

(1) Knowledge of God that general revelation gives is very limited and is unable to give man a personal saving knowledge of God.

See 1 Corinthians 1:21; John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:15.

(2) Man naturally suppresses (Romans 1:18) and perverts (Romans 1:25) the truth presented to him in general revelation.

d. Purpose of general revelation.

(1) Negative purpose – to serve as an adequate basis for God’s universal condemnation of man.

See Romans 1:18-3:20.

(2) Positive purpose – to incite man to search for fuller knowledge of God and to discover His plan of salvation.

See 1 Chronicles 28:9; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7-8; Hebrews 11:6; James 4:7; Acts 8:26-40.

2. Special revelation.

a. Definition of special revelation: God’s revelation of divine truth through special acts and words, especially recorded in the Bible.

b. Means of special revelation.

(1) Through Scripture (John 17:17; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; Romans 15:4; Jude 3; Revelation 1:2, 11).

(2) Through Christ. Christ is God’s living truth.

(a) Christ is living truth. (John 1:1, 14; Revelation 19:13).

(b) Christ is personal truth. (John 14:6).

(c) Christ is the ultimate truth. (Hebrews 1:1-3).

(3) Through prophecy.

(a) Definition: The predicting of events through direct communication with God.

(b) Distinction.

[1] All of the biblical prophet’s words spoken in the Lord’s name will be precisely fulfilled. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Psalm 22; Isaiah 37:33; Matthew 5:18).

- [2] The biblical prophet was not like modern “prophets” (Edgar Cayce, Jeane Dixon, Jeremiah Johnson etc.) (see Revelation 2:20).
- (c) How prophecy is received.
- [1] Dreams (Numbers 12:6).
- [2] Visions (Numbers 12:6; Isaiah 1:1).
- [3] Direct Communication (1 Samuel 3).
- [4] Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- (4) Through miracles.
- (a) Definition: An unusual, observable, supernatural, event effected for a specific purpose.
- (b) Classification of miracles.
- [1] An intensification of natural laws (e.g. the flood).
- [2] Supernatural facts outside natural laws (e.g. the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ).
- (c) Objections to miracles.
- [1] Miracles violate the laws of nature.
- Answers:
- [a] Ultimately nature is a miracle itself.
- [b] Nature is sustained by God (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3) and is subject to God rather than God being bound by the laws of nature.
- [2] Miracles contradict human experience (e.g. “I have never experienced a miracle, therefore, miracles do not occur.”).
- Answer: Because a miracle has never occurred in one person’s experience does not prove that miracles never occurred in any human experience.
- (5) Through personal experience.

- (a) People have walked with God (Genesis 5:22-24).
 - (b) People have talked with God through prayer.
 - (c) People are transformed by God.
 - (d) People who are saved experience the inner witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16-17).
- c. Evidence for a special revelation (in the Bible).
- (1) Evidence from reason.
 - (a) A priori reason (reasoning apart from experience [observed facts]).
Assuming the existence of God, it is possible, but not necessary for God to reveal Himself to man.
 - (b) A posteriori reasoning (reasoning after experience [observed facts]).
 - [1] There is adequate evidence that the Bible is a special revelation of God.
 - [2] Therefore, God is and has revealed Himself to man.
 - (c) Analogous reasoning.
 - [1] Analogy from communication.
 - [a] God has instituted communication in the natural world.
 - [b] Therefore, it seems probable that communication from God to man has occurred.
 - [2] Analogy from divine concern.
 - [a] God has concern for the natural world.
 - [b] Therefore, it seems probable that:
 - i. God would have concern for sinners in their need.
 - ii. God would provide a redemptive revelation of Himself.
 - (2) Evidence concerning the Bible.
 - (a) Preservation of the Bible.
 - [1] The Bible is the best preserved of all works transmitted from antiquity.

- [2] The Bible has been marvelously preserved in spite of
 - [a] Attempts to destroy it.
 - [b] Prohibitions against reading it.
 - [c] Denials of its authority.
- (b) Character of the Bible.
 - [1] Its contents.
 - [a] Unsurpassed in subjects treated (creation, sin, salvation).
 - [b] Unsurpassed in quality and variety of literature (historic, poetic, biographical, didactic [designed or intended to teach], apocalyptic [forecasting the ultimate destiny of the world]).
 - [2] Its unity.
 - [a] It was written by about 40 different authors over a period of about 1,500 years.
 - [b] It is the product of one author speaking through many “pen-men” (2 Peter 1:20-21).
Illustration:
“The English Bible is the only good writing job that I know of that was put together by a committee.”⁶
- (c) Influence of the Bible: Scientific, cultural, social, political, economic, domestic.
- (d) Answers in the Bible to major questions of philosophy.
 - [1] Is there a God? Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 1:1; Psalms 14:1
 - [2] Where did man come from? Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7
 - [3] What is man’s nature? Genesis 1:26-27
 - [4] What is man’s purpose? John 10:10b; 1 Corinthians 10:31

⁶ Robert Gunning, *The Technique of Clear Writing*, pp. 170-171.

- [5] Is man immortal? Job 19:25-27; John 11:25-26
- [6] What is truth? John 14:6; 17:17
- [7] Why does evil exist? Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28; Revelation 20:10
- [8] What are the determinants of history and what is its goal? Daniel 4:17; Revelation 22:20
- [9] What is right conduct? Matthew 22:37-39
- [10] What is the beautiful and valuable? Psalms 27:4; Mark 10:18; Philippians 4:8

(e) Fulfillment of Bible prophecy

- [1] The development of history predicted (Ephesians 1:11; Daniel 2; 7).
- [2] Details of the Messiah's life and death predicted (Psalms 22; Isaiah 53; Matthew 5:18).

It would be practically impossible for the biblical prophecies about the Messiah to be fulfilled by chance.⁷

(f) Reliability of the Bible.

The reliability of Scripture is supported not only by the precise fulfillment of biblical prophecy, but also by archaeological confirmation of biblical accuracy on historical, geographical, and cultural matters. If the Bible has demonstrated reliability in these areas, then it would seem safe and reasonable to accept the Bible's testimony about what it says is true. The Bible does indeed testify that is a special revelation from God, God's truth in written form (John 17:17).

This verification of the Bible's reliability from external scientific evidence (archaeology) helps avoid the criticism that circular reasoning is involved when the witness of the Bible is used to prove its own inspiration. If a witness is proven reliable, then it is not wrong to allow that witness to give testimony concerning itself. Furthermore, the truth-claims of Scripture concerning itself can be

⁷ Josh McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, 2nd rev. ed. (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), pp. 166-167.