

Lesson 2 REVELATION AND THE SCRIPTURES

2.0 Revelation

To reveal means: to uncover, to make known. Therefore, we confess publicly what has been revealed and made known to us. Essentially we confess that the LORD has revealed or “uncovered” Himself to us. He makes known His thoughts, counsels and plans, Psalm 92:5, 139:17. His revelation is not a loose collection of thoughts, but a unified whole, a multi-coloured unfolding tapestry expressing one plan of salvation.

2.1 Manifestation in Creation

The creation reveals God’s eternal power and divine nature, Romans 1:18f. His **power** is clearly visible in the way we see all things maintained and upheld in the world. He maintains all the forces and powers of the universe, for example, the weather patterns, the seasons, the movements of stars and galaxies, and so on. His divinity implies His absolute sovereignty over all things. He is the one who stands above all created things, and is openly manifested as Creator and Sustainer of all, Job 38.

There is order in the diversity of creation, and man is also able to see his place in creation. In many ways we find **traces** or **vestiges** of man’s original position in the covenant. However, this does not lead him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion. By nature man rebels against God’s revelation and holds down the truth in unrighteousness. Yet he is without excuse, and held accountable for what has been revealed, Romans 1:20.

We confess that we can only adequately read the book of creation through the glasses of Holy Scripture. In other words, one must know the second book of God before he can read His first one! Only God's grace in redemption allows us to properly see His goodness in creation.

2.2 Revelation in the Scriptures

2.2.1 Background to the Scriptures

Beyond and after creation, God **speaks**; this is **revelation** in its proper sense. Revelation implies God addressing man, John 1:1. This direct address of God to man takes various forms, Hebrews 1:1:

- i. theophany, appearance - Genesis 12:1, 18:1, and so on.
- ii. vision, dream, prophecy - Isaiah 1:4,5, Habakkuk 2:1
- iii. special revelations - Moses, Numbers 12
- iv. miracles and acts of power - Judges 6:34, 11:29, and so on.
- v. shadows and ceremonies of the law - Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
- vi. fulfilment in Jesus Christ - John 1:18
- vii. apostles and successors - Ephesians 3:1-7, 1 Corinthians 3:10
- viii. apostolic visions - Revelation 1:10, 2 Corinthians 12:1f

2.2.2 The Scriptures

This word literally means **the writings**, and is often used in the Bible in various forms, John 5:47. It is an expression which points to the authority and binding character of what is written, for example, Matthew 10:11, 21:16, Acts 7:42, Romans 3:10, 8:36, and so on. The Scriptures are the only rule for doctrine and life.

2.2.2.1 The Command to Write

Besides the oral speaking of the prophets and apostles, we often find the divine command to write down what is spoken, for example, Exodus 17:14; 34:27, Deuteronomy 6:9; 2 Corinthians 1:13; Galatians 1:16. God uses fallible men for an infallible work, 1 John 2:1, 7, 12; 2 Timothy 4:13; 1 Timothy 1:15.

2.2.2.2 Inspiration

We confess that the writings are inspired, which literally means: to **breath in and out**. This is a direct **movement** of the Holy Spirit, so that what is written is the very Word of God, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:19-21. The LORD God Himself wrote the law, Exodus 34:1, which the Lord Jesus, who never wrote any of His own words, fulfilled, Matthew 5:17.

In the work of inspiration God makes use of human talents with all the characteristics of human personality and personal style. Yet the voice of the human writers is none other than the voice of the Spirit of God Himself.

2.2.2.3 The Canon

This word literally means **rule, guide, standard**. These are the writings which are true and authoritative in the Church of Christ. The Bible, composed of sixty-six books, has one unified message, and testifies in all places to the work of the triune God, and the redemption in Jesus Christ. Thus we should see the Bible as **Holy Scripture**.

i. Formation of the Canon

The Old Testament (composed of thirty-nine books) was already recognized as sacred and canonical in Christ's day, Mark 12:10, 36. The New Testament (with its twenty-seven books) was clearly recognized as authoritative and canonical under the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:20. The canon was actually recognized before 200 AD, but was only officially acknowledged around 400 AD.

ii. Structure of the Canon

The books of the Bible have different forms. The following table of division is normally adopted:

O.T.		N.T.	
Historical books	17	Historical books	5
Poetic books	6	Letters	21
Prophetic books	16	Prophetic books	1

2.2.2.4 The Apocryphal Books

The apocryphal books are religious writings that appeared during the formation of the Old Testament Canon. **Apocryphal** means **secret** or **hidden**, signifying that these were religious writings brought in to acquire a certain status along side the canonical books. Yet the writings are spurious in the sense that they have strictly a human, and not a divine, origin.

We may distinguish two types of apocryphal books, that is, those that arose in the Old Testament and inter-testamental period, and those that appeared in the time of the early Christian Church. The

Belgic Confession refers to the former group, and states that while they may be read, and while one may draw instruction from them on any point which accords with the teaching of the canonical books, they cannot be used as a rule or standard by which any point of doctrine is judged.

Exercises Lesson 2

I. Reference Passages

Study: Belgic Confession, Articles 2, 3, 4.
Canons of Dort, Chapter III/IV, Articles 4, 5, 6.

Review: Order and names of the books of the Bible

Memorize: 2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16

II. Review Questions

1. Explain how God's eternal power and divinity are clearly visible in creation.
2. How does God normally reveal Himself in the Bible? What aspect of His revelation has more importance, sight or hearing? Why?
3. How did Jesus Christ fulfil the Old Testament revelation?
4. Does revelation still happen today? What means does the LORD use to apply His revelation to our time?
5. What does inspiration mean? How do we know that the Bible is the inspired Word of God?

III. Extra Questions

1. What is the role of the Bible writers in divine inspiration?

2. What status does the apostle Peter give to Paul's letters in 2 Peter 3:15 and 16? How then are we to view the New Testament letters in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures?
3. What does Paul say about the Jews of his day who have the Old Testament Scriptures but do not believe in Christ? See 2 Corinthians 3:15. What does this require of us? What does it say about the Jews today?