

# How We Got Our Bible

A Thought in the Mind of God
<b>Revelation</b>
A Thought in the Mind of the Human Author of Scripture
<b>Inspiration</b>
Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek Autographs of the Bible
<b>Canonicity</b>
Collected 66 Books of the Bible
<b>Preservation</b>
Manuscripts and Ancient Versions of the Bible
<b>Textual Criticism</b>
Modern Editions of the Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek Bible
<b>Translation</b>
English Versions of the Bible
<b>Interpretation</b>
Thought in the Mind of the Bible Reader
<b>Application</b>
Action in the Life of the Reader
<b>Archaeology</b>
Confirmation in the Heart of the Believer

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A thought in the mind of God

> REVELATION >

A thought in the mind of the human  
author of Scripture

**QUESTION:** How were God's thoughts relayed from His mind to the mind of the Bible authors?

**ANSWER:** By revelation.

### I. Definitions of (Biblical) Revelation

- A. Broad definition: (God's) communication of information to others (his creatures)
- B. Narrow definition: the supernatural disclosure from God to man of truth otherwise unknowable
- C. Question: Is the Bible 100% revelation?
  - 1. Broad definition: Yes. All of it is God's communication with His creatures.
  - 2. Narrow definition: No. Some of the Bible's truths can be learned in other ways.
- D. Technical definition: "Revelation" is a Latin (*revelatus*) derivation of a Greek noun *apocalupsis*, meaning "disclosure, unveiling"; a related verb is *apocaluptô*, "to reveal."
- E. Usage: The Greek noun/verb words are used as followings.
  - 1. The revelation of truth generally.
    - a) Romans 16:25 "the **revelation** of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages."
    - b) Luke 2:32 "A light of **revelation** to the Gentiles, and ... to Israel."
  - 2. The divine revelation of certain supernatural secrets.
    - a) Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21 "I thank you, Father... that you have hidden these things from the wise ... and **revealed** them to children."
    - b) 1 Peter 1:12 "It was **revealed** to them (i.e., the prophets) that they were serving not themselves but you ..."
  - 3. Revelations of a particular kind, through visions, etc.
    - a) Galatians 1:12 "For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a **revelation** of Jesus Christ."
    - b) Revelation 1:1; Ephesians 3:3; 1 Cor 2:4; 14:6, 26; 2 Cor 12:1, 7
  - 4. Eschatological revelation of secrets belonging to the last days.
    - a) Romans 2:5 "... when God's righteous judgment will be **revealed**."
    - b) 1 Peter 1: 7, 13; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Romans 8:19.

### II. The NEED for Revelation

- A. God is incomprehensible.
  - 1. Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
  - 2. 1 Corinthians 1:25 "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."
- B. Human intuition is inadequate for us to gain a detailed understanding of God, His creation, and His plan for mankind.
  - 1. A curtain separated the outer chamber of the tabernacle and temple from the inner Holy of Holies. **Hebrews 9:2-3, 6-7** *For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a*

## REVELATION - 2

second section called the Most Holy Place. 6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, 7 but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

2. A veil (*kalumma*) hinders mankind's perception of God. **2 Corinthians 3:13-16**. ... not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. <sup>14</sup> But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup> Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. <sup>16</sup> But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.
3. We can only see a dim reflection of God's glory. **1 Corinthians 13:12**. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.
4. Human reason is inadequate. **1 Corinthians 1:21**. For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.
5. Conclusion: We need revelation from God.

### III. Revelation Types

<b>General Revelation</b>	External - nature (God's creation)
	Internal - human conscience
<b>Special Revelation</b>	Written Word - the Bible
	Living Word - Jesus Christ

#### A. General Revelation

1. Definition. "General revelation is the self-disclosure of God that is given to every human being through nature and the conscience. General revelation includes the evidence for faith in God apart from Christ and the Bible."
2. External revelation: evidence from creation and logical "proofs" for the existence of God.
  - a) Two basic arguments
    - (1) The teleological argument of '**intelligent design**' and **purpose** in the universe.
    - (2) The teleological argument is present in various passages of Scripture.

**(a) Psalm 19:1-4 (+5-6)**

*The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

<sup>2</sup> *Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.*

<sup>3</sup> *There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.*

<sup>4</sup> *Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.*

*In them he has set a tent for the sun,*

REVELATION - 3

<sup>5</sup> *which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,  
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.*

<sup>6</sup> *Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them,  
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.*

**(b) Romans 1:18-23**

*18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

- b) The Bible does not attempt to prove that God exists; God's existence was axiomatic for the Bible authors - the starting point to discuss the dealings of God with humans in nature.
- c) *Summary.* No argument for the existence of God is "fool proof." There is no way to prove beyond doubt that God exists.
  - (a) Blaise Pascal thought that the evidence for or against the existence of God is 50/50. If not so, then "salvation by **faith**" might be in jeopardy. **Romans 8:24-25** states "*For in this **hope** we were saved. Now **hope that is seen is not hope**. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*"
  - (b) The paradigm below lays out options for faith and the existence of God.

	God exists	God doesn't exist
I believe in God.	I go to heaven.	I live morally, doing good to others.
I don't believe in God.	I go to hell.	I live without regard to morals and/or to others.

3. External revelation: God's creation

- a) External evidence in nature. It is constant, universal, reaches everyone, does not fail, and speaks of God's greatness by means of his works. **Psalm 19:1-6**. *[printed above]*
- b) External evidence from life's blessings. The good things we enjoy in life show us that God, the Creator, is good and loves us. **Acts 14:15-17**. "*Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.*"

## REVELATION - 4

4. Internal revelation: human conscience
  - a) Evidence from human cultures. The idea of God is almost universal - humans are aware of God's existence. Paul made use of this information in **Acts 17:23-29**.

*<sup>23</sup> For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. <sup>26</sup> And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, <sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup> for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' <sup>29</sup> Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.*
  - b) Evidence from human conscience - the inward sense of right and wrong that God gives to all people. The consciences of unbelievers is evidence of God's law on the hearts of all humans. See **Romans 2:14**.
5. Purpose of general revelation: Humans are without excuse before God. **Romans 1:18-20**.<sup>18</sup> *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,<sup>[a]</sup> in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse.*
  - a) God has made the effort to reveal himself in a way that is clearly visible to all people(s).
  - b) People who reject the knowledge of God are subject to God's wrath.
  - c) God's great power and divine nature revealed in his creation so that people who reject God are without excuse.

### B. Special Revelation

1. Definition: Special Revelation is God's communication to man which is found (1) in the Bible and (2) in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Note **John 5:39**. *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.*
2. The Need for Special Revelation
  - a) Man's Fallenness: Humans have willingly corrupted God's revelation in nature and have seared their consciences. **Romans 1:21-23**.<sup>21</sup> *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*
  - b) Revelation's Complexity: God's truth is complex; humans are prone to miss it.
    - **Jeremiah 17:9**. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*
    - **Isaiah 55:8**. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,*

## REVELATION - 5

*declares the LORD.*

- c) Special Revelation's Objectivity: Written revelation eliminates the subjectivity of a mere person-to-person encounter.
  - d) Written Revelation's Permanence: Revelation in nature is non-verbal, non-propositional. Revelation from our conscience is easily ignored and subjectively interpreted. God's written Word is propositional, can be objectively interpreted, and has a permanent quality.
    - **John 4:23-24.** *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*
3. The Written Word: Bible (Scriptures)
- a) Evidence for Special Revelation. How do we know that the Bible is revelation from God?
    - (1) The Bible claims to be revelation from God.
      - (a) 'Thus says the Lord (God),' or equivalent expressions are found about 3,800 times in Scripture.
      - (b) Words attributed to a human author in one place are attributed to God in another place in Scripture. E.g., **Psalm 104:4** (written by a human writer) is cited in **Hebrews 1:7**, "... he (God) says, 'He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.' "
      - (c) **Hebrews 1:1-2** *In the past **God spoke** to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.*
    - (2) The evidence supports this claim.
      - (a) The unit of the Bible - 100s of themes, 40 authors, over 1500 years. Yet there is a sustained unity of its subject, teachings, and solution to man's problem of sin."
      - (b) Evidence of its accuracy in regard to historical and scientific data.
      - (c) Evidence of fulfillments of its prophecies.
      - (d) Evidence of its moral and ethical teachings.
      - (e) Evidence of its survival from attacks: e.g., Roman 10th Legion, Emperor Diocletian, Voltaire, etc.
    - (3) The means used by God to deposit special revelation.
      - (a) Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; Ps 91:1-2 - the names of God
      - (b) Exodus 6:7 - God's mighty acts in history
      - (c) Exodus 31:18; Daniel 5 - the finger of God
      - (d) Numbers 22:28 - a pack animal speaking
      - (e) 1 Samuel 28:6 - the Urim and Thumim
      - (f) Proverbs 16:33; Jonah 1; Acts 1:21-26 - casting of lots
      - (g) Ezekiel 1:26-28 - a theophany (i.e., appearance of God)
      - (h) Daniel 7:1 - dreams
      - (i) Amos 5:8 - God's created works in nature
      - (j) Zechariah 1:7, 8 - visions
      - (k) Acts 7:38; Galatians 3:19 - angels
      - (l) 1 Cor 14:6 - tongues-speaking
  - b) The purposes of Special Revelation.
    - (1) Salvation. **2 Timothy 3:15.** *How from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred*

## REVELATION - 6

writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- (2) Other related purposes. **2 Timothy 3:16-17.** *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

### 4. The Living Word: Jesus Christ

#### a) The Scriptures speak of Jesus Christ.

- **John 5:39.** *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.*
- **Matthew 5:17.** *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

#### b) Jesus Christ is the latest and greatest revelation of God. E.g., we are created 'in God's image.'

Jesus Christ is the **very image** of God.

- **Hebrews 1:1-3.** *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

#### c) Jesus' relationship with God is superior to the relationship enjoyed by any other human being - including Abraham, Moses, David, John the beloved, Peter, Paul, and other Bible luminaries.

#### d) Jesus is the only human to have ever been in the 'bosom of the Father.'

- **John 1:18.** *No one has ever seen God; the only God,<sup>[a]</sup> who is at the Father's side,<sup>[b]</sup> he has made him known.*

#### e) Jesus was/is God in the flesh.

- **John 14:11.** *Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.*

#### f) Jesus was the only person to experience death and permanent resurrection in a glorified body.

- **1 Corinthians 15:19[-23].** *If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. <sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

### C. Personal Revelation?

#### a) Do individuals receive special revelation today? If so, under what conditions?

#### b) The Bible emphasizes that it is the main source of revelation about God and Jesus Christ, an objective source of revelation. Private revelation is subjective, so the Bible warns us to test it.

- **1 John 4:1.** *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

#### c) A good rule to remember is: *No genuine revelation from God will contradict the teaching of Scripture.* We should seek God's wisdom.

- **James 1:5-8.** *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that*

## REVELATION - 7

*person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

- d) God has revealed Himself (1) *verbally* through the written Word of God, (2) *visibly* and *bodily* through Christ's dwelling among humans, and (3) *personally* through our experience of His leading in our lives.

### D. Comparison of revelation types.

1. GENERAL REVELATION - is available to all people via God's creation.
  2. SPECIAL REVELATION - is available to readers of the Bible.
  3. PERSONAL REVELATION - is important mainly to the recipient.
- 2 Corinthians 4:4 *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
  - Romans 2:14 *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.*
  - Luke 10:21-23 *In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 22 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to **reveal** him."*



## REVELATION - 8

### IV. The character of the Bible as Special Revelation.

- A. It is **anthropic**, i.e., marked by human characteristics throughout: human languages, human modes of revelation, human analogies, etc.
- B. It is **remedial**. It would never have been needed if not for the fall.
- C. It is **personal**. It has an addressee ("pro me", Luther). 1 Cor 9:10
  - **Deuteronomy 6:7** *You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*
  - **1 Corinthians 9:9-10** *For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.' Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak certainly **for our sake**? It was written **for our sake**, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.*
- D. It is **definite**: the Bible is revelation; some other things are not revelation.
- E. It is **limited**. Its subject matter is not biochemistry, nuclear physics, etc.
- F. It is **authoritative**. Its teachings command obedience.
- G. It is **clear**. An ordinary human being can interpret its message using normal rules of interpretation.
- H. It is **sufficient**. It contains all things necessary for salvation and godly living.
- I. It is **self-authenticating**. It needs no external authority to confirm that it is God's Word.
  - **1 John 5:7-11** *For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup> the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. <sup>9</sup> We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. <sup>10</sup> Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*
- J. It is **mysterious**. The love of God transcends our understanding.
- K. It is **perfect**. It is blameless (*tamim*) and tested (*tserupha*).
  - **Psalms 19:17a** *The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul.*