

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 6, Our Need for Revelation, Psalm 19, Romans 1 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 6, Our Need for Revelation, Psalm 19, Romans 1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert A. Peterson's session on Revelation and Scripture explores the meaning and necessity of divine revelation. He distinguishes between **general revelation**, God's disclosure to all through creation (illustrated by Psalm 19), and **special revelation**, God's specific communication to certain people (like Scripture). The session highlights humanity's need for revelation due to our finite nature and sinfulness, preventing us from fully knowing an infinite and holy God on our own. Peterson also analyzes **Romans 1:18-25**, arguing it demonstrates how humanity suppresses the truth of God evident in creation, leading to ungodliness and idolatry despite God's clear self-disclosure.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 6 – 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).**



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3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 6, Our Need for Revelation, Psalm 19, Romans 1

Briefing Document: The Meaning of and Our Need for Revelation

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented in Session 6 of Dr. Robert A. Peterson's teaching on Revelation in Holy Scripture. The session focuses on defining revelation, exploring the distinction between general and special revelation, outlining humanity's need for revelation due to finitude and sinfulness, and examining external general revelation through the lens of Psalm 19:1-6 and Romans 1:18-25.

1. Defining Revelation:

- Revelation is defined as "the disclosure or communication of knowledge, instructions, etc. by divine or supernatural means." (referencing Oxford English Dictionary).
- The English word "revelation" originates from the Latin "revelation," meaning "to unveil, uncover, lay bare," which translates the Greek "apocalypsis," also meaning disclosure.
- In the New Testament, "apocalypsis" commonly refers to the uncovering of previously hidden truths, particularly about God and his plan.
- A "biblical concept of Revelation" exists, rooted in the Old Testament view that God has made himself known in his will to Israel.
- God communicates himself through both **general revelation** and **special revelation**.

2. General vs. Special Revelation:

- **General Revelation:** Defined as God's self-disclosure to **all persons at all times and places**.
- Its purpose is to show **who God is in part** and make **all people accountable to him as God**.
- It is **not redemptive**.
- Manifested in three main forms: **creation, humanity, and providence**.

- **External General Revelation** specifically refers to God revealing himself outside of us in creation.
- **Internal General Revelation** (an aspect of the image of God) refers to God revealing himself in the law written on our hearts.
- **Special Revelation:** Defined as God's self-disclosure to **particular people at specific times and places**.
- Its purpose is to enable them to **enter into a redemptive relationship with him**.
- It is **redemptive**.

3. Our Need for Revelation:

- Our need for revelation is **twofold**:
- **God is infinite, and we are finite:** God is the unlimited creator, perfect and unbounded in his perfections. Scripture highlights his power and understanding (Psalm 147:5, Isaiah 40:28, Isaiah 57:15).
- Humans are finite creatures, limited in comparison to God's infinitude.
- We "would never learn knowledge of God or know him apart from his taking the initiative to communicate who he is to us."
- Even in our resurrected state, while incorruptible and glorious, we will still be God's creatures.
- **God is holy, and we are sinful:** God is proclaimed as "holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty" (Isaiah 6:3).
- Humanity is sinful, evidenced by God's wrath against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people" (Romans 1:18) and the darkening of their "senseless hearts" (Romans 1:21).
- Limited by finiteness and blinded by sin, humans "would never succeed in knowing God or the truth about him" without his revelation.
- Revelation is therefore **gracious**.

4. God Reveals Himself in Creation (External General Revelation):

- **Psalms 19:1-6:** This is considered the "Textus classicus" for the doctrine of God's revelation in creation.

- "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." (Psalm 19:1, ESV) - This signifies that creation universally reveals God's glory, beauty, and magnificence, and bears witness to him as the maker.
- "Day-to-day pours out speech, and night-to-night reveals knowledge." (Psalm 19:2, ESV) - This indicates the continuous nature of God's revelation in creation.
- "There is no voice, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." (Psalm 19:3-4, ESV) - This emphasizes the universality of general revelation.
- The description of the sun further illustrates the pervasive reach of God's revelation.
- **Key Aspects of Revelation in Creation:**
 - Mode:** God's creation itself.
 - Content:** God's glory and handiwork, implying his existence, awesomeness, power, and intelligence as the Creator.
 - Timing:** Continuous, day after day, night after night.
 - Extent:** Universal, accessible to all people who can experience creation.
 - This revelation occurs regardless of human appropriation.

5. Romans 1:18-25: The Human Response to General Revelation:

- Paul, after stating the theme of Romans as God's saving righteousness through faith (Romans 1:16-17), shifts to God's "damning righteousness" by discussing his wrath (Romans 1:18).
- "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." (Romans 1:18, ESV) - This introduces the idea that humans actively suppress a truth that is available to them.
- "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them." (Romans 1:19, ESV) - Paul asserts that God has revealed something about himself to humanity.
- "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." (Romans 1:20, ESV) - This explains

how God has revealed himself: through his creation, revealing his eternal power and divine nature. This makes humanity "without excuse" for their ungodliness.

- "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." (Romans 1:21, ESV) - This highlights humanity's sinful response: despite knowing God through general revelation, they fail to honor and thank him, leading to futile thinking and darkened hearts.
- "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things." (Romans 1:22-23, ESV) - This illustrates the consequence of suppressing the truth: idolatry.
- They "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25, ESV).
- Paul connects religious sins (idolatry) with sexual sins (especially homosexual sins in this context), noting that both touch upon core aspects of human identity as image bearers and worshippers.

Key Takeaways:

- Revelation is God's act of disclosing himself and truth to humanity.
- General revelation is universal and constant, evident in creation, humanity, and providence, making all accountable to God.
- Special revelation is particular and redemptive, enabling a relationship with God.
- Humanity's finitude and sinfulness create a profound need for God's revelation.
- Psalm 19:1-6 provides a foundational Old Testament understanding of God's external general revelation in creation, highlighting its glory, constancy, and universality.
- Romans 1:18-25 explains how humanity, despite receiving this general revelation of God's power and divine nature through creation, suppresses the truth, fails to honor God, and descends into idolatry, leaving them without excuse before God's wrath.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 6, Our Need for Revelation, Psalm 19, Romans 1

Understanding Revelation: General and Special

Quiz

1. Define revelation in a theological context, drawing from the dictionary definition and the etymology of the word as discussed in the source.
2. What is the fundamental difference between general and special revelation, as outlined in the lecture? Provide a brief example of each.
3. According to the lecture, what are the two primary reasons for humanity's need for revelation? Explain each reason in one sentence.
4. Summarize the main point of Psalm 19:1-6 regarding God's revelation. What aspect of general revelation does this passage primarily illustrate?
5. Explain how Romans 1:18-25 builds upon the concept of general revelation presented in Psalm 19. What does Romans 1 add to our understanding?
6. What does the lecture mean by the "universality" of general revelation, and how do Psalm 19 and Romans 1 support this idea?
7. According to Romans 1, what is humanity's response to general revelation, and why does this lead to God's wrath?
8. What are the three main forms of general revelation mentioned in the lecture, beyond the specific passages discussed in detail?
9. How does the lecture address the idea that even those without access to the Bible have some concept of a deity? What is the limitation of this knowledge?
10. Explain the analogy used in the lecture to describe God's general revelation and humanity's reception of it. What does this analogy illustrate?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Revelation in a theological context is the disclosure or communication of knowledge, instructions, etc., by divine or supernatural means. The English word comes from the Latin "revelation," meaning to unveil, which translates the Greek "apocalypsis," often used in the New Testament to describe the uncovering of previously hidden truths about God and his plan.

2. General revelation is God's self-disclosure to all people at all times and places, showing who he is in part and making all accountable, while special revelation is God's self-disclosure to particular people at specific times and places, enabling a redemptive relationship with him. An example of general revelation is the created order, and an example of special revelation is the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
3. Humanity needs revelation because God is infinite, and we are finite, meaning our limited nature prevents us from fully knowing an unlimited God. Secondly, we need revelation because God is holy, and we are sinful, indicating that our sinfulness blinds us to the truth about a righteous God.
4. Psalm 19:1-6 demonstrates that God reveals himself through his creation, specifically the heavens and the sky, which constantly and universally proclaim his glory and handiwork. This passage primarily illustrates the external and universal nature of general revelation through the created order.
5. Romans 1:18-25 builds upon Psalm 19 by explaining humanity's response to this general revelation; while God's power and divine nature are evident in creation, people suppress this truth and fail to honor or thank God, leading to futile thinking and idolatry. Romans 1 adds the element of human culpability and the consequences of rejecting general revelation.
6. The "universality" of general revelation means that God's self-disclosure through creation is accessible to all people, everywhere. Psalm 19 depicts the heavens' message going out through all the earth, and Romans 1 states that God has shown his invisible attributes plainly to humanity since the creation of the world, making everyone without excuse.
7. According to Romans 1, humanity's response to general revelation is to suppress the truth about God in their unrighteousness, failing to honor him or give thanks and instead engaging in futile thinking and idolatry. This rejection of the knowledge of God available through creation leads to God's wrath being revealed against their ungodliness and unrighteousness.
8. Beyond creation, the lecture mentions two other main forms of general revelation: God making himself known in humanity by creating us in his image and writing his law on the human heart, and God making himself known in providence or history.
9. The lecture notes that even primitive peoples without the Bible often have concepts of a deity, which suggests a universal awareness of God stemming from

general revelation. However, this knowledge is flawed and distorted due to sin, leading them to worship created things rather than the Creator.

10. The lecture uses the analogy of God's radio station (GOD) constantly beaming out the revelation of his attributes everywhere to everyone. The problem, however, lies in humanity's "jammed" and "messed up" receivers, which distort the message. This illustrates that while God's revelation is clear and constant, our sinful nature hinders our proper understanding and response.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the interconnectedness between Psalm 19:1-6 and Romans 1:18-25 in developing a comprehensive understanding of external general revelation. How does the New Testament passage build upon and expand the themes introduced in the Old Testament text regarding God's self-disclosure through creation?
2. Analyze the implications of humanity's need for revelation due to both finitude and sinfulness. How do these two factors contribute to our inability to know God apart from his self-disclosure, and what are the distinct challenges posed by each?
3. Evaluate the concept of the "universality" of general revelation in light of diverse cultural and historical contexts. To what extent does the claim that God has revealed himself to all people at all times and places hold true, and what are some potential limitations or complexities of this idea?
4. Explore the theological significance of the human response to general revelation as described in Romans 1:18-25. What does this passage reveal about human nature, accountability before God, and the necessity of special revelation?
5. Compare and contrast the nature and purpose of general and special revelation. How do these two forms of God's self-disclosure relate to each other, and what distinct roles do they play in God's plan for humanity?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Revelation:** The act of God disclosing or communicating knowledge of himself, his will, or truths about the world through supernatural or divine means.
- **General Revelation:** God's self-disclosure to all people at all times and places through creation, humanity (image of God, moral law), and providence, making his existence, power, and glory known in part and rendering all accountable to him.
- **Special Revelation:** God's self-disclosure to particular people at specific times and places through specific means such as the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the spoken and written Word (Scripture), and prophetic messages, enabling a redemptive relationship with him.
- **Apocalypsis:** A Greek word meaning "unveiling" or "disclosure," commonly used in the New Testament to refer to revelation, particularly the uncovering of previously hidden truths about God and his plan.
- **Textus Classicus:** A Latin term meaning "classic text," used in the lecture to refer to Psalm 19:1-6 as the foundational Old Testament passage for the doctrine of God's revelation in creation.
- **Sensus Divinitatis:** A Latin phrase, popularized by John Calvin, referring to an innate human sense or awareness of the divine existence.
- **Suppression of Truth:** In the context of Romans 1, this refers to humanity's active holding back or distorting of the truth about God that is made known through general revelation, due to their unrighteousness.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of false gods or the treating of finite things as divine, often resulting from the distortion of general revelation, as described in Romans 1.
- **Finite:** Having limits or boundaries; in the lecture, used to describe humanity's limited nature in contrast to God's infinite being.
- **Infinite:** Without limits or boundaries; in the lecture, used to describe God's unlimited perfection and attributes.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 6, Our Need for Revelation, Psalm 19, Romans 1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Understanding Divine Revelation

1. What is the basic meaning of "revelation" in a theological context?

Revelation, in a theological sense, refers to God's act of disclosing or communicating knowledge, instructions, and truths about himself and his plan to humanity through divine or supernatural means. The term derives from the Latin "revelatio" and the Greek "apocalypsis," both meaning to unveil or disclose something previously hidden. In the Bible, it signifies God making himself known in various ways.

2. What is the distinction between general and special revelation?

General revelation is God's self-disclosure to all people at all times and in all places through the created order. It reveals God's existence, power, glory, and makes all accountable to him. Examples include the natural world (Psalm 19:1-6) and the inherent understanding of right and wrong in humanity. Special revelation, on the other hand, is God's self-disclosure to particular people at specific times and places. This form of revelation is redemptive, enabling individuals to enter into a relationship with God. Examples include the Old Testament prophets, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and the written Word of God (Scripture).

3. Why do human beings need divine revelation?

Human beings have a twofold need for revelation. First, God is infinite in his being and perfections, while humans are finite creatures with limited understanding. We could never fully know or comprehend the infinite God on our own. Second, God is holy, and humanity is sinful. Sin darkens our understanding and distorts our perception of God. Therefore, God's gracious initiative to reveal himself is necessary for us to know him and the truth about him.

4. How does creation serve as a form of general revelation according to Psalm 19?

Psalm 19:1-6 describes how the heavens and the sky constantly declare the glory and handiwork of God. This revelation is universal, ongoing day and night, and accessible to all people. While the creation does not literally speak, its grandeur, orderliness, and beauty metaphorically proclaim God's power, intelligence, and existence as the Creator.

5. How does Romans 1:18-25 elaborate on the human response to general revelation?

Romans 1:18-25 explains that while God's invisible attributes, such as his eternal power and divine nature, are clearly perceived through creation, humanity suppresses this truth due to ungodliness and unrighteousness. Although people have a basic knowledge of God, they fail to honor him or give thanks, leading to futile thinking, darkened hearts, and ultimately, idolatry. This passage highlights human accountability for rejecting the revelation available to them in creation.

6. What does it mean to "suppress the truth" in the context of Romans 1?

Suppressing the truth, as described in Romans 1:18, means that despite the clear revelation of God available through creation, people actively hold it down, ignore it, or distort it through their unrighteousness. It implies a conscious or unconscious resistance to the knowledge of God that is evident in the natural world. Because this truth reaches them, they are held responsible for their rejection.

7. Why are idolatry and sexual sin linked in Romans 1 and Galatians 5 in relation to revelation?

The connection between religious sins like idolatry and sexual sins in these passages emphasizes aspects of human life that define our identity as image bearers of God. Humans are inherently religious beings created for worship, and we are also gendered beings made male and female in God's image. When people reject the true God revealed in creation, they exchange his glory for idols (a religious sin) and distort their created nature through sexual immorality. Both types of sin represent a fundamental turning away from God and a corruption of our created purpose and identity.

8. What are the limitations of general revelation?

While general revelation clearly demonstrates God's existence, power, and glory, and holds humanity accountable, it is limited in its ability to provide salvific knowledge. It reveals God as Creator and Judge but does not disclose his grace, forgiveness of sins, or the means of redemption through Jesus Christ. For this saving knowledge, special revelation, particularly the gospel message found in Scripture, is necessary.