

A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

Recap...

- Revelation: making known that which was either previously unknown or otherwise unknowable
- Divine Revelation: God's revelation of who he is (nature), what he has done (acts) *or* how we should live before Him (response)
- Content not unique to Scripture and knowable otherwise is still revelation because it is part of the Story revealed in Scripture—the elements of the Story are revelation in light of the whole.
- Natural Revelation | 5 Main Texts – Ps 19; Rom 1; Rom 2; Acts 14; Acts 17
 - There *are* others
 - Core Idea: revelation that is not salvific—not sufficient for bringing about saving knowledge of God. However, it is sufficient for accountability such that no one is without excuse.

Summary

- It seems that natural revelation discloses to all humans, regardless of time or place, that God exists along with some of his attributes (eternity, wisdom, power, goodness) an awareness of what is right and wrong in God's world, and that we have done wrong with the accompanying sense of guilt.

Special Revelation

- Ironically, “special revelation” is simultaneously:
 - Broader than natural revelation in that it addresses more issues
 - Narrower than natural revelation in that its content has more specific intent and is not available to everyone, everywhere at all times.
- Forms of Special Revelation
 - Miraculous Acts
 - Ex. 4:2-4; 14; 1 Kgs 18; 2 Kgs 20:8-11; all the miracles of Jesus, climaxing in the resurrection

Special Revelation Cont...

- Direct Verbal Communication (Direct Speech)
 - General Conversation (Gen 3:9-19; 4:9)
 - Commands (Gen 12:1; Ex. 19:21)
 - Promises (Gen. 12:2; Ex. 20)
 - Answer to Questions (Job 38-41)
 - Information about the Future (Ex. 7:3-4)
- Indirect Verbal Communication (Indirect Speech)
 - “Thus says the Lord...” “Hear the word of the Lord...”
- Theophanies
 - Theophany: The visible manifestation or appearance of God.
 - Embodied Theophanies (Gen 16:10; 17:1; 32:22-32)
 - Elemental Theophanies (Ex. 3:4-6; 13:21; 19:18; Acts 9:3)

Special Revelation Cont...

- Dreams
 - Gen 41:25; Num. 12:6; 1 Sam. 28:6; Dan. 2:3; Matt. 2:21
 - That the meaning of dreams was often not understood without interpretation does not make them less genuine revelation.
- Visions
 - Unlike dreams, visions typically occur when the subject is awake, sometimes even apparently transporting them beyond their material environment in some supernatural way.
 - Dan. 9:24-27; Ez. 37:1-14; Acts 9:10; 2 Cor. 12:1-4; Revelation

Special Revelation Cont...

- Symbols/Sign-Acts
 - Jer. 28:10; Ez. 37:15-23; Acts 21:10-11
- Jesus Christ
 - The fullest and clearest manifestation of God's nature is revealed in Jesus (Jn. 14:9; Heb. 1:1)
 - Christ revealed himself physically in history and continues to reveal himself to individuals in salvation—united with Christ (Eph. 2:6; 5:31-32; 1 Cor 6:15-17), the direct presence of the indwelling Spirit (Jn. 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:16) and new hearts (Ez. 36:26-27) with a new law “written” on them (Jer. 31:33)
 - Everything that Jesus said—even those things not recorded—can rightly be considered special revelation (Lk. 24:27; Jn. 21:25)

Special Revelation Cont...

- Private Experience
 - Matt. 10:19; Acts. 19:21; Rom. 8:16
 - Private experience, like illumination (see below) is always to be regarded as *epistemically* submissive to God's word and evaluated as such (1 Kgs 13:11-22; 2 Cor 11:14; Gal. 1:8).
- God's Written Word
 - God's own finger (Ex. 20; Dan. 5:5; John 8:8)
 - The Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12) – **This will be the principal subject of this course**
 - Barth: Scripture is only a historical witness *to* revelation, but one through which God can choose to manifest himself in a special way to readers—it is in those cases in which Scripture itself becomes the Revealed Word.
 - What is helpful and what is unhelpful about Barth's analysis?

Does Revelation Still Happen Today?

- The Tension
 - “No”
 - Seems to lock God out of his own world
 - “Yes”
 - Seems to open the door to “authoritative” commands or necessary information not contained in Scripture, but on the same level as Scripture
- A Quick Sketch for Now
 - Nuance is key
 - Natural revelation?
 - Yes
 - Special Revelation? – Depends on which kind
 - Scripture?
 - No

Does Revelation Still Happen Cont...

- Miracles?
 - Yes
- Dreams/Visions?
 - Yes
- Authoritative Prophecy
 - No
- Personal Insight from the Scriptures
 - Yes
 - This is *illumination*, not *revelation*, though.
- Private Conviction?
 - Yes
 - Conscience, conviction, intuitions
- Due to our own depravity, warped desires and broken cognitive faculties, illumination—which we will discuss much more later—is always to be regarded as *epistemically* submissive to Scripture, including when the illumination comes through reading Scripture itself.