

BC 3 – God’s Special Revelation

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: We have already seen that God speaks through natural revelation; he speaks through the order, wonder, and power of nature. God’s natural revelation is evident to everyone. Natural revelation is so clear that if a man does not seek out God after seeing it, he is rightly condemned to hell. We then introduced Special Revelation from God. Special revelation filled in what natural revelation could not do.

But how did this Special Revelation come into existence and what are the details of what it says? This is what you will hear about today.

Our headings are:

The Word of God – the Source

The Word of God - the Means

The Word of God – the Message

Our goals are: That you will **recognize that God greatly loves you and gave his Word to you** and that you therefore **make it the greatest goal in your life to read, meditate on, fully understand, and obey God’s Word.**

Belgic Confession of Faith Article 3? Let’s read together!

We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but that men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit, as the apostle Peter says; and that afterwards God, from a special care which He has for us and our salvation, commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed word to writing; and He Himself wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

The Word of God – the Source

1. God spoke through or to men he chose through dreams, visions, angels, prophets, Theophanies, and providential circumstances.

Many of these things God spoke were written down. These writings which were preserved by God are included in the Bible.

2. Consider for a minute these 5 ways of special revelation in the past.

a. Dreams. They came during sleep and had to be interpreted. Eg. Abraham dreamed of a torch passing through the cut pieces of animal. Genesis 15.

b. Visions. These were visual images about what was occurring or would occur. The person seeing the vision could be asleep or not. Ezekiel had visions of what God would do to Judah and where they would go into captivity. He saw God’s glory departing from the temple. No interpretations were usually necessary.

c. Angels. These were Divine messengers from God to man. Angels (and Jesus as an angel)

appeared to Daniel and spoke to him.

d. Prophets. They relayed messages they received from God. A prophet was not limited to addressing future events.

Hebrews 1:1-2b - God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,

e. Theophanies. These were “God-appearances,” like when God appeared to Abraham at his tent door, or to Jacob.

Genesis 28:12-13 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: **“I am the LORD God** of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

Another theophany is when the Lord came down on Mt. Sinai and spoke to Moses and gave him the 10 commands.

Providential circumstances (miracles, etc.) appear throughout Scriptures. This was an indirect way in which God spoke.

3. You must believe that God is the source of the Bible.

You can see that God is the source of the Bible when you look at its majesty, truthfulness, and its self-authentication.

If you don’t believe God is the source of the Bible, **you won’t take it seriously.** (Who would take it seriously if I spoke to you about astrophysics?) If you do believe God is the source of the Bible, you will learn it well so you can use it properly.

The Word of God – the Means

1. Throughout the ages God moved godly men to speak and write his Word; God did this through his Holy Spirit.

1Peter 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

2. Those men who were moved felt compelled to write.

Jeremiah, for instance, wanted to stop speaking God’s Words (prophecies) because men tried to kill him. His feeling was strong, so much so that he wished he were not born. Yet, **he and Amos could not stop doing what God wanted him to do.**

Jeremiah 20:7-9 **O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I,** and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me.⁸ For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, “Violence and

plunder!" Because the word of the LORD was made to me A reproach and a derision daily. 9 Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name." But His **word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones**; I was weary of *holding it back, And I could not.*

Amos 3:7-8 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, **Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.** A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The **Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?**

3. God wanted men to write down what he spoke because a written account is durable and reliable.

A writer might die, but his words live on. **That reliability was important to preserving truth – truth man so badly needed.** Consider what happens when a story is orally transmitted sequentially to 20 persons. Do you realize how much truth is lost? ("Chinese Whisper") The fact that God had his Word written down is evidence of God's graciousness to you. **God wants you to keep his words and refer to it over and over again.** Each generation has his truth.

4. This whole process of God giving his Word through men is called "inspiration."

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

Inspiration means "God breathed" – the Words were breathed out by God.

5. But how did God move men to write?

God organically inspired men to write. (In Organic Inspiration God used human authors, each with his own particular talents, experiences, education, struggles, feelings, gifts, vocabulary, circumstances, and temperament to write down His Word. At the same time, the Holy Spirit illumined their minds, helped their memory, stimulated them to write, suppressed the influence of sin on their writings, and guided them in the expression of their thoughts even to the words they chose, so that they wrote exactly what God wanted. One cannot, then, separate God's Word and man's word in the Bible. Luke was a doctor and this was shown in his details about medical conditions. **You can see the simplicity in the writings of Peter** - a fisherman and the complexity of Paul's. Mark, having Gentiles connections, wrote to Gentiles. Amos, a farmer, spoke of wild figs, bulls, cows, grain, and wine.

6. There are some false theories about inspiration you must identify.

1. The Mechanical Theory of Inspiration. (Think of robots.) This theory, promoted especially in the days following the Great Reformation, claim that human authors were like mere 'typewriters' moved by God to write down what he wanted without any other use of human faculties. The problem with this theory is that human feelings are in fact quite evident in the Bible: e.g. the Psalms of David clearly speak of his struggles, emotions, and problems.

2. The Dualistic Theory of Inspiration. This is embraced by some Pentecostals. This theory claims that the Holy Spirit is the actual author of those **parts of Scripture dealing generally with religion**, but human authors wrote those **parts of Scripture dealing with history, geography, and human emotions**. So, they argue, the Bible consists of 2 parts: writings from God and writings from people. But who determines which writings are of the Spirit and which writings are of human origin? This theory is good for those who want to manipulate the Scriptures.

3. The Dynamic Theory of Inspiration. This theory claims that the Bible was written by human authors who lived very close to God and who knew God very well and consequently they wrote down their thoughts of God. But this makes the **Bible essentially a collection of books written by man**, a collection of human thoughts. This is like what the United Church teaches.

4. The Actualistic Theory of Inspiration. According to this theory the Bible *is* not the Word of God, but *can become* the Word of God when one reads it and is taken in by what he reads. Only when the written word does something to the reader, touches him, is he able to say of that that portion is the Word of God. The problem with this theory is that the work of the Holy Spirit is moved **from the time the author wrote the Bible book to the time the reader reads the Bible book**. Neo-orthodoxy embraces a similar view.

8. You must believe that God gave his message by his Holy Spirit who inspired men to write.

If you don't, you will be open to anyone's writing and put them on an equal footing with God's revelation. And where will that leave you? How can you know how to properly praise God? How can you trust that which the Holy Spirit did not inspire?

The Word of God – The Message

1. The Word of God came to man because of God's love for man.

God needed nothing from man. God simply gave man his Word because God is gracious. God owed no man anything!

2. God's love for man which is expressed in his Word, leads to man's salvation.

No man would know his sin or how he is set free from his sin without the Word of God. Natural revelation falls short!

John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**

3. God's love for man, shown in his Word, leads to man's sanctification.

Jesus directly prays his disciples may be sanctified, set apart from sin, made clean by the Word of God more and more each day.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your word is truth.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 all Scripture is given... that the man of God may be

complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4. These same truths were written for your benefit...so you can enjoy God's salvation and sanctification.

So you must believe this message of God's salvation found in his Word. If you don't, you have no hope of salvation. You will be lost forever.

5. You must spread this message to the world as the world has no hope without this message.

You can dig wells, build hospitals, and provide clean water. You can build homes so people don't live in tents or on the streets. You can teach children to read so they are not illiterate. But if they don't have the message of Bible, while they may have many comforts and conveniences in this life, they will spend eternity in hell.

Conclusion:

The Bible came from God through Divine inspiration. The Bible speaks of God's plan for saving and sanctifying man through Jesus Christ.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. What are you doing with God's love letter to you? How well do you know it? Do you place it on a table or keep it in your car? If you use it correctly, you will grow in grace. If you are not using it correctly you will be spiritually malnourished. You won't grow in your faith. Are you spiritually malnourished?

2. What should you do with God's Word? Desire God's Word. Psalm 19:9b-11 - The judgments (the first 5 books of the Bible) of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold... by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. **Meditate on God's Word.** Say: "Oh, how I love Your law (the Bible)!" It is my meditation all the day. Get help when you need to understand something in it. **Listen to preaching of God's Word.** Listen to the sermon again on the internet if you didn't fully understand it. **Discuss the Word the pastor preaches with your wife and children.** **Obey God's Word.** **Tell God's Words to others so they can learn of his salvation.** **Give God's Words to others.**

Finally, what sadness if someone refuses to open God's love letter and never learn of salvation and sanctification! Is this you? If so, you still have some time today to begin to open God's Word and learn of his love for sinners. He died to set sinners free from God's condemnation.