

Theology Proper

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- I. How has God revealed Himself? Part 2: Special Revelation
- a. Definition of Special Revelation
- i. *“God’s words addressed to specific people, including the words of the Bible.”¹*
 - ii. *“Special revelation involves a narrower focus than general revelation and is restricted to Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.”²*
 - iii. Some form of supernatural way in which God discloses himself (Prophets³, Bible, visions and dreams)
 1. *“He said, ‘Listen to my words: “When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in Dreams” (Numbers 12:6)*
 - a. Lest someone gets arrogant and think they are a prophet of God, look at the context of Numbers 12.
 - iv. Revelation of God that comes in propositional (verbal or written) form.
- b. Types of Special revelation
- i. Jesus Christ
 1. Jesus reveals God: *“No one has ever seen God, but God the one and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” (John 1:18)*
 2. Jesus is Himself God revealed in Human form: *“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9)*
 3. God speaks to us through Jesus: *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heirs of all things, and through whom he has made the universe.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)*
 4. The revelation of Christ also limits Special revelation through the means of Prophets (who’s content is revealed to him through visions and Dreams, cf. Numbers 12:6)

Note that Hebrews 1:1-2 states in the past God spoke through prophets but in *“these last days he has spoken to us by His Son”*
 - ii. Scripture
 1. Scripture reveals teachings from God: *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2Timothy 3:16)*

Its because there is teachings from God in the Scriptures that one can have the content that is *“useful for teaching”*
 2. God is in control of what Scriptural prophecies reveals: *“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its*

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction To Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 1255.

² Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, Moody Press), 158.

³ The question might be raised, “How do I know whether someone is a true prophet from God or not?”, the biblical test of a prophet is outlined in my article, “The Test Of A Prophet” available at http://teamtruth.com/articles/art_prophettest.htm

origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2Peter 1:20-1)

3. Scripture reveals the gospel to all the nations: “...*But now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him*” (Romans 16:26)
 - a. Notice that this verse mentioned that prophetic writings are revealed “*so that all nations might believe Him*”
4. The revelation of Scripture also further limits additions to Scriptural revelation: “*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.*” (Revelation 22:18)
- c. Relationship of Special Revelation with General Revelation
 - i. Special Revelation reinforces the truth found in General Revelation
 1. Analogy of the Traffic Signs and the Traffic Officer
 - a. Sometime in a busy intersection we see not only the traffic signal but also a traffic officer. Both of these give us information in different forms.
 - b. Traffic signal is like General Revelation and the officer’s verbal/motion signaling is like Special Revelation.
 - i. If you violate just the General revelation (traffic signal), it is sufficient enough to get you in trouble already.
 - ii. Yet Scripture (traffic officer) provides further instruction and warning for the benefit of man (driver)
 - iii. In this sense, Special revelation (traffic officer) reinforces the truth in General revelation (traffic signal)
 - ii. Special Revelation provides us the interpretative principles to interpret General Revelation
 1. Man have always needed the lens provided in Special Revelation to interpret Natural Revelation
 2. Man’s need for Special Revelation before the Fall
 - a. “*And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die’.*” (Genesis 2:17)
 - i. This was before the fall, and God’s Word was important than as it is now.
 - b. Genesis 3 shows the magnitude of disobedience to Special Revelation and interpreting General Revelation contrary to Special Revelation
 3. Man’s need for Special Revelation after the Fall

- a. **NOTE:** The problem is not that General Revelation is unclear but since the effect of sin man misinterprets and/or suppresses the truth⁴
- b. If there was a need for Special Revelation before the fall, how much more so because of sin's effect in misinterpreting General Revelation
 - i. *"We cannot understand natural revelation without distortion, unless we view it biblically."*⁵
 - ii. *"Being a sinner, man will not read nature aright unless he does it in the light of Scripture."*⁶
- 4. There are no such thing as non-interpreted facts⁷, therefore Special Revelation is the lens that pattern General Revelation⁸
- iii. General Revelation points to the need of Special Revelation
 - 1. The relationship between the Conscience and the Gospel
The Conscience is part of General Revelation, and the Gospel is revealed in Special Revelation
 - 2. The Conscience condemns but only the gospel can save
 - 3. If God exists (as General Revelation testifies), has God spoken? Indeed, He is there and He is not Silent!

⁴ See Romans 1:18-21. See Part I on the Doctrines of Revelation about the nature, content and extent of General Revelation, which should leave no one in doubt as General revelation being intrinsically unclear.

⁵ John Frame, "Is Natural Revelation Sufficient to Govern Culture?", available at http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/2006NaturalRevelation.htm#_ftn5

⁶ Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetics: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed), 209.

⁷ See my Article titled, "Impossible Neutrality: An Analogy From Humanistic Geography" available at <http://teamtruth.com>.

⁸ For a discussion about 'facts' dependence of one's worldview's patterning, consult: Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace* (Philadelphia, The Presbyterian And Reformed Publishing Company), 1-13.