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B0513 – March 27, 2005 – Major Bible Themes
Chapter 04 – The Bible: As a Devine Revelation

I. Four Forms of Divine Revelation – Dr. Chafer only mentioned three forms of divine revelation, creation, Christ, and canon. I’ve added a fourth, conscience.

A. General Revelation in Creation

1. Ps 19:1-6 (read)

- a. General revelation reveals the glory of God and the greatness of God (19:1)
- b. General revelation in creation is continuous (19:1)
- c. General revelation is not audible but it does speak (19:3)
- d. General revelation is available to everyone everywhere (19:4)
- e. Even a blind man can feel the heat of the sun (19:6)

*Men must ask, “Who made this? Where did this come from?”

2. Rom 1:18-32 (expound)

- a. General revelation in creation is continuous (1:20)
- b. General revelation communicates God’s eternal power and divine nature. General revelation does not just point to a Supreme Being but to a Supreme Being with the specific nature/attributes that the God of the Bible has (1:20)
- c. General revelation leaves men without excuse (1:20)
 - i. God is just in condemning men for suppressing general revelation. What this means is that people do not have to hear the gospel before being condemned. All men, without exception, already know God clearly through creation and a rejection of that knowledge is enough for God to justly condemn them?

- ii. Why is rejection of general revelation in creation enough to condemn? Because general revelation falls under common grace and common grace stems from the cross of Christ. Therefore, a rejection of general revelation is ultimately a rejection of the cross of Christ. Where else could grace come from than through the cross of Christ? A rejection of the lesser revelation is therefore a rejection of the greater revelation
- iii. God has made it so clear that if a man simply acknowledges that God created all this then He will give them more truth. But acknowledging general revelation is not enough to save anyone. One must understand the special revelation of Jesus Christ and His atoning death on the cross to be saved.
- iv. If a man will not acknowledge that God created all, and gives some other explanation then God is just in rejecting them and not offering them more truth (v. 21).
- v. God made the truths of general revelation so clear that a rejection of them brings just condemnation

*General Revelation does not extend to scientific discoveries using instrumentation such as microscopes, telescopes, high speed cameras, etc...General Revelation is available to all men through the five God-given senses.

*Ryrie says, "We must not forget that the majority of people who have ever lived have rejected the revelation of God through nature, and that rejection has come with scorn and deliberate substitution of their own gods. They have condemned themselves, and when God rejects them, He does so justly."ⁱ

B. General Revelation in Conscience

1. Rom 2:14-15

Since God created man in His own image man was given the faculty of conscience and God implanted knowledge of Himself within all men. Man shows that he knows God when he does right. He's showing that he knows there is an ultimate standard. Therefore, all men know God through creation and conscience.

C. Christ Revelation

1. John 1:14

John 1:14 ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. John 1:18

John 1:18 ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained [exegeted] *Him*.

Jesus Christ is a higher revelation of God than creation and conscience. He is the exegesis of the Father. This means he is the “drawing out of” God and explanation of God. This is described more fully in...

3. Heb 1:1-3

Hebrews 1:1-3 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

4. Acts 26:23, 26

Additionally, Christ’s death on the cross was a public event. It did not happen in a corner but visibly so everyone could see.

D. Canon Revelation

Canon revelation is even more detailed. It contains all sorts of details about the entirety of God’s revelation; from angels to inspiration to man to sin to salvation to the trinity to God’s nature to God’s works to things to come. The advantage of canon revelation is that it is written and can be preserved and translated into other languages and carried from generation to generation without corruption.

II. Special Revelation

A. Captured Revelation

Captured revelation is verbal revelation that has been captured in writing. Uncaptured revelation is revelation that has not been captured in writing. **John 21:25** “*And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.*” Why wasn’t everything captured in writing? Two reasons; 1) it would be way too much information and 2) what was captured is totally sufficient. Additional revelation is not necessary.

B. Canon Closed

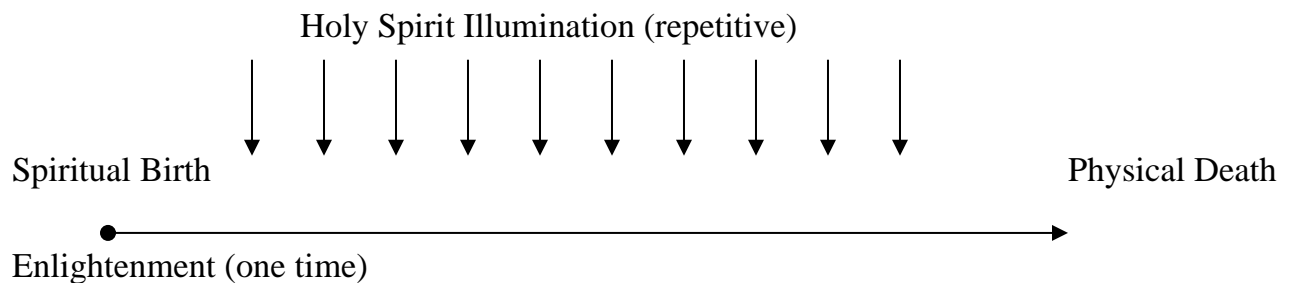
“The canon is closed as a historical fact.” (F.F. Bruce) “No one has ever been able successfully to add one verse to the written Scriptures as a normative statement of truth” (Chafer). The propositions in Scripture are essential to have an encounter with God. We cannot simply say that Scripture only gives us knowledge about God as a subject (Neo-Orthodoxy) and that if we really want to know Him then we must experience Him in a direct encounter. Neo-Orthodox theologians and many Christians think that the Bible is simply God’s personal self revelation and does not contain propositions. They go on to say that revelation from God is ultimately relational, confrontational, communion rather than the communication of facts. It is true that we are to learn Christ and that to learn a person is not simply the cold assimilation of facts about Him but the developing of a deep relationship with Him. But the only means of doing this is through the propositional statements in God’s word. We might say there is no encounter with Christ apart from the propositional words of Christ. If you cut yourself off from the words of Christ then you have moved into the thinking of the existential religions of eastern mysticism.

C. Work of the Spirit

1. Enlightenment – In soteriological contexts “enlightenment” (Gk. *photizo*) is either a perfect or aorist tense and it is always passive in voice Eph. 1:18 (perfect passive participle); Heb. 6:4 (aorist passive participle); 10:32 (aorist passive participle). To be enlightened means to have the ability to perceive spiritual truths. The perfect tense means a past completed action having present results. All believers ***have already been enlightened*** at the moment they believed. This simply means all believers have the ability to perceive spiritual truths. No unbeliever can perceive the spiritual import of God’s word. The “*natural man*”, Paul tells us, “*does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them*”. The reason he can’t understand them: *because they are spiritually appraised*” (1 Cor. 2:14). The human spirit of an unbeliever is dead and must be made alive before it can understand spiritual truths (Eph 2:1-5). Unbelievers can understand the word of God intellectually but they cannot understand the spiritual import. Paul goes on saying, but “*we [believers] have received...the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God*” (1 Cor. 2:12). The Holy Spirit has quickened the human spirit of believers so that we *may know the things of God*. So, enlightenment occurs at salvation and gives the believer the ability to perceive spiritual truth.

2. Illumination (1 Cor 2:10-14) – a distinct but related ministry of the Holy Spirit is “illumination”. Illumination is the Holy Spirit’s influence over a believer’s spiritual attitude and perception of the text of Scripture. Illumination is not the conveying

of truth for that is the function of inspiration. “Inspiration is infallible, but not illumination. No man can say he has had *infallible* illumination from the Holy Spirit.”ⁱⁱ The function of the Holy Spirit in illumination is to make “men wise up to what is written, not beyond it.”ⁱⁱⁱ For example, you will never be able to know who the author of Hebrews is, for example, because it is not revealed. I don’t care if you study the structure, vocabulary, sources of quotations, etc... and compare it with other authors of Scripture. No matter what you do you will never be able to figure out who wrote that book. A matter of fact cannot be discovered solely by spiritual means. Nor should we pray for *a revelation about* the revelation. That is not the function of the Holy Spirit in illumination. His function is to “make men wise up to what is written, not beyond it.” This ministry is repetitive throughout the life of the passionate, reverent, student of God’s word.



Illumination takes place as a believer studies the word of God while in fellowship with God. Studying involves using all materials available to come to the proper interpretation of God’s word.

III. Interpreting Revelation

A. Qualifications for the Interpreter

1. Regenerated (1 Cor 2:12-14)
2. Filled by Holy Spirit (1 John 1:9)
 - a. Dependence on Spirit
 - b. No hidden meanings
 - c. Spirit guides or leads us into truth
 - d. Not sudden intuitive flashes. Many passages readily understandable and some come to light only gradually with careful study
 - e. Spirit’s role indicates that Bible was given to be understood
 - f. Spirit’s role does not mean human teachers not needed
3. Passion for knowing God’s word
4. Careful Study

B. The word *hermeneutics* is derived from Hermes the Greek god who brought the messages of the gods to the mortals, and was the god of science, invention, eloquence, speech, writing, and art.

1. **Nehemiah 8:8** *“They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.”* The scribes were helping take the words from the Hebrew Law and translating it into Aramaic to give the Jews the sense since they had lost their native language while in Babylon.

2. Hermeneutics is the science of biblical interpretation. This is not a dry set of rules. These rules or principles are what helps open up the words of Scripture. There are several gaps we, as believers in the 21st century, have to overcome in order to reach the proper interpretation.

- a. time gap (2,000-6,000 years)
- b. geographical gap (Land of Israel, Mediterranean)
- c. cultural gap (Israel, 1st Century Rome, Pagan Cultures)
- d. language gap (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek)

A large part of my job here as pastor and teacher is to help bridge these gaps by studying the ancient cultures, the geographical regions, and the original languages. I am here to ultimately exegete Scripture. Hermeneutics is not exegesis but exegesis is applied hermeneutics.

Now let's look at some of the principles or rules of interpretation.

C. Literal or Normal Interpretation – “This means interpretation which gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking^{iv}...It might also be designated plain interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech. Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method and are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved.”^v

- 1. Literal-Literal
- 2. Literal-Figurative

*Golden Rule of Interpretation

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light

of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.^{vi}

D. Grammar

1. word studies – tracing etymology, usage, and sense (e.g. replenish KJV Gen 1:28)
2. syntax – studying the relationship between parts of a sentence

E. Context, Context, Context

“a text taken out of context is not a proof text but a pre-text”

1. Immediate Context
 - a. verse before (anaphoric)
 - b. verse after (cataphoric)
2. Paragraph Context
3. Book Context
4. Other Books by Same Author Context
5. Testament Context
3. Entire Bible Context

*There is an ever growing ring of context within the canon of Scripture. e.g. Matt 19:1-6

F. Progressive Revelation – God did not reveal everything at once but gradually over time. It is important not to read later revelation back into earlier revelation but to seek to understand the text in its original historical context. *Progressive revelation never changes prior revelation, but merely enlarges and enhances it by adding to it.*

F. Audience – who is the author speaking to? Israel, Church, Ephesians, etc...

1. Primary Application
2. Secondary Application
3. All Scripture [including sections written to other people groups] is

God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuke, correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God is adequately equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17)

What we can do is take the principles taught in scriptures addressed to others and apply them creatively in our own lives. That’s what we call wisdom.

G. Accurate Exegesis in Original Languages

1. Hebrew and Aramaic OT
2. Greek NT
3. Dynamic Equivalence Translations/Phrase-for-Phrase (NIV, NEB, The Message)

While easy to read these translations are far too interpretive. The translators are giving phrase-for-phrase translations which are often highly biased interpretations of the text. This is done to remove all ambiguity for the reader. This infringes on the priesthood of the believer. The least interpretive of these versions is the NIV. Don't get the TNIV.

4. Formal Equivalence Translations/Word-for-Word
(NASB, KJV, NKJV, RSV)

While more difficult to read these translations are much less interpretive. The translators are giving a word-for-word translation to try to maintain as nearly as possible the original wording in the original languages. This is done because the translators have a very high view of inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and want to keep you as close as possible to the originals. The ambiguity is also left in the text so you as a student of the word will learn to struggle with the text. This protects the priesthood of the believer. I prefer the NASB or the NKJV.

H. Guard Against Bias

1. Preconceived Ideas
2. Twisting the Text (*eisegesis*)
4. Be Filled by the Spirit

I. Analogy of Faith – always last step in interpretation. Don't bring in too early or you may force a teaching on a text. This is what is dangerous about ICE teaching. ICE teaching often leads the teacher to supplant the Bible's teaching with human categories. This has been abused by American Bible teachers for the last 100 years.

1. Compare Scripture with Scripture – does my conclusion contradict anything else in Scripture that I am aware of? If yes then go to those other texts and re-study them going through this whole process. Sometimes we need to go back and change beliefs that we have wrongly held. That's ok, that's a part of growing. Sometimes I hold onto a contradiction for awhile until I've furthered my understanding. Sometimes it's cleared up by a word study, other times by the grammar. I've changed my beliefs on certain issues since I've been at this church. I haven't shifted on any major things but I have shifted on details. As a believer in Christ I am responsible to be consistent in my understanding of Scripture and that means I have to work through the details, hashing out my theology and making sure it's not contradictory. When you learn to think theologically then you will learn how to work out your theology and really struggle with the text.

ⁱ Ryrie, Charles, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 38.

ⁱⁱ Ramm, Bernard, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1970), 14.

ⁱⁱⁱ Angus and Green quoted in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1970), 14.

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- ^{iv} Ramm, Bernard, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1970), 89-92.
^v Ryrie, Charles, *Dispensationalism Today*, 86-87.
^{vi} Cooper, David L., *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled* (Los Angeles, CA: Biblical Research Society, 1939), 546.

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