

WHAT IS REVELATION?

The New Testament word for revelation is “*apokalypsis*” which means, “the uncovering or revealing of that which was previously hidden”. If God had not revealed Himself, man could never know anything about Him. Atheists and agnostics do not believe in revelation. Pantheists and Deists may admit of revelation in nature but deny any form of special revelation. Christians distinguish between God’s revelation in nature (General Revelation) and His revelation in Scripture (Special Revelation).

GENERAL REVELATION:

This is God’s revelation of Himself in the facts, forces and laws of nature, in the constitution and operation of the human mind, and in the facts of experience and history (Psalm 19:1-2; Rom.1:19–20; Rom.2:14-15).

SPECIAL REVELATION:

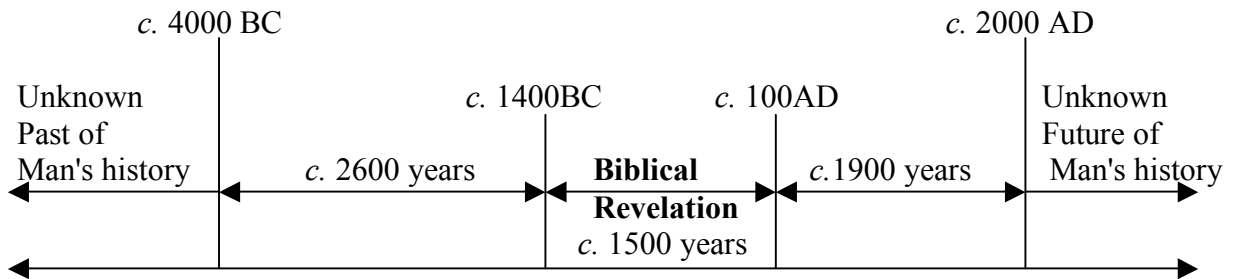
This is God’s revelation of Himself as revealed in Holy Scripture. God’s *transcendence* can only be broken by His choosing to reveal Himself to mankind. The supreme highlight of His revelation in which He became *immanent* was in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Other means by which God revealed Himself in a special way as recorded in the Bible included theophanies, audible voices, dreams, visions, angelic messages and miracles.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION:

Man did not always have a Bible as we know it today. The Bible was compiled over many hundreds of years to reach its present form, from about 1400 BC to about 100 AD. This process is known as "Progressive Revelation". In other words, God gave man information about Himself over many years through a process of divine inspiration, and this process culminated within a few years after the resurrection of Christ. The question arises as to what form of revelation man had before the Bible began to be written. There are many interesting theories about this but the truth of the matter is that we do not really know. We do know, however, that man did have some form of revelation from God. Whether this record was written down is almost certain, but it has also certainly been long lost. One of the most interesting theories concerning God's original revelation was made popular by Dr. Joseph Seiss in 1884 in his book *The Gospel in the Stars*. The theory presented here was that God recorded His revelation of Himself in the stars in the form of the zodiac, and that early man (and even later man) was able to read the account, written in the heavens, of God's plan of salvation. Later, this system was corrupted and gave rise to the forbidden practice of astrology, and it also gave rise to the various myths that exist among the nations. Although this theory cannot be proved beyond doubt, no one has yet been able to successfully repudiate it. It therefore stands as one of the most reasonable theories for the origins of man's early

religions as he spread across the world. If this was the case, then God must have eventually entrusted His inspired Word into the care of a chosen people, who realising its tremendous importance, would take great care to preserve it from corruption. This would be the beginning of the Bible as we know it today - God's Special Revelation.

The place of the Bible as God's progressive revelation in the known history of mankind will therefore look something like this:



From the above chart we can see that man has been around for thousands of years before the Bible appeared. We know that the first man, Adam, had a revelation from God for God spoke to him face-to-face (Gen.3:8-9). Therefore, man has always had knowledge of God from the beginning. We don't know for certain what form this revelation took, but at a certain time in history (about 1400BC) God chose to begin to give man a written revelation of Himself. This written revelation took about 1500 years to process until God deemed it complete and the Biblical canon was closed (about 100 AD). The Bible is therefore a record of God's dealings with man as well as a revelation of His will and His plan of salvation for man. It is the authoritative revelation of God for the believer and contains all that is needed to know to be able to serve God successfully. One of the evidences that the Bible is indeed God's Word to mankind is the fact that although it was written over such a long period of time (about 1500 years) and by many different people (66 books by 40 authors), it is one continuous record, without contradiction, and prophesying many events that would come to pass even hundreds of years later. It thus has "built-in" evidence that it has been given by God, through His servants, to mankind. Many efforts have been made to discredit it over the years, but all have been successfully refuted by God-fearing men, and the Bible continues to stand as the Word of God wherein we hear His voice and, through faith, receive from Him.

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Questions:

- 1) What are some of the ways in which God has generally revealed Himself to mankind?
- 2) What are some of the ways in which God has revealed Himself to individuals?
- 3) What are some of the evidences that the Bible is God's Word?