

LESSON 4

SPECIAL REVELATION: THE BIBLE

Introduction

Thought questions

1. Has God dealt differently in the history of Israel than in the history of other nations?
2. Did God show favouritism by choosing one nation above others?
3. Did God act in a special way in Israel's history or did the prophets merely give it a theological interpretation?
4. Would the histories of other nations have yielded special revelation if their histories had been interpreted theologically by prophets?
5. How does the Bible relate to revelation? Does it contain revelation or is it a record of revelation?
6. How is the special revelation of God to Israel relevant to our contemporary needs?

The meaning of special revelation

Special revelation or particular revelation refers to what is known of God through the Bible. The Old Testament is a record of God's special dealings with a nation. The New Testament is a record of God's special dealings through His Son. God's special acts in Israel's history were not evident to people in general but were revelatory acts to a particular people. The obligation of the chosen people was to make these activities known throughout the world.

General or natural revelation refers to what can be known about God through nature in a general way by all people. Special or particular revelation refers to what God made known about Himself to a chosen or particular people by acting in their history in a special way. God controls the histories of all people, but He entered the history of Israel in a special and unique way.

Define special revelation. _____

(Compare your definition with the text.)

General or natural revelation is what can be known about _____ through _____ by all _____.

(God, nature, people)

The need for special revelation

The natural man has lost the power of perceiving truth as it is. Although God makes some things known about Himself through creation, man is still incapable of establishing a right relationship to Him. Man's religious nature causes him to crave a relationship to God, but his sinful nature results in his willingness to accept a substitute for God from created existence. Left to his own strength and wisdom, man is destined to fail in his quest for a right relationship to his Creator.

Christianity makes the bold claim that man has not been abandoned to human resources, but a God of grace searches for man and rescues him from his frustration and condemnation. God has established a redemptive relationship to man. The redemptive activities are special activities. Divine grace reaches down to man in his historical dilemma and provides spiritual and physical deliverance or salvation. It is through these special redemptive activities that man comes to know God in a personal way. His knowledge of God is through an encounter with God in historical, redemptive events. The special redemptive activities of God were in the history of a chosen nation. In the deliverance and salvation of that nation, the Creator became known as a just and righteous Judge, a merciful God, and a loving Father. If there had been no special redemptive acts which took place in the history of Israel, God's true nature and personal characteristics would be unknown.

The possibility of special divine revelation

Although God is beyond the natural world, it is possible for Him to reveal Himself through nature and act in the history of man. The doctrine of Creation requires that the supernatural, spiritual Being can relate to the material. God is able to work in the history of His creation. His special activities become occasions of special revelatory events.

God is separate and hidden from the eyes and knowledge of man. It is necessary for God to reveal Himself to man; however, He continues to be cloaked in great mystery even when He does reveal Himself. Although finite man is unable to comprehend the depth of His being, he can come to know something about the infinite and hidden God. Special revelation does not give a clear vision of God. Man must continue to "know in part" and to "see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:9, 12a).

Man needs special revelation because he is incapable of establishing a right

_____ to _____.

(relation, God)

God's _____ activities are _____ activities.

His special redemptive activities were in the history of a c _____ n _____.

(redemptive, special, chosen nation)

Is this statement true or false?

Because God is beyond the natural world, He is unable to work in the history of His creation. _____

(false)

Historical Events and Revelation

The uniqueness of Israel's history

The Bible itself maintains that God has control over the histories of all nations and directs various nations to accomplish His purposes. The prophets understood that God used Assyria as His rod of punishment against the sinful and rebellious Northern Kingdom. Babylonia was used as God's rod of judgement and punishment against sinful Judah. Although Cyrus of Persia did not worship or serve Israel's God, Isaiah contended that he was an instrument of God in delivering the Israelites from exile (see Isa. 45ff.). Even though God worked in the histories of all nations, He worked in Israel's history in a special redemptive way.

The necessity of interpreting revelatory history

Historical events in which God is active must be interpreted theologically. It was the role of the prophets to interpret for Israel the divine meaning of her history. Some of the people received the lessons revealed through Israelite history; others closed their ears to them. Apart from the prophets' interpretations, very few Israelites would have discerned God's special activities in their history.

The prophetic interpretation of historical events was itself the result of divine activity. The prophets could only speak the Word of the Lord when they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. False prophets attempted to interpret history by their own wisdom and desires. True prophets seldom gave interpretations which satisfied the desires of men, but they had no choice but to speak the truth because the Spirit of the Lord impelled them. A prominent example is Jeremiah who described the Word of the Lord in his heart "as a burning fire shut up in my bones" when he determined not to speak forth God's revelation (20:9).

Both the historical event and its interpretation form a complex entity which comprises the revelation of God in history. The Holy Spirit used and guided the mind of the prophet to interpret correctly historical events.

Human and divine roles in revelation

Both human and divine participations are involved in the special historical events of revelation. God controlled the historical action and gave inspiration to the prophet in interpreting it. Since the mind of the prophet was involved, statements of

God's relation to Israel's history was different from His relation to other nations in that He worked in Israel's history in a _____ way.

(special redemptive)

What was the role of the prophets in revelatory history? _____

(to interpret for Israel the divine meaning of her history)

The prophets' interpretations were also _____ activities: they were inspired by the _____.

(divine, Holy Spirit)

Revelatory history involves both the _____ event and its _____.

(historical, interpretation)

Write divine or human by the appropriate activities or elements in revelation.

- _____ 1. special historical events
- _____ 2. inspired the prophets' interpretation

(continued on the next page)

The Bible and historical revelation

The Bible which records Israel's salvation history embodies revelation and is not just a record of revelation. The Bible is more than a record of salvation history. It has revelatory value for us even though it may be no more than a record of revelation to the person who has not entered the stream of redemptive history through a salvation experience. The Bible has one kind of value for those who by faith have received Christ as Saviour and another level of value for those who stand outside redemption and read the Bible as a history of past events.

As a record of revelation, the Bible has historical value. The salvation history of Israel was given in the midst of her political and social histories. Since the various kinds of history presented in the Old Testament are interrelated, it is impossible to separate sharply salvation history from political and social history. Israel experienced political history similar to that of other nations. Her political leaders were human and often failed. The nation was often involved in war and eventually defeated. These characteristics are true of the histories of Israel's neighbours. Israel was also like her neighbours in many of her social customs.

Israel's 'chosenness' as the people of God does not mean that her society and political structure were exempted from the common failures characteristic of all nations. Israel struggled with economic, political, social, and military problems as other nations did. She was part of the culture of her day; however, there was something unique in her history which did not exist in the experiences of surrounding nations. God had chosen Israel as His special people and, in spite of her failures, God worked out His plan of redemption in the life of the people.

Again it needs to be emphasized that God's history of redemptive events cannot be sharply separated from Israel's political, economic, social, and military histories. It is important to note, however, that the salvation history, including divine intervention and interpretation, is trustworthy and infallible. There is no guarantee, however, that the recording of Israel's political or social activities is completely accurate. Errors in the dates of Israel's kings do not diminish or threaten the validity of the revelation of the Old Testament.

In order to communicate the revelation given through God's special intervention in Israel's history, descriptive and doctrinal statements were necessary. Divine truth was made tangible by putting it into a historical setting. This was not inconsistent with the original revealing of the truth through a historical event. The statement may have been oral or written.

The Bible _____ revelation and is not just a _____ of revelation.

(embodies, record)

God chose Israel as His _____ and, in spite of her _____, He worked out His plan of _____.

(chosen people, failures, redemption)

The Old Testament contains the statements setting forth the inspired interpretation of divine activity in Israel's history. Sometimes the inspired statements dealt with events which had already come to pass. At other times, they concerned predicted events. When the statements are approached with an attitude of investigating objectively political or economic history, these statements do not yield revelational value to the person who studies them. When the Old Testament Scriptures are approached in an attitude of faith by one who is seeking God and His will, the Spirit speaks to him through the statements which embody the revelation or Word of God. The words which embody revelation and revelation itself cannot be separated. In this sense, the Old Testament contains (and is) divine revelation. The attitude with which one approaches the Scriptures determines whether the verses contain statements about God or statements from God. The Holy Spirit working in response to faith changes the Old Testament Scriptures from objective facts to divine revelation to a person.

The primary revelatory event

Deliverance constituted the key revelatory event in Israel's history. Bondage and affliction caused Israel to seek intensely the presence of God. Through the divine acts of deliverance, sinful and disobedient Israel gained a greater understanding of the nature and work of God. The deliverance from Egyptian bondage became the foundation of Israel's national and spiritual life. Her obligations to worship and to serve God were based on what God had done for her in the Exodus. The Covenant pointed up Israel's responsibility to obey and serve God in response to His blessings upon Israel. The breaking of the Covenant and Israel's need for deliverance from deserved punishment overshadowed the establishment and keeping of the Covenant. The facts of the Covenant and Israel's transgression magnified the mercy of God who delivered an unworthy and undeserving people. The nature and work of God are especially revealed in His delivery of Israel from Egyptian bondage, Babylonian captivity, and sin through the Cross of Christ.

Characteristics of Biblical Revelation

Biblical revelation assumes natural revelation

The Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of God. The Biblical writers assume that man is conscious of God and is in greater need of knowing how to relate to God than to be convinced that there is a God. The doctrine of Creation at the

*The Old Testament becomes revelation for us through the work of the _____ in response to our _____.
(Holy Spirit, faith)*

*What was the key revelatory event in Israel's history? _____
(deliverance)*

beginning of the Old Testament does lay the foundation for man's obligation to God. Because man was created by God, he cannot ignore or neglect his responsibilities to worship and to serve Him. Universally, men recognize their responsibility to God. Although many fail to worship and serve Him, they are troubled by the recognition of their obligations to the Creator. Man's awareness of his obligation to God is based on general revelation. General revelation prepares men for special or Biblical revelation.

God's Word is in human words

The prophet spoke with the conviction that his words were the Words of God. "Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet" is a frequent statement in the Prophets.¹ The prophet was convinced that God had "put my [God's] words in thy [the prophet's] mouth" (Jer. 1:9), and he spoke not his own words but the Word of the Lord. These words were not propositional statements concerning truth about God but expressions of His will for His people. God's nature is known from His will and works. A person is known better by his works than by his own words which describe himself. God's will and His demands on man are given in specific statements through the prophets. According to the prophets, the Bible is not simply a human record of revelation but God's revelatory Word in written form. Man's mouth was used to speak God's Word, and his hand was used to put God's Word in written form. The Bible is the product of revelation but its words are also revelatory.

Revelation can be expressed in actions and attitudes as well as words. This was true in the life of Jesus. His activities of loving concern and His death on the cross revealed the nature of God as well as His teachings concerning the Father and His will.

Existentialism emphasizes that knowledge comes through an event or experience in life. The psychological emphasis on inter-personal relationships stresses that the most intimate knowledge comes through the encounter of persons. Theologians have been influenced by these concepts and have stressed the importance of knowing God through the Person who revealed the Father in His encounters

¹ See Jer. 36:27; 37:6; 40:1; Isa. 56:1; 1:10; Ezek. 6:1; 7:1; Joel 1:1; Hos. 1:1; etc. These are only a few references selected at random from the many similar statements.

The Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of God because Biblical writers assumed man is conscious of _____ because of _____ or natural revelation.

(God, general)

Revelation can be expressed in _____, _____, and _____.

(actions, attitudes, words)

with other persons. Sometimes theologians tend to stress the importance of revelatory knowledge through personal encounters and experiences to the extent that other forms of revelation are unduly minimized or denied. God's revelation through His Son is primary, but God also reveals Himself through words which were personal when they were uttered. If written words are not valid means of knowing truth, why are so many books written?

The philosophic question with which theologians are dealing is expressed by Brunner: "How does legitimate human speech about Jesus, about God, arise out of the revelation, which is Jesus Christ Himself, and therefore is not a spoken word?"² The problem more simply stated is how do words relate to the truth they describe? The words which describe a truth are not identical with the truth, but they cannot be distinguished sharply from the truth or else man knows no truth, only words. Words are sound or visual symbols which convey concepts. The words of Scripture embody revelatory concepts. The teachings of Jesus contained divine truth. The writing of those teachings did not change the truth.

The Bible is practical, not speculative

Special revelation originated in the life of the people who faced real problems. God responded to the needs of His people in special, historical activities. The Bible describes people who experienced problems in life and God's gracious work in meeting their needs. It is not a book which originated in the mind of a person removed from the day by day struggles of life. The Bible is not a book of philosophy which deals with the theories of knowledge and speculates about the nature of reality. It does contain a philosophy which proposes that ultimate knowledge comes through revelation, and the ultimate reality of life is both spiritual and physical. Ultimate truth is man's right relation to God. Jesus' purpose was to reconcile men to God. He said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jno. 8:32). Jesus is the life which gives light to men (Jno. 1:4).

The Bible continues to be relevant because it deals with real human problems. Even though civilization and society have changed, man's nature remains the same. His fundamental problems have not changed; they have only taken on new environments. The answers to the problems of the

² Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 29.

Human words about Jesus relate to Jesus Christ, who is revelation, because words are _____ which can convey _____ revealed _____.

(symbols, divinely, concepts)

The Bible is practical because it deals with real human _____.

(problems)

Is this statement true or false?

The Bible is relevant today because it continues to deal with real human problems.

(true)

Israelites continue to be relevant to the problems of today.

Biblical revelation has unity

Although the revelation presented in the Bible was given over a period of approximately fifteen hundred years and was recorded by some forty different authors, it has a unity of purpose. The revelation to Abraham was not limited to him but looked forward to his descendants and God's relation to them. The unity of Biblical revelation centres in the redemption of all people, not just the Israelites. It was given through a specific nation which was chosen to be Yahweh's servant in proclaiming the good news of God's redemptive purpose to all people. Both the Old and New Testaments are dedicated to the recording of the fulfilment of this purpose.

Biblical revelation does not give a fragmented and contradictory account of God's nature and will. Although the character of the God of the Old Testament is not as clearly seen as the God of Jesus in the New Testament, His revealed nature in each Testament is related and unified. The will of God for Israel was the same as the will of God for Christians today.

Biblical revelation is progressive

The Book of Hebrews emphasizes the progressive nature of revelation in the words: "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the world" (1:1-2-NASB). Old Testament revelation was piecemeal and partial, but revelation in Christ is complete and final.

The Old Testament prepared the way for the New; the New Testament is the fulfilment of the Old. Without the sacrificial system, the moral commandments, the institution of the prophets, and the experience of the Davidic kingdom, the life, purpose, death, and future plans of Jesus would not have been understood. The sacrificial system prepared for the understanding of Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice for sins. The Davidic kingdom prepared for the understanding of the heavenly King or Messiah who will come again. The institution of prophecy was necessary for men to understand their responsibilities in the building of the Kingdom. The moral laws prepared the way for the new ethical standards required of Kingdom citizens. Christ and His Kingdom could not have been understood until the people had received revelation in preparation for His coming.

The unity of Biblical revelation centres in the _____ of all _____.
(redemption, people)

Choose the correct words to complete each statement.

(complete and final, piecemeal and partial)

Old Testament revelation was _____.

Revelation in Christ is _____.

(piecemeal and partial, complete and final)

The knowledge of the nature and purpose of God is incomplete without the ministry and work of Jesus. If man's concept is limited to an earthly Davidic kingdom, he has not fully understood the purpose of God. If man sees the justice of God only requiring righteousness and condemning sin, he has not understood fully the nature of a loving Father who forgives and cleanses from sin. Only in Christ is God's full and final revelation given.

Progressive revelation should not be confused with the evolutionary view of religion. Progressive revelation refers to the hidden God who makes Himself partially known in given circumstances. The evolutionary theory of religion views man as growing and developing to a higher level of religious maturity. Evolution sees religious progress as man's accomplishment. Progressive revelation speaks not of man's accomplishment but God's self-disclosure to man in proportion to the need and limitations of the occasion. Man's understanding of God progresses, but the God whom he knows does not evolve to a higher level of existence.

Progressive revelation explains some of the moral problems which appear in the Old Testament, such as God's command for the Israelites to kill even the women and children. In the Old Testament the moral ideals of man were not as advanced as the morality revealed through the life and work of Christ. The concept of destroying enemies in the Old Testament was replaced in the New Testament with the concept of loving enemies.

The Unity of the Bible

The Bible's unity centres in Jesus Christ who came to redeem man. The Old Testament predicts and prepares for His coming, and the New Testament describes His redemptive mission. Not every Old Testament Scripture speaks explicitly of Christ, but many give rather accurate descriptions of His life and ministry.

The Gospels contain accounts of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus. They emphasize the Jewish misunderstanding of the redemptive work of Jesus. Jesus' contemporaries expected a Messiah who would bring physical deliverance to the nation. The Gospels present Christ as the Suffering Servant who willingly gave His life in obedience to the command of God and in love to sinful humanity.

The unique and divine life of Jesus was attested by His miracles. The miracles were not performed to prove that He was the Son of God but to express His love in meeting the needs of suffering humanity.

The evolutionary theory attributes religious progress to _____ accomplishment. Progressive revelation is _____ self-disclosure as needed.

(man's, God's)

Write Old Testament or New Testament in each blank.

The _____ predicts and prepares for Jesus' coming.

The _____ describes Jesus' redemptive mission.

(Old Testament, New Testament)

His miraculous power was interpreted by the Gospel writers, however, as signs of His divine nature. The miracles showed that the New Age or the Kingdom of God had arrived in the life and ministry of Christ.

Jesus' last week on earth climaxed His ministry. Apart from the death and resurrection of Jesus, there would be no Christianity. The Resurrection became the central point in the preaching of the Apostles because it established Jesus as the suffering, dying Servant who had acted according to the will of God. God showed His approval by raising Jesus from the dead. The Resurrection also showed that the strength of Satan had been broken. Satan is no longer the conqueror of men who place their faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

The Epistles explain the meaning of the life, teachings, and ministry of Christ with regard to the worship and work of the Church. A number of problems arose in the early Church which needed the interpretation and application of the teachings of Jesus. The Epistles also set forth the position of Christ and the victory which belongs to Him and His Church. His victory will be manifested in His second coming. Until His return, the work of Christ in His Kingdom on earth is carried on through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Biblical Inspiration and Authority

The doctrine of special revelation would not be complete without a statement of Biblical inspiration and authority. The subject is treated in greater detail in Lesson 3 of the study guide The Bible and Its Interpretation.

Definitions

Revelation and inspiration are closely related concepts. Revelation is the activity of God in which He makes Himself and His purpose known to man through creation and history. Revelation can refer either to the method of God's self-disclosure or to the truth disclosed. Inspiration is concerned with the method of receiving, interpreting, and recording the truth revealed by God. It refers to the activity of the Holy Spirit in guiding man or the result of that activity, the inspired authoritative and trustworthy writings.

Is this statement true or false?

If Jesus had not died and had not been resurrected, there would be no Christianity.

(true)

Now that you have finished reading the topic The Unity of the Bible, fill in the blanks with either The Epistles or The Gospels.

_____ contain accounts of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus.

_____ explain Christ's life and ministry as related to the Church.

(The Gospels, The Epistles)

Define revelation. _____

Define inspiration. _____

(Compare your definitions with the text.)

Biblical description of inspiration

The Old Testament prophets spoke under the control of the Holy Spirit; therefore, their utterances and the written accounts of those utterances are inspired. The role of God was to give His Word to the prophets. In instructing Moses, the Lord stated that Aaron would be a spokesman for Moses. The relationship was described as, "he shall be a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God" (Exod. 4:16b-RSV). Aaron spoke words which Moses gave to him. The prophet is one who speaks words which God puts into his mouth. Amos stated, "the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (3:8). Isaiah claimed his words to be the Lord's, "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (40:5).

Paul instructed Timothy that "All scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16a-RSV). Second Peter 1:20-21 states, "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (RSV). The writer of Hebrews stated, "God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets" (1:1-RSV). These three Scriptures teach:

1. The Word of God was first spoken and then written (2 Pet. 1:20-21).
2. Scripture is of divine origin (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).
3. Scripture is also the work of human writers (2 Pet. 1:21).
4. The writings as well as the writers or prophets are inspired (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Claims concerning Jesus' teachings

Jesus stated that "the Father is in me, and I in him" (Jno. 10:38). The words which He spoke to His disciples were not from Him but from the Father who dwelt in Him (Jno. 14:10). His teachings were from God (Jno. 7:17). Not only His teachings but His life was also under the control of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16; 4:1). The control of His life by the Holy Spirit and the words from the Father which He spoke established the inspiration of the Gospel accounts.

The Epistles of the New Testament are inspired interpretations of the meaning of the life and teachings of Jesus. Paul's Epistles were considered to be inspired and authoritative by the time of the writing of 2 Peter (see 2 Pet. 3:15).

Is this statement true or false?

A prophet is one who interprets what he believes to be God's words. _____

(false)

Who is a prophet? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

List four teachings concerning inspiration according to 2 Peter, 2 Timothy, and Hebrews.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Conservative views of inspiration

The verbal dictation theory.—This view holds that God dictated the words to the prophets who acted as recording secretaries. Objections to this view are based on the fact that God used human agents, not as passive receptors but as active contributors, in the writing of the Scripture (see Rom. 16:26; Heb. 1:1). A second objection is that the theory does not allow for the distinct and characteristic style of the various writers.

The dynamic theory.—The position of neo-evangelicals is that God inspired the thoughts or ideas but not the words. God gave the thoughts to the prophets who were free to record them in their own words. This view allows for the literary differences and the reflection of the author's personality in his writings.

The plenary inspiration theory.—This theory states that all the words were God-breathed (inspired—2 Tim. 3:16). God gave full (plenary) expression to His thoughts in the words of the Biblical record. He guided the writers in selecting the words and expressions which were characteristic of their age and culture.

The neo-orthodox view of inspiration

Karl Barth stated this view in terms of the Word of God. The Bible is the written Word of God and is to be distinguished from the revealed Word. The Bible contains the Word of God and words of men. Scripture is not to be identified with the revelation of God, but it is a witness to that revelation and becomes the form or event through which God speaks as it is read. It is a record of revelation. The Bible is the human record or witness of special divine events or revelation. Neo-orthodox theologians hold that the Bible is not the Word of God but becomes the Word of God when He chooses to make it His Word in an existential situation.

The liberal view of inspiration

The liberal believes that all truth must be God's truth; therefore, the Bible should not be protected from critical examination. The Bible is put to the test of human reason. The liberal reasons that God speaks in the Bible as He speaks elsewhere—through nature, philosophy, and the arts. The liberal view is basically that the Bible contains the Word of God along with varied mixtures of words of men. The words of men and the Word of God must be separated by use of reason.

After reading the three conservative views of inspiration, match the theory with its view.

- 1. All words were God-breathed. Verbal dictation theory
- 2. God dictated the words to the prophets. Plenary inspiration theory
- 3. God inspired the thoughts and ideas, but not the words. Dynamic theory

(1-plenary inspiration, 2-verbal dictation, 3-dynamic)

The neo-orthodox view is the Bible is the _____ record or witness of special divine events or _____.

(human, revelation)

The liberal view of inspiration is that the Bible contains both the Word of _____ and words of _____.

(God, men)

Biblical Authority

The authority of the Bible is based on the fact that it is the inspired Word of God. Jesus and the Apostles believed that the Old Testament was authoritative; therefore, they appealed to the statements of the Old Testament as the authority for their teachings and activities.

In the New Testament, John identified Jesus as the Word Incarnate. Since He was identified as one with the Father, His words and actions were very significant to the Apostles and early Christians. The 27 books of the New Testament were later recognized by the Church as the inspired and authoritative Word of God. The 39 Old Testament books were also recognized as inspired and authoritative.

The Bible was written by divinely inspired men, and it is God's revelatory Word to man. The purpose of the Bible is redemptive, and its truth is without any mixture of error. It is the authority for guiding churches in faith and practice.

Now that you have finished reading this lesson, write your definition of the Bible.

Home Study Exercises

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). The following questions are based on the study guide.

1. What is special revelation? _____
2. Why is special revelation needed? _____

3. What activities in Israel's history are particularly revelatory? _____

4. How did God's relation to Israel's history differ from His relation to other nations? _____

5. Explain the human and divine roles in special revelation. _____

6. What is salvation history? _____

7. How does Israel's salvation history rise above the temporal? _____

8. How are we related to Israel's salvation history? _____

9. Is Israel's political, military, economic, or salvation history relevant to us and why?

10. What is required for the Old Testament to become revelation to us? _____

11. Why does the Bible not attempt to prove the existence of God? _____

12. How does human speech about Jesus relate to Jesus Christ, who is revelation?

13. Explain whether the Bible is speculative or practical. _____

14. What is the unifying theme of the Bible? _____
15. How does progressive revelation differ from the evolutionary view of religion? _____

16. How do the Old and New Testaments relate to Jesus? _____

17. Distinguish between revelation and inspiration. _____

18. Who is a prophet? _____

19. List four New Testament teachings concerning inspiration.
- (1) _____
- (2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

20. What is the plenary inspiration theory? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3):

1. Distinguish between Israel's national and salvation history.
2. To what areas does the authority of the Bible apply?
3. Give indications from the Bible which suggest that its revelation is progressive.
4. Read pages 71-76 in Christian Doctrine by Shirley C. Guthrie and answer the following questions:
 - (1) How does God reveal Himself in a special way?
 - (2) Distinguish between "knowing God" and "knowing about God."

Advanced activity (Level 3):

Read pages 65-83 in Shaping Your Faith by C. W. Christian and answer the following questions:

1. How has the change in world view during the past 300 years affected the authority of Scripture?
2. Why must the Bible be interpreted in relation to its environment?
3. What is meant by the statement that the Bible is a creation of faith?
4. What is meant by "the Bible is inspired"?

Optional reading: Revelation and God by Conner, pages 77-101.
The Doctrine of God by Strong, pages 111-144, 175-190, 196-242.
The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression by Mullins, pages 142-153.
The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought by Baillie, pages 62-133.

Seminar Discussion

1. What is meant by Israel's salvation history and national history? How are they related?
2. In what respect is Christ part of Israel's salvation and national history?
3. How do the different parts of the Old and New Testaments relate to Christ?
4. How is the Bible related to special revelation?
5. What is the difference between the evolutionary view of religion and progressive revelation?
6. How is Israel's history different and similar to the histories of other nations?
7. What is the Biblical view of inspiration?
8. Catholics recognize authority as being in the Church but most Protestants recognize authority in the Bible. Which position is correct?