

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation and Scripture, Session 5, Revelation in the Bible Story, Revelation in Selected Texts

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Revelation and Holy Scripture. This is session 5, Revelation in the Bible Story, Revelation in Selected Texts.

We continue our lectures on God's Revelation and the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

Please pray with me. Father, thank you that you have chosen to reveal yourself to us, especially in your Son and in your Word. Teach us, we pray. Lead us in your everlasting way, we ask, for ourselves and our families. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen.

We're all familiar with the idea of revelation.

We know people who are easy to get to know and those who are not so easy to get to know. Amazingly, God is easy to get to know, for he takes the initiative and reveals himself to us. In fact, he is the revealing God who delights in making himself known.

He reveals himself to all people, both outside and inside of them. He makes himself known outside of us in the world he has made. All God's creatures bear witness to their Creator, for they are his creations.

He also reveals himself by caring for and guiding events in the world. In addition, he makes himself known to every human being, writing his law on our hearts and giving each of us a conscience. God not only reveals himself to all humans but also personally makes himself known to many.

He does this in several ways. He sometimes performs miracles in his Word to teach his people. He inspires Scripture through his prophets, who bring His Word to his people.

Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New. Best of all, God himself becomes a human being to make himself known as never before. Who could reveal God better than God? And who could reveal God to humans better than a human? The Son of God becomes a human while continuing to be God.

He's the perfect revealer of God. Jesus makes God known in Word and deed. His deeds glorify God and reveal Jesus' identity as the promised one and Savior.

He speaks God's words like no other. He so perfectly reveals God that God calls him the Word, the communication of God. God's revelation in the biblical story.

God's self-revelation begins with creation, particularly in the Garden of Eden. God reveals his power, wisdom, beauty, and more in the world and in the beautiful garden that he makes. He manifests his holiness and justice within Adam and Eve's hearts, and they obey their Maker.

God reveals his generosity and faithfulness in Providence as he gives our first parents fruits, vegetables, and grains in abundance. God made himself known before the fall, not only in general revelation but also in special revelation. Adam and Eve receive the Word of God verbally.

They also know his presence in the Garden. What effects does the fall have on God's revelation? Two things are noteworthy. First, God's original revelation is relational.

He makes himself known in various ways to Adam and Eve, who know, love, and obey him. The fall breaks that relationship, illustrated by our first parents hiding themselves from God's presence. Second, as a result of the broken relationship, God's unified revelation now appears fragmented.

God still bombards the first pair with knowledge of him from outside and within them, in history and in word and presence, but because of the effects of sin on their minds, such revelation now appears disjointed to their cloudy vision. I thank Richard Gaffin Jr. for his unpublished systematic theology notes that helped us with many of these ideas. In Christ, we enter into a personal relationship with God and recover some of the revelation's original unity.

Seeing the world as God's handiwork rather than as all there is leads us to perceive the grass as greener green and the sky as bluer blue. We heed the warnings of conscience as it works with the law written on our hearts, Romans 2:15. We view life and the future in light of God's providence.

We love God's presence in worship and esteem Christ as the one priceless pearl, the pearl of great price, Matthew 13:46. We cherish his written word and treasure it in our hearts, Psalm 119 verse 11. In our future resurrection and life on the new earth, our appreciation for God's unified revelation will be fully restored.

In fact, things will be better than they were before the fall, for as God's people, we will no longer be able to sin, and God will dwell in our midst as never before. We will rejoice in God's making himself known in a renewed creation, to perfected consciences, and in the history of eternity future. We will love the word, and we'll worship the Father, Spirit, and Incarnate Son who says, quote, I am the living one.

I was dead, but look, but behold, I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades, Revelation 1:17 and 18. Revelation in selected passages. God reveals himself in general revelations given to everyone everywhere, and in special revelations given to particular people in particular places.

In the passages below, we will see that special revelation includes historical events, such as the plagues and Exodus, in which God displays himself as a warrior and Redeemer who judges false gods and delivers his people. Jesus orients us to special revelation, teaching that humans cannot acquire it on their own but that God sovereignly gives it. It is Trinitarian in character and received by the humility of faith.

It is both propositional and personal, reflecting its giver, who is both the truth and a person. God especially reveals himself in his scriptures. Whereas God gives Old Testament revelation by the prophets, he gives New Testament revelation by his Incarnate Son, who pours out the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. God uses his word to communicate his will, to bring about new birth into a new creation, and to promote freedom, life, and flourishing.

Believers must be quick to obey the scriptures and be blessed. Our passages include Exodus 7 to 15, Matthew 11:25 to 27, Hebrews 1:1 and 2, James 1:18 to 25, and that'll do it. Exodus 7 through 15.

The Bible teaches that God's revelation comes in historical events, such as the Exodus. God reveals himself to Moses and calls him to lead his people out of Egyptian oppression into a land that God prepares for them, Exodus 3:1 through 4, 26. Moses obeyed God, urging Pharaoh to let God's people go so that they could worship him.

Pharaoh stubbornly refuses, pretentiously asking Exodus 5:2, who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? Pharaoh arrogantly increases his oppression of Israel, chapter 5, verses 4 to 20. God responds, planning both to deliver his people and to remedy Pharaoh's ignorance. He promises to redeem Israel from Egyptian bondage, 6:6. I'll bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I'll redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment, Exodus 6, 6. God sends ten dreadful plagues upon Egypt.

We see this in Exodus 7:14 through 12:32, and declares that the Lord has revealed that he is the Lord. We see it in 7:5. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them. 7:17.

By this, you shall know I am the Lord. Behold, with the staff that is in my hand, I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn to blood. And then another good example is 10 and verse 2. The Lord said to Moses in 10, 1, Go into Pharaoh, for I

have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.

Specifically, these historical events display God's power, his possession of the world, and his covenant-keeping love. In at least half of the plagues, the Lord distinguishes between Israel, Egypt, and Israel, sparing his people. We see it in Exodus 11:4 through 7, for example.

This is where God threatens the final plague. Thus says the Lord, Exodus 11:4. About midnight I will go into the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl, who is behind the hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there never has been, nor ever will be again, but not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

Wow. Pharaoh's stubborn defiance resulted in the tenth plague, the death of all firstborn males in Egypt, including Pharaoh's son, 12:29. At midnight, the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the captive, who is in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.

God graciously protects the Israelites, who obediently put a sacrifice lamb's blood on their doorposts and lintels. Because the Lord passes over Israel's homes when he comes to judge the firstborn, Israel is to celebrate the Passover as an annual feast to the Lord. Pharaoh relents and lets the Israelites go, but he quickly changes his mind and furiously chases after them.

God powerfully opens the Red Sea for his people to cross. When the Egyptians follow, God closes the water over their chariots and destroys their horsemen. 14:28, the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen of and of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea.

Not one of them remained. The Exodus is a major historical event and a major means by which God reveals himself, as Moses and Miriam's songs acclaim. In the Exodus, God judges his enemies and delivers his people.

In the Exodus, God also communicates who he is: Yahweh, the covenant Lord. He loves, protects, and remains faithful to his covenant people. In chapters 3 and 4, he is powerful over nations, leaders, false gods, and even the sea.

Exodus 9:16 and 11:9, he's the Lord over life and death. Exodus 12:29 to 32, the Exodus is a special revelation, celebrating that there is no one like Yahweh who is highly exalted, glorious, powerful, majestic, holy, and loving. God is a warrior, the Redeemer, the eternal King, mighty to save.

I fail to give these references. He's powerful over nations, leaders, false gods, even the sea. 9:16 and 11:9. The song of Moses is worthy of our attention.

Notice how God reveals himself in the Exodus, and notice how word and deed go together. The deed is a mighty revelation, but it must be interpreted for us by the words. Surely, people throughout the ancient Near East who heard of this event wouldn't conclude, oh, Yahweh is the only true and living God.

I should be circumcised and become a Jew. I don't think so. They would say something like, perhaps, huh, Israel's God, Yahweh, is stronger than the gods of Egypt, at least at this time.

Something like that. Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. This is my God.

I will praise him, my Father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is his name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts were cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them. They went down into the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, oh Lord, glorious in power. Your right hand, oh Lord, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty, you overthrow your adversaries.

You send out your fury. It consumes them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils, the waters piled up.

The floods stood up in a heap. The deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue.

I will overtake. I will divide to spoil. My desire shall have its full of them.

It's full of them. I will draw my sword. My hand shall destroy them.

You blew with your wind. The sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like you, oh Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand. The earth swallowed them. You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed.

You have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. The people have heard. They tremble.

Pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now, the chiefs of Edom are dismayed. Trembling seizes the leaders of Moab.

All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them because of the greatness of your arm. They are still as a stone to your people, oh Lord, pass by.

To the people pass by whom you have purchased. You'll bring them in and plant them on your own mountain. The place, oh Lord, which you have made for your abode.

The sanctuary, oh Lord, which your hands have established. The Lord will reign forever and ever. Miriam's song said, Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. We're taking biblical soundings of some marvelous passages that speak of God revealing himself to his people. So it was for Exodus for chapters 7 through 15.

In Matthew 11, Jesus speaks very memorable words. The context is Jesus' woes in the unrepentant cities. Then Jesus began to denounce the cities where he had done most of his mighty works because they did not repent.

Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You'll be brought down to Hades.

For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you. Here are the verses we're most interested in, Matthew 11:25 through 27.

At that time, Jesus declared, 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. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Jesus also orients us to the topic of Revelation. He denounces the lack of repentance in the Galilean cities in which he had performed many miracles. Then he burst forth in worship and depth of insight with the verses that I had read.

Praise belongs to the Trinity for its work of Revelation. I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you've hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

God the Father is the author of Revelation. He's the Revealer, verse 25 of Matthew 11. The Son is also involved, for he reveals the Father, verse 27.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. The Son is also the great subject of Revelation, Luke 24, 27. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

The Holy Spirit, too, is involved in Revelation, Luke 10:21. In the same hour, Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, have you hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to little children. Luke's version of the same episode in Matthew says Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, with that preface, we see, in Jesus' words, the Holy Spirit's participation in Revelation.

All of this points to the Trinitarian character of Revelation. Jesus shows that Revelation is also personal, for its content is knowledge of the Father and the Son, Matthew 11:27. I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you've hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the

Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. That means Revelation is necessary.

We need to know God, verse 25. Furthermore, Revelation is sovereignly given. God the Father is sovereign in revelation, verses 25 and 26 of Matthew 11, and so is the Son.

No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. God takes the initiative and makes Revelation effective. Hidden from the wise and understanding means to be beyond human ability or reason.

Humans cannot acquire Revelation on their own. Instead, we need the humility of faith. We must humble ourselves, become like little children, and trust God.

Mark 10:15. In addition, joy is a proper response to Revelation, as we saw from the Luke parallel to this passage in Luke 10 and verse 21. A third passage, a third sounding to check the depth of the waters, is Hebrews 1:1 and 2. This passage informs us how Revelation comes and relates to salvation history.

In particular, God's Revelation through the Old Testament and his Revelation in Jesus are set side by side. Hebrews 1:1 and 2. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our forefathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, whom he appointed as the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world.

He's 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, having become much superior, having become as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. The writer to the Hebrews sets up strong comparisons between the Old and New Testaments.

There's one fundamental underlying difference: similarity. Sorry, there's one fundamental underlying similarity, but there are some dissimilarities. For example, long ago is contrasted with in these last days. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers.

In the last days, God spoke to our fathers long ago. In these last days he's spoken to us. Fathers, the recipients of Old Testament Revelation, us, those who live in New Testament times, especially those who knew Jesus and the Apostles, are the recipients of New Testament Revelation in Christ and his Apostles.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. In contrast, in many portions and in many ways, at many times and in many ways, that's the Old Testament description.

The New Testament is by His Son and also by the prophets and by His Son. The words concerning the Son do double duty. I should have pointed out, first of all, that the mediators of Revelation were the prophets in the Old Covenant and the Son in the New.

But there's nothing to balance out this side of the equation to the words at many times and in many ways unless we see the words by the Son as doing double duty, which I believe they do, as Philip Hughes and F. F. Bruce and other commentators on Hebrew show. What a contrast. Long ago, in these last days, God revealed himself to the fathers, to us, by the prophets, by his Son.

At many times and in many ways, by the Son. What is the underlying fundamental similarity between Old and New Testament Revelation? Listen carefully. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. In both Testaments, God is the speaking God. He reveals himself to Old Testament people and to those who encounter Jesus and his Apostles.

And that includes us, whom God meets through the writings of Jesus' Apostles. So God is the speaking God in both Testaments. The dissimilarities are there, and they're important.

There's progress of Revelation. But the underlying similarity is awesome. God is the speaking God.

He has revealed himself. As the writer of Hebrews compares Old and New Testament Revelation, he sets forth four distinctions. He distinguishes timing, as we have seen, audience, mediators, and manner.

With regard to timing, he contrasts long ago with these last days. The Old Testament uses the expression, the last days, to point to the future. Fulfilling Old Testament expectation, Christ's coming causes the addition of the word, these.

The Old Testament says, in the last days. The writer of the Hebrews says, in these last days. The last days are the times in between the comings of Christ.

The author contrasts audiences. Old Testament Revelation came to the fathers, the patriarchs, and their descendants. New Testament Revelation comes to us, those living after the coming of the Messiah.

With regard to the mediators of Revelation, God's previous word came to the prophet by the prophets. And now he has spoken to us by his Son. Jesus is the mediator of New Testament Revelation.

The fourth contrast is implied. God manifested himself to his Old Testament people in various ways. Corresponding to this, New Testament Revelation came by the Son.

All such revelation is S-O-N hyphen revelation. Son revelation. The eternal Son is the great prophet who became flesh.

John 1:14. To reveal God as never before. After Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, he fulfills his promises to send the Spirit of truth to his disciples, to remind them of and teach them many truths.

John 14:25-26. John 15:26. John 16:13 to 15.

Acts 1:1. From heaven, Jesus has revealed the New Testament by the Holy Spirit through his apostles. The most fundamental division in the Bible story is between before and after the fall. Pre-fall and post-fall.

The fall changes everything. The second most fundamental division in the Bible story is right here in Hebrews 1:1 and 2. Old Testament and New Testament. James 1:18 through 25 is our last passage as we continue to take soundings to gauge the depth of the water, especially of God's manifesting himself in time and space.

James 1:18. Of his own will, God brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word that can save your souls. But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. In this brief section, James speaks of revelation as the word of truth, James 1:18.

The implanted word, verse 21. The word, verses 22-23. The perfect law, verse 25.

The law of freedom, verse 25. Later in the letter, James also refers to the royal law, 2:8. The law, 2:9-11. And the scripture, 2:8, 2:23, 4:5. Along the way, James stresses that the law is a unity, communicates the will of the lawgiver, and serves as the basis of judgment, 2:8-13, 4:11, and 12. James does so by incorporating Old Testament material such as that relating to Abraham, Rahab, Elijah, the prophets, Job, Exodus 20, Leviticus 19, and Deuteronomy, as well as the teachings of Jesus.

See Christopher Morgan, *A Theology of James, Wisdom for God's People*, PNR Publishing. In the passage that we read, James 1:18-25, James writes of the word of truth, associating the word with truth, which connects the word to the God who's characterized by and communicates truth, James 1, 18. God uses the word of truth to bring about the new birth into a new creation, verse 18.

Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. See also 1 Peter 1:23, James contrasts the word of truth as an instrument that leads to life, with sin as an instrument that leads, results in death, James 1:13-18. In contrast with the desire that births sin, the word of truth births believers as a new creation.

The word functions as God's seed to bring the new birth, verses 16-18, and it is God's agent by which he shapes believers, verse 21. This word, like every good and perfect gift, comes down from God and is to be received. James uses the word and the law somewhat interchangeably, and both terms appear to depict broadly the Old Testament, key ethical teachings in the Old Testament, and the new covenant promises revealed in the gospel and teachings of Jesus.

James treats word and law synonymously in 1:19-25, which begins by emphasizing the importance of doing the word and ends with a blessing on those who do the law. The word law is also the perfect law of freedom, verse 25. See also 2:12.

In continuity with Psalm 19, James highlights not only the idea of the law's perfection but also related themes of life, wisdom, joy, purity, cleanness, righteousness, and reward. The perfect law is the means to freedom, promoting life, flourishing, holiness, and service. The word also bears the authority of the God who gives it.

Because of this, believers are to be quick to listen to the word. See also Deuteronomy 6:1-9, to lay aside sin in preparation to receive it, and to receive it with meekness and to hear and do it, James 1:19-25. Believers who do the word will be blessed in their doing, verse 25.

God uses the word at the beginning, middle, and end of the Christian life, verses 18-25. At each step of the journey, God's people are to submit their thinking and lives to God's authoritative word. In our next lecture, we will take up knowing God through

his revelation, the meaning of revelation, and our need for revelation, and we will start thinking about God revealing himself through general revelation.

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