

# Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 7, External/Internal General Revelation Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 7, External/Internal General Revelation, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Peterson's lecture explores the concept of God's general revelation, examining both its external manifestation in creation and its internal presence in human conscience. He analyzes biblical passages like Romans 1:18-25 and John 1:3-9 to illustrate how God's power and divine nature are evident through the created world. The lecture further investigates Romans 1:32 and 2:12-16, focusing on the innate moral awareness within humanity, suggesting that even without explicit knowledge of God's law, people possess an understanding of right and wrong. **Despite this universal revelation, Peterson notes humanity's tendency to suppress this truth and their consequent accountability before God.** The lecture distinguishes general revelation from special revelation and anticipates further discussion on its theological implications and practical outworkings.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Revelation & Scripture).**



Peterson\_Rev\_Sessi  
on07.mp3

### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 7, External/Internal General Revelation

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on General Revelation

**Overview:** This briefing document summarizes the key themes and arguments presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 7 of his teaching on "Revelation and Holy Scripture." This session focuses on God's general revelation, exploring both its external manifestation in creation (Romans 1:18-25 and John 1:3-9) and its internal manifestation in the human heart (Romans 1:32 and 2:12-16).

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### 1. External General Revelation (Romans 1:18-25):

- **Definition and Mode:** God's invisible attributes, specifically his eternal power and divine nature, are clearly revealed through creation. The mode of this revelation is God's created world itself.
- **Quote:** "His invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen and understood by what he has made." (p. 1, quoting Romans 1:20)
- **Content:** The content of this revelation points to God as the powerful and divine creator.
- **Quote:** "...the content is God's eternal power and divine nature, connoting that God is the creator and is awesome, powerful, and divine." (p. 1)
- **Timing and Extent:** This revelation has been constant since the creation of the world and is universal in its reach, extending as far as creation itself.
- **Human Response:** While God's truth is made known, evident, shown, clearly seen, and understood, humanity actively suppresses this truth due to their unrighteousness. They fail to glorify God or show gratitude, leading to darkened hearts and foolish thinking.
- **Quote:** "Although God makes his revelation known to them, they do not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened." (p. 2)

- **Consequences:** This suppression of truth leads to God's righteous judgment, including revealing his wrath, considering humanity "without excuse," and abandoning them to idolatry and moral depravity.
- **Quote:** "As a result, God justly judges sinners... He regards them, verse 20, as without excuse." (p. 2)
- **Comparison with Psalm 19:** While both passages discuss general revelation, Psalm 19 does so within the context of God's covenant people who also have special revelation, and their response involves worship and joy. Romans 1, however, highlights that all people are "without excuse" and in need of the gospel.

## 2. External General Revelation (John 1:3-9):

- **The Word as Agent:** The prologue of John's Gospel reveals that the Son of God, referred to as "the Word," was God's agent in creation.
- **Quote:** "All things were made through him, and without him, nothing was made." (p. 3, quoting John 1:3)
- **Life and Light:** Eternal life resided in the Word, and this life was the light of humanity, representing God's revelation shining on humankind through creation.
- **Quote:** "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." (p. 5, quoting John 1:4)
- **Continuity and Opposition:** This general revelation in creation has continued since the beginning, but the "darkness" (representing the fallen world) has not overcome it.
- **Quote:** "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it..." (p. 6, quoting John 1:5 with a preferred translation)
- **The Incarnation:** The passage uses a chiasm (inverted parallelism) to emphasize the incarnation of the eternal Son, who was the Word and the Light, coming into the world.
- **John's Contribution:** John adds to the understanding of general revelation by highlighting that the Son of God is the agent of this self-disclosure, that it is continual, opposed by the world but cannot be extinguished.

### 3. Internal General Revelation (Romans 1:32 and 2:12-16):

- **Knowledge of God's Decree:** Even those who practice wickedness know God's righteous decree that such actions deserve death. This knowledge stems from the law of God written on their hearts.
- **Quote:** "Though 1:32 of Romans, though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die..." (p. 8)
- **Law Written on the Heart:** Gentiles, who do not have the Mosaic Law, by nature do what the law requires, demonstrating that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their conscience also bears witness to this internal moral standard.
- **Quote:** "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, it means of Moses, the Torah, by nature do what the law requires. They are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law." (p. 11, quoting Romans 2:14)
- **Conscience as Witness:** The conscience, along with conflicting thoughts that accuse or excuse, serves as a witness to this internal law.
- **Judgment According to Works:** God will judge individuals according to their works, which reveal whether or not they have responded to God's revelation (both general and special).
- **Universality:** This internal general revelation is not limited to believers but is present in every human heart, even after the Fall. It is linked to humanity being created in original holiness and righteousness with a moral component.
- **Conscience's Limitations:** While conscience serves as a guide, it can be abused and is not an infallible guide on its own.

#### Key Differences and Connections:

- Romans 1 focuses on the external revelation in creation and humanity's negative response, leading to condemnation.
- John 1 highlights the role of the pre-incarnate Christ (the Word and Light) as the agent of external revelation from the beginning.
- Romans 2 shifts to internal revelation, demonstrating that even without the Mosaic Law, people have a moral awareness imprinted on their hearts, holding them accountable.

- Both external and internal general revelation serve to show humanity's knowledge of God and their accountability to Him. However, general revelation alone is insufficient to lead sinners to saving faith.

**Further Steps:**

Dr. Peterson indicates that he will further develop a theology of general revelation by integrating these concepts and examining other relevant passages (Acts 14 and 17 on providence) to understand the timing, place, content, and results of general revelation.

**Conclusion:**

Session 7 provides a detailed examination of God's general revelation as presented in Romans 1, John 1, and Romans 2. Dr. Peterson emphasizes that God has clearly revealed himself through creation and has also placed a moral awareness within the hearts of all people. While this revelation makes humanity accountable to God, it is ultimately insufficient for salvation, highlighting the necessity of special revelation through the Gospel.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 7, External/Internal General Revelation

### Study Guide: General Revelation

#### Key Concepts:

- **General Revelation:** God's communication of himself to all people at all times through creation and the human conscience.
- **External General Revelation:** God's revelation through the created order (nature, the cosmos, humanity itself as a created being).
- **Internal General Revelation:** God's revelation through the moral law imprinted on the human heart and conscience.
- **Suppression of Truth:** Humanity's active rejection and disregard of the truth about God revealed through general revelation.
- **Accountability:** The state of being responsible to God based on the knowledge of him received through general revelation.
- **Incarnation:** The act by which the eternal Son of God became human in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **The Word (Logos):** A title used for the second person of the Trinity, particularly in John's Gospel, highlighting his role in creation and revelation.
- **Light:** A metaphor in John's Gospel representing God's revelation and the life found in the Word.
- **Conscience:** The internal awareness of right and wrong, reflecting the moral law written on the heart.
- **Justification by Works:** The false doctrine that salvation is earned through human actions and obedience to the law.
- **Justification by Grace:** The biblical teaching that salvation is a free gift from God received through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from human works.

#### Quiz:

1. According to Romans 1:20, what are the two primary attributes of God that are clearly seen through creation? What does the constant timing and universal extent of this revelation imply for humanity?

2. In what key way does Paul's discussion of general revelation in Romans 1 differ in context and emphasis from the presentation of God's revelation in Psalm 19?
3. How does Romans 1 describe humanity's typical response to God's external general revelation? What are the consequences of this response according to the passage?
4. Explain how John 1:3-5 describes the role of the "Word" in creation and as the "light of men." How does this relate to the concept of general revelation?
5. What does the prologue of John's Gospel (John 1:1-18) reveal about the "Word" before his incarnation? What is the significance of John referring to Jesus as the "Word" and the "light"?
6. According to the lecture, what are the four key aspects that John's Gospel adds to our understanding of general revelation?
7. How does Romans 1:32 provide a transition to the discussion of internal general revelation? What does this verse suggest about humanity's inherent moral awareness?
8. Summarize Paul's argument in Romans 2:14-15 regarding Gentile believers who do not have the Mosaic Law. What does this imply about the nature of God's moral law?
9. Explain the two different scholarly interpretations discussed regarding Romans 2:13 and whether it teaches justification by works. What is the common theological agreement despite the differing exegetical views?
10. How does the analogy of a person hiding in a dark cave illustrate the concept of internal general revelation? What aspect of human existence serves as this internal witness?

**Answer Key:**

1. Romans 1:20 states that God's eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen through creation. The constant timing (since creation) and universal extent (as far as creation reaches) imply that all humanity has always had access to this revelation and is therefore accountable to God.
2. Psalm 19 speaks of general revelation in the context of God's covenant people who have also received special revelation (the Law), and their response includes worship and joy. Romans 1, however, emphasizes that general revelation leaves

all people "without excuse" and highlights their negative response and need for salvation.

3. Romans 1 describes humanity's typical response as actively suppressing the truth about God, failing to glorify him or give thanks, and exchanging his glory for idols. The consequences include God's wrath, regarding them as without excuse, and abandoning them to idolatry and moral depravity.
4. John 1:3-5 states that all things were made through the "Word," indicating the Word's role as God's agent in creation. The "life" in the Word was the "light of men," suggesting that the Word, even before incarnation, revealed God through the created order, offering a form of general revelation to humanity.
5. Before his incarnation, the prologue reveals that the "Word" was with God and was God, the agent of creation, and the source of life that served as the light of humanity. Referring to Jesus as the "Word" emphasizes his eternal nature and role in revealing God, while "light" highlights his role as the bringer of divine truth and life.
6. John adds that the Son of God is the agent of God's self-disclosure, that revelation is continual, that it is opposed by the world, and that it cannot be extinguished by its opponents.
7. Romans 1:32, which notes that people know God's righteous decree that those who practice certain sins deserve to die yet still do them and approve of others who do, suggests an inherent awareness of God's moral standards, setting the stage for the discussion of the law written on the heart in Romans 2.
8. Paul argues that when Gentiles, who do not have the Mosaic Law, by nature do what the law requires, they demonstrate that the work of the law is written on their hearts, and their conscience acts as a witness, either accusing or excusing them. This implies that God's moral law is universally known and inherent in human nature.
9. One interpretation suggests that "doers of the law" refers to those saved by grace who then obey God. The other interpretation sees it as an impossible standard, highlighting humanity's inability to achieve righteousness through works. Despite this, there is theological agreement that salvation is by grace alone through faith, and good works are a result of salvation, not a means to it.
10. The person in the dark cave, trying to escape external revelation, still hears their own heart beating, illustrating that even the human body itself, particularly the



inherent moral awareness within ("the law of God written on the heart"), serves as a form of inescapable internal general revelation.

### **Essay Format Questions:**

1. Analyze the relationship between external general revelation (as described in Romans 1 and John 1) and internal general revelation (as described in Romans 2). How do these two forms of revelation work together, and what are their limitations in leading humanity to a saving knowledge of God?
2. Discuss the concept of the "suppression of truth" in Romans 1. What does it mean, according to the lecture, and what are the consequences of this suppression for individuals and society? How does John's Gospel provide further insight into this opposition to God's revelation?
3. Compare and contrast the presentation of God's revelation in Psalm 19 with that in Romans 1. What are the key similarities and differences in their context, emphasis, and the described response to God's self-disclosure?
4. Explore the significance of the prologue of John's Gospel (John 1:1-18) for understanding the concept of general revelation. How does John's description of the "Word" as the agent of creation and the "light of men" contribute to our understanding of how God reveals himself to humanity?
5. Examine the role of conscience as an aspect of internal general revelation, according to Romans 2 and the lecture. How does the conscience function as a witness to God's moral law, and what factors can affect its reliability? What is the relationship between conscience and justification by faith?

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **General Revelation:** God's universal self-disclosure to humanity through nature, history, and the human conscience, making knowledge of his existence and some of his attributes accessible to all.
- **External General Revelation:** The ways in which God reveals himself through the created order, including the natural world, the cosmos, and humanity as part of that creation.
- **Internal General Revelation:** The innate knowledge of God's moral law and the awareness of right and wrong inscribed on the human heart and reflected in the conscience.
- **Suppression of Truth:** The active and willful disregard or rejection of the truth about God that is made known through general revelation.
- **Accountability:** The state of being answerable to God for one's knowledge and actions, based on the revelation received.
- **Incarnation:** The theological doctrine that the eternal second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **The Word (Logos):** A Greek term used in philosophy and theology, adopted by John to refer to the pre-existent Son of God, emphasizing his role as the agent of creation and divine revelation.
- **Light:** A symbolic representation of divine truth, life, and revelation, particularly prominent in John's Gospel in relation to Jesus Christ.
- **Conscience:** The faculty of the human mind that discerns moral right and wrong, often seen as an inner witness to the moral law.
- **Justification by Works:** The erroneous belief that a person can achieve righteousness and salvation through their own efforts, obedience to the law, or good deeds.
- **Justification by Grace:** The biblical doctrine that salvation is a free gift from God, bestowed upon individuals through faith in Jesus Christ, entirely apart from human works or merit.

## 5. FAQs on Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 7, External/Internal General Revelation, [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on General Revelation

**1. What is "general revelation" as discussed in these sources?** General revelation refers to the ways God makes himself known to humanity through means other than specific, direct communication (like the Bible or prophetic messages). The sources primarily focus on two forms: external general revelation through creation (Romans 1:18-25, Psalm 19, John 1:3-9) and internal general revelation through the law of God written on the human heart and conscience (Romans 1:32, Romans 2:12-16).

**2. How does external general revelation manifest itself in creation according to these texts?** Romans 1:20 states that God's "invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen and understood by what he has made." This means that through observing the created world, humanity can perceive God's power, divinity, and the fact that he is the creator. This revelation has been constant since the creation of the world and is universal in its extent, reaching as far as creation itself. John 1:3-5 adds that the "Word" (understood as the pre-incarnate Christ) was God's agent in creation, and the eternal life within the Word was the "light of men," a form of God's revelation shining on humanity through creation.

**3. How does humanity typically respond to external general revelation, according to Romans 1?** Despite the clarity of God's revelation in creation, Romans 1:18-25 describes humanity's negative response. People "suppress the truth by their unrighteousness," failing to glorify God or give thanks. Their thinking becomes futile, their hearts are darkened, and they exchange the glory of God for idols, worshipping the creation rather than the creator. This willful rejection and suppression of the truth leaves them "without excuse" before God.

**4. How does John 1:3-9 contribute to the understanding of general revelation?** John's prologue presents the "Word" as the agent of creation and the source of life, which is also the "light of men." This "true light" gives light to everyone, implying a universal aspect of God's revelation through the Word, even before the incarnation. While the world largely did not recognize this light (referring ultimately to the incarnate Christ), the passage suggests a continuous revelation from God through the Word from the beginning.

**5. What is internal general revelation, and how does Romans 2 describe it?** Internal general revelation refers to God's moral law being inherently known by humanity, written on their hearts (Romans 2:15). Even Gentiles who do not have the Mosaic Law naturally do what the law requires at times, demonstrating this internal awareness of right and wrong. Their conscience also bears witness to this law, with their thoughts sometimes accusing and sometimes excusing their actions. This internal knowledge makes all people accountable to God.

**6. Does general revelation alone lead to salvation?** The sources clearly indicate that general revelation, whether external or internal, is not sufficient for salvation. Romans 1 shows that humanity suppresses external revelation, leading to judgment. While Romans 2 highlights the internal knowledge of God's law, it ultimately points to the universality of sin and the need for something more. The sources emphasize that while general revelation makes humanity aware of God's existence and moral standards, it does not, on its own, bring about saving faith.

**7. What is the role of conscience in relation to internal general revelation?** Conscience acts as a witness to the law of God written on the heart (Romans 2:15). It functions as a kind of internal barometer, sometimes affirming actions as right and sometimes condemning them as wrong. However, the conscience can be flawed and even seared through persistent sin. While it reflects the inherent moral knowledge, it is not an infallible guide and does not provide salvation.

**8. How do these sources connect general revelation to God's judgment?** Both external and internal general revelation contribute to humanity's accountability before God and his righteous judgment. Romans 1 argues that the clear revelation of God in creation leaves those who reject him "without excuse" and subject to his wrath. Romans 2 states that even those without the Mosaic Law will be judged based on their actions in light of the law written on their hearts and the witness of their conscience. Ultimately, God will render to each person according to their works, which reveal their response to the knowledge of God available to them through general revelation.