curtain from that which is hidden. It is God's making known to man the nature of His person and His will. The divine God is so far above nature and beyond the power of man to discover that it is necessary for God to disclose or reveal Himself. *Revelation, therefore, is the activity of God in making Himself known.*

In addition to the word reveal (revelation), other biblical expressions used to make God's word and will known to man are:

God warns	God instructs
God causes to know	God foretells
God causes to learn	God testifies
God says	

Two phrases, "thus saith Yahweh" and "the Word of the Lord," stress the verbal nature of revelation.

#### The Necessity of Revelation

##### God is spirit

In speaking to the woman at the well, Jesus informed her that true worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and truth, for God is spirit (John 4:23,24). Because God is spirit, it is impossible for man to see Him with physical eyes. John points out that "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Jesus stated to His followers, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father" (John 6:46). Created man cannot see the invisible God.

##### Revelation is God's activity

Man as a creature cannot discover God in nature because God has not embodied Himself in His creation, nor is He to be

God's act of revelation is His drawing back the \_\_\_\_\_ from that which is \_\_\_\_\_. He makes the nature of His \_\_\_\_\_ and His \_\_\_\_\_ known to \_\_\_\_\_.

(curtain, hidden, person, will, man)

Revelation is necessary because God is \_\_\_\_\_ and (can, cannot) be seen with \_\_\_\_\_  
physical eyes.  
UNDERLINE ONE

(spirit, cannot)

identified with the world (the doctrine of Pantheism). The Creator stands outside of and beyond His creation. Man, who is a part of creation, can discover from the created world facts that reveal something about God's nature, but he is unable to extend his mind into the realm of the Eternal One and discover His nature.

*How man knows.*—Man has been given two basic ways to know. He has been given the five senses of sight, smell, taste, feel, and hearing to enable him to know the physical existence about him. He has been given a mind with which he classifies, correlates, and understands knowledge which comes through sensual experiences. He also uses his mind in a process of speculation in which he attempts to derive truth from a process of reasoning or logic. Man's sensory experiences and rational endeavours do not bring him to a knowledge of God. God is the Creator of the material universe, but man does not come to know God simply by gaining knowledge of the material through use of his senses. God is not the same as His creation.

*God's self-disclosure.*—Since man is unable to discover God, he can only know God if God discloses Himself. God must reveal Himself or "draw back the curtain" which keeps Him hidden from man. *Revelation is God's activity in making Himself known to man and not man's achievement of discovering God.*

### Factors in Knowing God

Dr. W. T. Conner spoke of two factors in all knowledge: the objective and the subjective.<sup>1</sup> There must be the object which is known and the subject who knows. The atheist denies that there is a God to be known. He believes that ultimate reality is material in nature. The world is no more than the operation of physical forces, and man's soul or life is the result of the working of material energy under the law of mechanical necessity. According to this philosophy, man cannot know God because there is no God to know. The only object of knowledge for man would be the material which is discovered and understood through scientific processes. In an age of science, the danger is constantly present of exalting the methods of scientists for gaining knowledge. For example, those who have adopted a materialistic philosophy conclude that the only objective reality is that which can be investigated through the use of the senses. Such a view eliminates the objective reality of spiritual existence.

In the knowing relationship of object and subject, *man is the subject who seeks to know God.* Philosophers and scientists have struggled with the question of how man as subject knows an object. It has already been mentioned that man's five senses and mind are involved in the process of knowing physical reality. Man's problem arises because he cannot know spiritual reality in the same way that he knows physical reality. Although the Psalmist used the expression "tasting God," he did not mean that man could discover God through use of the five senses. Biblical writers expressed the ability of the subject to know the object by using common and understandable concepts. Revelation involves the problem of how man as subject can know and understand a spiritual object.

Since God is on a higher level of existence, He must reveal Himself and His will to man. Man is unable to discover God because of his limited means of knowing objective reality. After

<sup>1</sup>*Revelation and God* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1936), p. 44.

<p><i>Man cannot discover God through his five _____ or his _____.</i></p> <p><i>(senses, mind)</i></p>
<p><i>Revelation is _____ activity in making Himself known to _____.</i></p> <p><i>(God's, man)</i></p>
<p><i>There are two factors in all knowledge: the _____ which is known and the _____ who _____.</i></p> <p><i>(object, subject, knows)</i></p>
<p><i>Man is the _____ who seeks to know _____ (the object). Man, the subject, cannot know God, the object, through his five _____ and his _____. Man knows God through _____.</i></p> <p><i>(subject, God, senses, mind, revelation)</i></p>

God discloses His nature and will to man, man must comprehend them and express them in words corresponding to his own level of experience. When God is described as Father, certain characteristics of God's nature are communicated. A father provides for the members of his family, protects them, and gives them guidance. He is the symbol of authority and strength within the home. By using the term father to describe the nature of God, man as subject can comprehend something about the object—God.

### How God Has Revealed Himself

#### General Revelation: God as Creator

*A distinction between general revelation and natural theology.*—Theologians frequently use two expressions which may be confused: general revelation and natural theology.

**General revelation** refers to what can be known about God through nature, God's creative work. **Natural theology** refers to a doctrine of the nature of God and His will based on sources other than the Bible. Human reason is the primary source for a system of natural theology, but nature is also a source. Thomas Aquinas of the Middle Ages is known for his natural theology built primarily on reason, but many conservative theologians have challenged the validity of his system.

The contemporary theologian Karl Barth says that no valid knowledge of God comes through general revelation. He holds that man can only know God through special revelation which centres in the person of Jesus Christ. He maintains that a second source of the knowledge of God—for example, Scripture and tradition, or Scripture and reason—always leads to devaluation of the first source. According to Barth, there might be general revelation, but there can be no valid natural theology because sinful man's mind perverts the knowledge of God through nature.

*Paul's view of general revelation.*—The Apostle Paul spoke of general revelation in Romans 1 and 2. The man who has no knowledge of God through the special revelation of Jesus Christ is still responsible to God because of general revelation. Although nature says nothing about God's redeeming mercy, Paul maintained that the created works of God disclose His unlimited power, eternal existence, and divine nature (Rom. 1:20). Through general revelation man knows enough about his responsibility to God to become guilty when he deliberately disobeys Him and refuses to worship Him. Man's perverse and sinful nature causes him to turn away from his responsibility to God. He refuses to live up to the standard of right which he knows. In his pride and selfishness, he chooses to exalt and serve his own desires rather than His Creator.

Paul indicates that man's conscience gives evidence that man has some knowledge of his responsibility to God (Rom. 2:12f). The Gentiles, who had not been given the special revelation of the Old Testament Law, revealed that they knew something of God's moral requirements because they established a law for themselves. Their moral standards were not as high as those of the Jews who had the special revelation of the Old Testament; however, their condemnation was not based on their failure to have a superior moral law but on their failure to keep the law they had.

*The significance of general revelation.*—General revelation is the basis of man's guilt and of God's justification in condemning all men as sinners. General revelation does not lead to a full knowledge of God, but it does give man some light by which to live. The problem is that man distorts the light of nature and justifies his unrighteous acts.

General revelation is a knowledge of \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_.

Natural theology is the doctrine of the \_\_\_\_\_ of God and His will based on sources other than the \_\_\_\_\_.

(God, nature, nature, Bible)

Paul said a man could know enough about \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_ revelation to be guilty before Him.

(God, general)

Paul said the Gentiles not only had a knowledge of God through n \_\_\_\_\_ but their c \_\_\_\_\_ as well to make them morally responsible.

(nature, consciences)

General revelation does not lead to full \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, but it does give man some \_\_\_\_\_ by which to live.

(knowledge, God, light or understanding)

Luther and Calvin of the Reformation rejected as inadequate a theology based on general revelation. They reacted against the natural theology of the Catholic Church which was derived from St. Thomas Aquinas and emphasized the depravity (perverted and corrupt nature) of sinful man. They concluded that the mind of depraved man was not a dependable source for knowledge of God. Instead of depending on the process of reason to establish a knowledge of God, the mind should be used to understand the special revelation which God has given through Scripture.

**Special Revelation: God as Redeemer**

Through general revelation, man has a consciousness of God. Special revelation builds on that foundation. Created existence speaks to man of a higher power and natural man reveals his desire for a greater knowledge of God through various forms of religion. Christianity builds on man's innate longing for God and offers to him a full knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. *Special revelation is biblical revelation.*

Special revelation relates specifically to the redemptive work of God in the life of His chosen nation Israel in the Old Testament and in the life of the New Testament Church. Man's need for special revelation lies in his sinful and corrupt nature. Without a special confrontation with God, sinful man is satisfied to continue in his sin. To follow one's perverted desires produces sin and leads to separation from God which is death. Sinful man is unable to see his true condition without the initiative and special activity of God. Depraved man is unable to utilize general revelation. Only after regeneration is man capable of reading the "book of nature" rightly.

Special revelation supersedes general or natural revelation. Man can understand only partially the nature of God by observing His work of creation. According to Calvin, a knowledge of the special revelation of the Old and New Testaments enables man to read the "book of nature" with glasses so that he may see what is really there and was always available.

God's special revelation in Christ gives a superior understanding of the love and justice of God to that which could possibly be inferred from the natural world. Special revelation is God's gift of grace to sinful man in order to restore to him the benefits of the natural and general revelation given to man originally. Special revelation brings to man the good news of God's redemptive work in and through Jesus Christ. *God's special revelation, beginning in the Old Testament, reached its final and ultimate goal in Jesus Christ.* The most revealing events of the life of Christ were His death and resurrection. In His death, the love and righteousness of God were laid bare. A God of love takes upon Himself the punishment for man's sin. Paul tells us in Romans 3 that, through the death of Christ, God can be just and also the justifier of those who believe in Jesus Christ. In His resurrection, the power and victory of God over sin and Satan are demonstrated. In Jesus Christ, God reveals His nature and work of love.

**Media of Special Revelation**

**History as a medium of revelation**

A survey of the Bible reveals history as the medium through which the Eternal God has revealed Himself once and for all. God chose one nation and guided her history. The influence of such a small nation as Israel upon the nations of the world throughout the centuries has no explanation except that God entered the history of Israel in a special way. The Israelites believed their history was under the control of God who was directing the nation towards her climax in eternity.

<p><i>Special revelation is _____ revelation.</i></p> <p><i>(biblical)</i></p>
<p><i>Special revelation relates to the _____ work of God in the life of _____ in the Old Testament and in the life of the New Testament _____.</i></p> <p><i>(redemptive, Israel, Church)</i></p>
<p><i>Christ is God's _____.</i></p> <p><i>Special revelation brings to _____ the good news of God's _____ work in and through _____.</i></p> <p><i>(special revelation, man, redemptive, Jesus Christ)</i></p>
<p><i>God reveals Himself through h_____.</i></p> <p><i>(history)</i></p>

God's special control of Israel's history does not mean that He exercised no control over the histories of other nations. God revealed His purpose for all nations in relation to the history of the one nation Israel. Israel was responsible for communicating God's revelation to the other nations. That revelation included:

- He is a righteous God and requires all people to be righteous;
- He is a loving and merciful God and will forgive the iniquities of those who repent;
- He has provided eternal life for those who live by faith in Him.

God revealed His righteous nature and requirements for righteousness on the part of His people through such historical events as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the giving of the Ten Commandments, the punishment of the wilderness wanderings and the captivity, and the cross of Christ. God revealed His mercy and willingness to forgive and to deliver His people through such events as the Egyptian deliverance, the provisions for the people during their wilderness journeys, the conquest of the land of Canaan, the deliverance from Babylonian captivity, and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

*God's greatest revelation in history came in the person of Jesus Christ.*—In the person of the Son, God clothed Himself in human flesh and entered the history of Israel. God revealed His righteousness, love, and redeeming mercy in concrete terms which man could understand. His eternal nature and purpose were clothed in human flesh and dwelt in the midst of His people. Through the great historical experiences of Jesus' death and resurrection, God made known in an understandable way His love and plan for redeeming His people. The climax of God's self-disclosure in history came in the incarnation, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.

*History has to be interpreted.*—As Creator and Sustainer of the universe, God controls all history. Special historical events reveal God's particular purposes, but they have to be interpreted. God must, by His grace, disclose the meaning of His acts. He does this through the inspired prophets and apostles who wrote the Scriptures. The Bible is largely the sacred record of what God has done in history and the inspired interpretation of those saving events. Revelation was not so much in the teachings about God as in the impartation of the life of God to meet the needs of His people.

#### God's communication with man

How God communicated with man is not fully understood. The Bible asserts that God has spoken in many ways to His people through the ages (Heb. 1:1). Examples of the "many ways" are found in various parts of the Bible; perhaps it would be profitable to examine a few.

*God's communication with Adam and Eve.*—The writer of Genesis says that "God commanded the man," "they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden," and "the Lord God called unto Adam" (Gen. 2:16; 3:8, 9). The vivid style of the writer implies direct communication between Adam and His God.

*God's communication with Abraham.*—The writer states that "the Lord had said unto Abram" (Gen. 12:1). He does not explain how God spoke the important words of the Covenant to Abraham. On another occasion, the writer states, "the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision" (Gen. 15:1). The writer states that the Lord appeared to Abraham in the middle of the day. The appearance is associated with the presence of three men who stood before Abraham. No distinction is made between the three

God revealed His purpose for all nations through the history of \_\_\_\_\_.

Through the history of Israel, three characteristics of God were revealed:

1. He is a \_\_\_\_\_ God;
2. He is a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ God;
3. He has provided \_\_\_\_\_ for those who live by \_\_\_\_\_ in Him.

(Israel, righteous, loving, merciful, eternal life, faith)

God's greatest revelation in history is \_\_\_\_\_.

(Jesus Christ)

God has interpreted His historical revelation through the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ who wrote the S \_\_\_\_\_.

The Bible is largely the sacred \_\_\_\_\_ of what God has done in \_\_\_\_\_ and the inspired interpretation of those \_\_\_\_\_ events.

(prophets, apostles, Scriptures, record, history, saving)

Hebrews 1:1 tells us God has spoken to His people in many \_\_\_\_\_.

(ways)

The writer of Genesis implies God communicated directly with \_\_\_\_\_.

(Adam)

God communicated with Abraham in appearances or v \_\_\_\_\_ and through m \_\_\_\_\_.

(visions, messengers)

men and the voice of the Lord (Gen. 18:16, 17). As the men departed from Abraham, the writer says, "And the Lord went his way" (Gen. 18:33). The next verse states, "there came two angels to Sodom" (Gen. 19:1). Angels are messengers of God. The writer does not distinguish between the appearance of the Lord and His messengers (men or angels) who brought His word to Abraham.

*God's communication with Moses.*—Moses was attracted to a bush which was burning but was not being consumed. The writer states, "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I" (Exod. 3:4). On Mount Sinai God called to Moses out of the mountain and appeared to him in a thick cloud (Exod. 19:3, 9).

*The communication of Yahweh with Samuel.*—The statement, "the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision" (1 Sam. 3:1), implies the disclosure of God's will for His people was usually through visions. Samuel was sleeping when the Lord called to him (1 Sam. 3:3ff.).

*God's communication with Isaiah.*—Yahweh frequently revealed His purpose to His people during a time of crisis. He spoke to Isaiah during the critical hour of the death of King Uzziah. The communication from the Lord was connected with a vision of the temple scene which was familiar to Isaiah (cf. Isa. 6).

### The Role of the Holy Spirit in Special Revelation

It appears that God's most common means of making His will known to His servants was through dreams and visions. On the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted the prophet Joel in explaining the descent of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of God's message. Joel had predicted that in the last days the Lord would give visions to the young men and dreams to the old men (Acts 2:17). The dreams and visions would be the results of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Internal revelation is frequently described in terms of dreams and visions. Dreams and visions may be real whether they have physical counterparts or not; however, not all dreams contain divine revelation. In our scientific age, our minds often conclude unconsciously that what man dreams or envisions is not real because the content of the dream has no physical existence. Such conclusions limit the activity of God to the physical order. God frequently revealed His Word to the prophets through internal revelation. Although the process involved in the communication of God to the prophet is not clearly understood, the prophet was convinced that he did not speak his own words but the words which came from Yahweh through him. These words were the result of the activity of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Pet. 1:20f.).

According to 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, Paul indicates that the thoughts and words of God must be revealed by the Spirit. No man can discover the mind of God. Only the Spirit of God can reveal to man's spirit the wisdom and will of God. The Spirit of God alone knows fully the truth of God's plan and purpose. The Spirit used different methods in making known to the apostles the Word of God. The Creator of the universe is not limited to any one method of making His Word known to man.

The communication of the Holy Spirit to the mind or spirit of man is not necessarily audible, but it is real. In recording revelation, man expresses in his own words the word which God made known to him. Through this process, the revealed Word of God takes on the characteristics of the person and the environment in which it is given. Scripture passages are often interpretations of God's acts in history. The interpretations are not humanly drawn conclusions based on astute observations of these acts. The meaning of the acts themselves is divine revelation.

God spoke to Moses by means of a \_\_\_\_\_ bush, a voice out of the \_\_\_\_\_, and a thick \_\_\_\_\_.

(burning, mountain, cloud)

God's most common means of communicating with His servants was through \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(dreams, visions)

Only the \_\_\_\_\_ of God can reveal to \_\_\_\_\_ the will of God.

(Spirit, man)

The communication of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily audible, but it is \_\_\_\_\_.

(real)

God's Spirit guides man in interpreting the divine acts. God's Spirit also guides the one who reads the Bible to understand the meaning of the acts and their interpretations.

### Ultimate Revelation Through the Person of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the final and ultimate revelation of God. According to John's Gospel, Jesus told His disciples that when they had seen Him they had seen the Father. In the Prologue to his Gospel, John calls Jesus the Word of God. Perhaps John is saying that Jesus has communicated or revealed the Father and His will to man. The teachings of Jesus were the words of God. His actions were the concrete expressions in history of the nature of His heavenly Father. Because of Jesus' divine nature and relationship to the Father, men are able to know God in a personal way through Him.

God as a spiritual being is difficult for man to comprehend. In Jesus Christ, the nature and will of God are expressed on the level of man's understanding in terms of a concrete historical person. What God made known in Jesus Christ is not His physical appearance but His eternal love, His impeccable (faultless) righteousness, and his redemptive purpose. In Jesus Christ, God is not revealed as an abstract power but as a definite personality. Apart from the disclosure of His nature in Jesus Christ, the personality and nature of God remain largely hidden.

### Truths Revealed Through the Bible

The following summary statements should be helpful in remembering the important truths revealed through the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

- God reveals His nature.
- God reveals His will and purpose for man.
- God reveals the way of salvation.
- God reveals the requirements for the Christian life and the resources for living it.
- God reveals solutions to personal problems.
- God reveals the power of His Kingdom and the promise of its final victory.

### Contemporary Views of the Bible and Revelation

Three basic views emerge from the debate on the meaning of revelation. They may be generally classified as

- liberal,
- neo-orthodox (new orthodox), and
- conservative or fundamental.

It is impossible to give a description of each view which would be acceptable to all within a particular group; however, each group does have certain basic characteristics.

The **liberal view** states that the Bible contains the Word of God along with varied admixtures of the words of men. The Bible is not to be equated with the Word of God, since God discloses Himself and His will by means other than the Bible. Also, the liberal critical scholar points out that all the Bible teaches is not worthy to be called God's revelation. Some liberal theologians believe that the biblical writers were inspired only in the sense that from time to time their natural religious insight and genius were deepened and heightened to discover "divine truths" for

<sup>2</sup>These are suggested in *Understanding the Bible* (The Seminary Extension Department, SBC, Nashville, Tennessee, 1970), p. 7.

Jesus Christ reveals God's eternal \_\_\_\_\_,  
perfect \_\_\_\_\_, and  
redemptive \_\_\_\_\_.

(Love, righteousness, purpose)

The Bible reveals God's \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ for man, the  
way of \_\_\_\_\_, the requirements  
and resources for the \_\_\_\_\_ life,  
solutions to personal \_\_\_\_\_, and  
the power of His \_\_\_\_\_ and the  
promise of its final \_\_\_\_\_.

(nature, will, purpose, salvation, Christian, problems, Kingdom, victory)

List the three basic views of revelation.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(liberal, neo-orthodox, conservative)

The liberal view says the Bible \_\_\_\_\_  
the Word of God as well as varied admixtures  
of the words of \_\_\_\_\_.

The liberal view is weak because it  
emphasizes man's d \_\_\_\_\_  
instead of God d \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

their own day. The emphasis of the liberal scholar is on man's discovery of God instead of God's disclosure of Himself. Conservatives object to the liberal view because:

- It emphasizes the activity of man in the discovery of God instead of God's disclosure;
- Its view of revelation is rationalistic and man-centred;
- It is not biblical;
- It places in fallible man's hands the power to determine when God is speaking.

The neo-orthodox view states that the Bible becomes the Word of God. Nineteenth century liberal critics emphasized that the Bible is filled with human errors and imperfections. How can the Bible be God's perfect Word when it is filled with man's erring words? Karl Barth answered that the Bible becomes the Word of God when God chooses to use the imperfect channel to confront man with His perfect Word. The Bible uniquely reveals God to man, not in propositions about God, but as a channel of personal encounter by God with man in an act of revelation. In an existential experience, the words of the pages of the Bible become alive and speak personally to man.

Rudolf Bultmann proposed that the Bible contains two levels of history. The lower level or natural history contains elements of the culture and thought patterns of the biblical world. The higher level or supernatural history contains the truth of God which existential man encounters in his environment. The supernatural history or divine principle is interwoven in the biblical record with the cultural concepts and characteristics. Cultural concepts and characteristics change from one generation to another. Customs of the environment are not part of the divine revelation; therefore, the task of the interpreter is to separate the supernatural history or divine principles from the culturally oriented expression. Because the people of the first century were limited in knowledge and filled with superstition, the biblical record is filled with error and myth. The divine truths are not to be confused, however, with the culturally limited words with which they are recorded. Bultmann concluded that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus could not be verified as historical; however, whether the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ took place in natural history is not important to their reality and truth on the supernatural level. The revelation of God's selfless love in Christ is not dependent on the fact of a natural crucifixion outside of Jerusalem.

Since many criminals died on crosses outside Jerusalem, Bultmann has a valid point in stressing that the meaning of the crucifixion is more important than the act of it; however, one has difficulty in conceiving how it could have meaning if it never happened. Bultmann, along with Barth, was attempting to explain how the Bible can be revelation and yet contain human error.

The neo-orthodox position is too subjective. It limits revelation to the existential encounter of the individual with God. The Bible is not considered to be the Word of God, but it is described as the medium through which the Word of God comes. The strength of the neo-orthodox position is the emphasis on revelation as personal instead of propositional. Revelation is primarily an encounter with God who is personal rather than a belief in a set of recorded truths. On the other hand, revelation does not exclude propositions since the revealed knowledge of God must take on propositional form to be communicated.

Conservatives believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Objections raised against their view are:

The neo-orthodox view says the Bible \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of God when God chooses to use man's imperfect words. This view is represented by K \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_, who says that the error-filled words of the Bible can become the \_\_\_\_\_ of God when He uses it to confront man with His perfect Word.

(becomes, Karl Barth, Word)

For Bultmann, the Bible contains two levels of history: The \_\_\_\_\_ level and the \_\_\_\_\_ level. The myths and errors of the \_\_\_\_\_ level must be separated from the supernatural level or divine truth.

(natural, supernatural, natural)

The neo-orthodox view has contributed to the understanding of revelation by emphasizing that it is \_\_\_\_\_ instead of \_\_\_\_\_.

(personal, propositional)

1. Identifying divine revelation with human words is derogatory to God. This identification makes God responsible for the imperfections embedded in the Bible and for all moral short-comings as well as any historical and scientific inadequacies found in the Scripture.
2. The Bible as the revelation of God implies that revelation is propositional—God dictates truths by which men are to live. Such a position reduces religious devotion to an individual acceptance and impersonal loyalty to revealed truths rather than to a person.

The Scripture is the embodiment of revelation. It is more than a record of revelation which happened in history many years ago. The words of Scripture put in tangible and enduring form the divine truths made known in history. In a similar way, the fleshly body of Jesus put into concrete expression the divine truth. God's self-revelation in Christ is not to be equated with the earthly body of Jesus, but the earthly body was the vehicle by which divine truth was placed in history and within the range of man's perception. Divine truth, which was once housed in a tangible body, is now housed in tangible words. It is true that in Jesus Christ revelation was made personal (a person communicating the personal nature of God to persons). It should be recognized, however, that God has not limited reality to persons nor revelation to knowledge of His personal nature.

The Scripture was written by inspired men who put God's revelation into concrete form which could be preserved and communicated. The words of Scripture can be read without becoming revelation to a man just as men in the day of Jesus could look upon His human body without apprehending the divine truth which was revealed through Him. Since the words of the Bible embody revelation, the reading of the words becomes the medium of revelation. The Holy Spirit uses statements in the Scripture to enlighten the understanding of the reader. The words of Scripture are the medium through which the Holy Spirit confronts man with the claims of God.

The words of Scripture as revelation are powerless apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit would lead into all truth. The activity of the Spirit would be based upon the words which Jesus had spoken; they would be recalled (John 14:26). The Greek word for "to read" means "to know again." Reading the words of the Scripture brings to our minds the words of Jesus and becomes the basis of the Holy Spirit's activity in guiding us into divine truth. The words of the Bible can be read without becoming revelation. However, they embody divine truth whether the reader apprehends the truth or not.

Several emphases of the contemporary view of revelation are valid:

Revelation should not be thought of as doctrine in propositional form or inspired rules which legislate every action of man.

Revelation is not a body of knowledge about God which was given to man but is God's giving Himself to man in communion.

God's self-revelation through His activities in history is also a valid emphasis. A person's character is expressed by his deeds.

The following statements attempt to set forth the relation of the Bible and revelation:

The Bible, which contains a record of God's acts in history and an interpretation of those acts, embodies God's revelation.

The Bible guides to a deeper understanding of God through

Conservatives believe the Bible \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of God.

(is)

The Bible puts in concrete form the divine \_\_\_\_\_ made known in \_\_\_\_\_.

(truths, history)

The Scripture was written by inspired \_\_\_\_\_ who put God's r \_\_\_\_\_ into concrete form which can be p \_\_\_\_\_ and c \_\_\_\_\_.

(men, revelation, preserved, communicated)

The Holy Spirit uses the \_\_\_\_\_ to confront man with the claims of \_\_\_\_\_.

(Scriptures, God)

Revelation is God's giving Himself to \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.

(man, communion)

The relation of the Bible and revelation:

1. The Bible contains a record of \_\_\_\_\_ acts in \_\_\_\_\_. God's revelation comes in the i \_\_\_\_\_ of these acts through the help of the \_\_\_\_\_.

2. The Bible is a guide to deeper understanding of \_\_\_\_\_. (See next page)

a personal encounter with Him effected through the Holy Spirit.  
Revelation may be embodied in biblical statements as well as in divine acts, but neither becomes true revelation to the individual until each is apprehended through the work of the Holy Spirit.

3. *Biblical statements and divine acts become true \_\_\_\_\_ only through the work of the \_\_\_\_\_ (God's, history, interpretation, Holy Spirit, God, revelation, Holy Spirit)*

## Home Study Exercises

Basic assignment (to be answered from the Study Guide by Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. Define revelation as used in the term God's revelation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Tell whether each of the following statements is true or false:
  - (1) God is spirit and cannot be seen with the eyes. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) Man can know God fully through nature. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (3) Man cannot discover God through his five senses and his mind. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (4) Revelation is man's activity in knowing God. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The two factors in knowledge are: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Revelation involves man as \_\_\_\_\_ knowing God as \_\_\_\_\_.  
(subject or object) (subject or object)
5. Define general revelation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Define special revelation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Paul taught that the Gentiles had enough \_\_\_\_\_ (general or special) revelation to make them guilty before God.
8. God revealed Himself through \_\_\_\_\_ and through the person of His \_\_\_\_\_.
9. According to Hebrews 1:1, how has God spoken to His people? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. List five ways God spoke to Old Testament men. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. List the three basic views of revelation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What is the medium which makes the Bible more than a record of God's acts—God's message to man? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Supplementary assignment (to be answered by Levels 2 and 3)**

1. Explain the differences between natural or general revelation, natural theology, and special revelation.
2. List three facts God revealed about Himself in the history of Israel.
3. Explain this statement: Revelation is God's activity.
4. How did God use the history of Israel to reveal His purpose for all nations?
5. List three attributes of God which He revealed in Israel's history.
6. List three attributes of God which are revealed in Jesus Christ.
7. Give the three basic views of revelation and the keyword indicating the attitude of each concerning the Bible as the Word of God.

**Advanced assignment (for Level 3)**

Read pages 37–47 in *A General Introduction to the Bible*, by Geisler and Nix, and do the following:

1. What problem caused Bultmann to propose the two levels of history in the Bible, and how did he propose to solve the problem?
2. Give some objections to each of the three basic views of revelation.

**Seminar Discussion**

1. Why is general revelation associated with God as Creator and special revelation with God as Redeemer?
2. How are general and special revelation related?
3. How does a spiritual God communicate with man?