

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 8, 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 8, Internal General Revelation, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert A. Peterson's session on Revelation and Scripture explores the concept of **general revelation, which God makes known to all people**. The lecture specifically examines **internal general revelation**, focusing on Romans 2:12-16 and Ecclesiastes 3:11, arguing that God's law is written on human hearts, influencing their moral understanding. Peterson then discusses **general revelation through providence**, analyzing Acts 14:14-18 and Acts 17:22-29 to illustrate how God reveals his attributes like generosity and guides human history. The session posits that God's revelation extends beyond special revelation (like scripture) to encompass creation, human conscience, and his active involvement in the world. Ultimately, the lecture aims to understand how God universally makes himself known and the implications thereof.

2. 9 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 8 – 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 8, Internal General Revelation

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

Subject: Review of Dr. Robert A. Peterson's Session 8 on Internal General Revelation (Romans 2:12-16, Ecclesiastes 3:11) and General Revelation in Providence (Acts 14:14-18, Acts 17:22-29)

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and arguments presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 8 of his teachings on Revelation and Holy Scripture. The session focuses on two key aspects of general revelation: internal general revelation, discerned through the law written on human hearts and conscience, and general revelation through God's providential actions in history. Dr. Peterson emphasizes that God reveals himself not only through special revelation (Scripture and his Son) but also universally to all people in all places through these general means.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Internal General Revelation (Romans 2:12-16 & Ecclesiastes 3:11):

- **Law Written on the Heart:** Dr. Peterson highlights Romans 2:14-15, stating that even Gentiles without the Mosaic Law "by nature do what the law requires," demonstrating that "the work of the law is written on their hearts." This internal moral compass allows them to discern right from wrong, with their "conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them."
- **Universal Moral Awareness:** This internal law means all human beings, saved and unsaved, possess an inherent understanding of God's moral demands. As Dr. Peterson notes regarding Romans 1:32, "though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things...deserve to die," they still engage in and approve of these actions. This presupposes the existence of the law on the heart.
- **Revelation of God's Attributes:** Internal general revelation, though imperfect due to the fall, reveals God's attributes of "holiness and justice and his work of judgment." This contrasts with external general revelation in creation, which primarily shows God's glory, beauty, power, and wisdom but not necessarily his holiness in the moral sense.

- **The Role of Conscience:** The conscience acts as an "internal meter" that judges our actions, sometimes accusing and sometimes defending us based on our internal moral principles.
- **Ecclesiastes 3:11 and the Sense of Eternity:** Dr. Peterson discusses Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He has also put eternity in their hearts." This indicates an innate human longing for something beyond the temporal, a "sense of a greater reality." However, this desire is often frustrated as humans "cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." This verse suggests a God-given awareness of transcendence and a desire for the eternal, even if incomprehensible in its totality. The NIV Study Bible quote reinforces this idea: "God's beautiful but tantalizing world is too big for us, yet its satisfactions are too small. Since we were made for eternity, the things of time cannot be fully and permanently satisfied."

2. General Revelation in Providence (Acts 14:14-18 & Acts 17:22-29):

- **God's Witness Through Historical Actions:** Dr. Peterson argues that God reveals his qualities through his providential work in history, particularly citing Acts 14 and 17 as key passages.
- **Acts 14: God's Goodness and Generosity:** In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas point to God's provision of "rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17) as evidence of his existence and goodness (interpreted as generosity and benevolence). This is a general revelation extended to all people, regardless of their beliefs. "As Jesus said, the good Lord's Father shows his goodness by giving rain to the saved and unsaved farmer."
- **Acts 17: God as Creator and Sustainer:** In Athens, Paul addresses the Areopagus, proclaiming "The God who made the world and everything in it" (Acts 17:24). This foundational truth establishes God's role as the source of "life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:25), highlighting his sustaining power (common grace).
- **God's Sovereignty Over Nations:** Paul states that God "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" (Acts 17:26). This emphasizes God's providential direction of human history, including the establishment and movement of peoples.
- **Purpose of God's Providence:** The purpose behind God's providential ordering of nations is "that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and

find him" (Acts 17:27). This suggests that God's actions in history are intended to lead humanity towards an awareness of himself.

- **Imminence of God:** Paul quotes pagan poets ("in him we live and move and have our being...for we are indeed his offspring" - Acts 17:28-29) to illustrate God's nearness to humanity, even those who do not explicitly know him.
- **Denunciation of Idolatry:** Both accounts in Acts (14 and 17) involve a confrontation with idolatry, emphasizing the contrast between the true, living God and man-made idols.

Similarities and Differences Between Internal and External General Revelation:

- **Similarity:** Both are forms of general revelation accessible to everyone. Both also "work" in that they have an effect on people (conscience, enjoyment of provisions).
- **Difference:** External general revelation (creation) reveals God's glory, power, and wisdom. Internal general revelation (law on the heart) reveals God's holiness, justice, and work of judgment.

Key Implications and Future Discussion:

Dr. Peterson concludes by highlighting the importance of these concepts and indicating that the next session will delve into the theology of general revelation, addressing crucial questions such as the possibility of salvation through general revelation alone and its relationship to Christian missions.

Quotes:

- "God reveals himself in humanity." (Regarding internal general revelation)
- "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness..." (Romans 2:14-15)
- "God's beautiful but tantalizing world is too big for us, yet its satisfactions are too small. Since we were made for eternity, the things of time cannot be fully and permanently satisfied." (NIV Study Bible on Ecclesiastes 3:11)
- "God, the creator, bears witness of himself in providence, not only in creation, not only in the law and the heart but in providence."
- "In past generations, he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways, yet he did not leave himself without witness." (Acts 14:16-17)

- "The God who made the world and everything in it, being the Lord of heaven and earth..." (Acts 17:24)
- "...that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him." (Acts 17:27)
- "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." (Acts 17:28)

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson's Session 8 provides a comprehensive overview of internal general revelation and God's revelation through providence. He effectively uses biblical passages like Romans 2, Ecclesiastes 3, Acts 14, and Acts 17 to demonstrate that God's self-disclosure extends beyond special revelation, reaching all of humanity through their inherent moral understanding and his active involvement in history. The session lays the groundwork for further theological discussion on the nature and implications of general revelation.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 8, Internal General Revelation

Study Guide: General Revelation

Quiz

1. According to Romans 2:14-15, what evidence exists that even those without the Mosaic Law possess a form of God's moral demands?
2. What two aspects of human nature does the text highlight as being revelatory of God through internal general revelation?
3. In what ways does the author argue that Romans 1:32 presupposes the teaching found in Romans 2:14-15 regarding God's law?
4. What specific attributes of God are identified as being revealed through internal general revelation, and how does this differ from external general revelation?
5. According to Ecclesiastes 3:11, what has God placed in the hearts of humanity, and what is the accompanying limitation or frustration?
6. In Acts 14:14-18, how did Paul and Barnabas respond to the people of Lystra's reaction to the healing of the lame man, and what did they proclaim about God?
7. What specific providential acts of God are mentioned in Acts 14:17 as evidence of his general revelation and generosity?
8. In Acts 17:22-29, what observation did Paul make about the religious practices of the Athenians that allowed him to introduce the true God?
9. What foundational aspect of God's being does Paul emphasize in his address to both the Lystrans (Acts 14) and the Athenians (Acts 17) as the basis of general revelation?
10. According to the text, what is one of the stated purposes of God's providential ordering of nations and their boundaries, as mentioned in Acts 17:26-27?

Answer Key

1. Romans 2:14-15 states that when Gentiles, who do not have the written law, by nature do what the law requires, they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their conscience also bears witness, and their thoughts alternately accuse or excuse them.

2. The text highlights that human nature itself is revelatory, and human beings are not only creatures of God but also revelations of God. This is evident both in their internal moral compass (law written on the heart, conscience) and in their very being as created by God.
3. The author argues that Romans 1:32, which speaks of people knowing God's righteous decree that certain sins deserve death, presupposes Romans 2:14-15 because the knowledge of this decree comes from the law of God written on the heart, a concept explained later in chapter 2.
4. Internal general revelation reveals God's attributes of holiness, justice, and his work of judgment. This differs from external general revelation (in creation), which reveals God's glory, beauty, power, and wisdom, but not specifically his holiness.
5. According to Ecclesiastes 3:11, God has put eternity in the hearts of humanity. However, the accompanying limitation is that no one can fully discover or comprehend the work that God has done from beginning to end, leading to a sense of frustration in their desire for the eternal.
6. Paul and Barnabas were horrified and tore their robes, proclaiming that they were merely men and urging the people to turn from worthless idols to the living God who created heaven, earth, and sea. They emphasized God as the creator.
7. Acts 14:17 mentions God's providential acts of giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying people's hearts with food and gladness. These acts demonstrate God's goodness, generosity, and benevolence to all people.
8. Paul observed that the Athenians were very religious and had an altar dedicated "to the unknown God." This acknowledgment of ignorance allowed Paul to introduce the true God whom they unknowingly worshipped as the creator of the world and everything in it.
9. The foundational aspect of God's being emphasized in both accounts is that he is the Creator. In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas point to the "living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea." In Acts 17, Paul begins by stating, "The God who made the world and everything in it."
10. One stated purpose of God's providential ordering of nations and their boundaries is "that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him," highlighting God's desire for humanity to know him.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the relationship between internal and external general revelation as presented in the source material. What are their similarities and key differences, and how do both contribute to humanity's understanding (or lack thereof) of God?
2. Analyze the significance of Romans 2:12-16 and Ecclesiastes 3:11 in developing the concept of internal general revelation. How do these passages support the idea that God reveals himself within humanity, and what are the implications of this revelation?
3. Examine the accounts in Acts 14:14-18 and Acts 17:22-29 as examples of God's general revelation through providence. What specific actions and attributes of God are highlighted in these narratives, and how effective was this form of revelation in each context?
4. Critically evaluate the claim that general revelation is universally accessible to all people in all places. What limitations or challenges does the source material present to this idea, particularly concerning the suppression or misunderstanding of general revelation?
5. Based on the provided excerpts, discuss the purpose and implications of general revelation in light of the need for special revelation (as alluded to in the mention of Christ and the Word). What role does general revelation play in God's overall plan for humanity?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **General Revelation:** God's communication of himself to all people at all times through creation, human nature (the law written on the heart/conscience), and providence (his ordering of history).
- **Internal General Revelation:** God making himself known through aspects inherent in humanity, specifically the moral law written on the heart and the conscience.
- **External General Revelation:** God making himself known through the created order, the natural world outside of human beings.
- **Providence:** God's active involvement in and governance of the world and history, guiding events and circumstances.
- **Law Written on the Heart:** The concept, primarily from Romans 2:14-15, that God's moral requirements are inherently known by all people, even without explicit written laws.
- **Conscience:** The internal moral awareness or "meter" within human beings that judges their actions as right or wrong, accusing or excusing them.
- **Litotes:** A figure of speech that uses an understatement by negating the contrary; in this context, used to emphasize God's witness in providence ("He did not leave himself without witness").
- **Benevolence:** The disposition to do good; kindness. In the context, it describes God's generous and kind acts toward all of humanity.
- **Common Grace:** God's undeserved favor and blessings bestowed on all of humanity, regardless of their relationship with him (e.g., rain, food, life).
- **Special Revelation:** God's specific communication of himself to particular people at particular times through supernatural means, such as the Bible, miracles, and ultimately through his Son, Jesus Christ.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 8, Internal General Revelation, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on General Revelation

What is general revelation, and how does it differ from special revelation?

General revelation refers to how God makes himself known to all people at all times through creation, human nature (the law written on the heart and conscience), and providence (God's ordering of history and provision). Special revelation, on the other hand, is God's more specific communication given to particular people at particular times, such as through the Old and New Testament scriptures, miracles, visions, and ultimately through his Son, Jesus Christ. While general revelation is universally accessible, special revelation is not.

How does Romans 2:12-16 describe internal general revelation?

Romans 2:12-16 teaches that God has written his law on the hearts of all people, both those with and without the Mosaic Law. This means that even Gentiles who do not have the Bible sometimes instinctively do what the law requires, demonstrating that the essence of God's moral demands is within them. Their conscience acts as an internal witness, accusing or excusing their actions based on these inherent moral principles. This internal awareness makes all people accountable to God's moral standards.

What does Ecclesiastes 3:11 contribute to the understanding of general revelation?

Ecclesiastes 3:11 states that God has put "eternity in their hearts," creating in humanity a longing for something beyond the temporal world. This inherent desire for the eternal, coupled with an inability to fully comprehend God's work from beginning to end, reveals God's existence and our created nature that yearns for the transcendent. While it doesn't directly address morality, it highlights a universal human awareness of a greater reality and a dissatisfaction with purely earthly pursuits, suggesting a divine origin for this longing.

How does God reveal himself through providence, as illustrated in Acts 14:14-18?

Acts 14:14-18 illustrates God's providential general revelation through his good actions in history. Paul and Barnabas point to God giving "rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" as evidence of his existence, creative power, and generosity (goodness/benevolence) towards all people. This continual provision for human physical and emotional needs, experienced worldwide, serves as a witness to God's character and care, even for those who do not yet acknowledge him.

How does Paul's sermon in Athens (Acts 17:22-29) exemplify general revelation in providence and creation?

In Acts 17:22-29, Paul engages with the Athenians by first acknowledging their religious nature. He then proclaims the "unknown God" they worship as the creator of the world and everything in it, the Lord of heaven and earth who sustains all life. Paul highlights that God made all nations from one man, determining their allotted times and boundaries so that they might seek him. He even quotes their own poets to emphasize God's immanence and humanity's dependence on him. This passage demonstrates God's revelation through the creation of humanity and the providential guidance of nations, all intended to lead people to seek and find him.

What attributes of God are revealed through internal general revelation (the law on the heart and conscience)?

Internal general revelation primarily reveals God's attributes of holiness, justice, and his work of judgment. The inherent moral awareness within humanity, expressed through the conscience, reflects God's holy standards and our understanding that actions can be morally right or wrong. The guilt and conviction we feel when we violate our conscience indicate our innate knowledge of God's justice and the reality of his judgment against wrongdoing.

How is internal general revelation both universal and yet suppressed or perverted?

Internal general revelation is universal because God has written his law on the hearts of all human beings. However, due to sin and human nature, this innate moral knowledge is often suppressed and perverted. People tend to apply moral standards strictly to others while excusing their own similar failings, as highlighted by Paul's condemnation of hypocrisy in Romans. Despite this suppression, the underlying awareness of right and wrong, and the function of conscience, still operate in all people.

According to the provided text, what are some key implications or limitations of general revelation?

General revelation, through creation, conscience, and providence, makes God known in certain aspects, such as his power, glory, wisdom (in creation), holiness, justice (internally), and goodness/generosity (in providence). It leaves all people without excuse for not acknowledging God's existence and some of his attributes. However, the text suggests that general revelation is insufficient for salvation. It raises questions about the relationship between general revelation and the Christian missionary enterprise, implying that while God has revealed himself generally, a fuller, saving knowledge comes through special revelation, particularly the gospel of Jesus Christ.