

The Course of Revelation

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There are some who reject outright the need or use of revelation insight. Often this is based on some kind of overreaction against some “apostle,” “prophet” or charismatic preacher who claimed to have been given special revelation only to later be proven to be a false huckster or charlatan. But those who completely reject revelation are in as great an error as are those who falsely claim to possess special revelation. If we search the Scriptures, we will find that revelation indeed holds a central – and therefore dangerous – place in the genuine believer’s life.

It has long been acknowledged, if not asserted, that one can take the words from the Bible and prove just about any doctrine one wants to prove. It is also considered true that no one person can know “the whole counsel of God” on any given matter (even though it is obvious that Paul must have possessed it or his boast would be mere deception and pretension – see Acts 20:27) – further, it is held, in subtle practice if not in overt teaching, that only Greek and Hebrew Bible scholars and theologians can really know what the Bible says on any particular subject and whole tomes, treatises and dictionaries are written with utter disregard for divine revelation. Forgotten is the fact that the learned Jews, the ones who crucified the Messiah and persecuted the apostles, rejected the true messengers of God chiefly because they were not as learned as they were! (Jn. 7:14-15, Acts 14:13, etc.) Also Paul spoke clearly that one who would apply oneself to God would be able to “rightly divide the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15) These insights alone make the New Testament perhaps *the* most dangerous book in the world.

Most followers of Christ consider the Bible to be *the word of God* but this is not exactly accurate. The word of God is clearly shown to be a person (Jn. 1:1-4, 14, Heb. 4:12-13, etc.) and the Greek construction of Paul’s statement “...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17) shows that *the Spirit* (of truth, holiness, righteousness, etc., that is, the Spirit of Christ and God) is what Paul considered to be the word of God and that “the sword” wielded by the believer is *not* what he considered to be the word of God. Further insight is gleaned when we recognize that for the first two to three centuries, there was no “New Testament” canon of Scriptures as we know them today and only as time went by was more emphasis placed on writings and less on oral presentation as the basis of gospel truth. Considering the Bible, the Book, the compilation of words, to be “the word of God” is therefore clearly misguided even though the words contained in the Bible are “the word of truth” that, when opened up to us by the Spirit of truth and understanding, become “the rightly divided word of truth.” It is in this light that we can see that the New Testament is therefore God’s “manifesto,” His unchanging, clearly-defined declaration of His goals, aims, agendas, methods and concepts. Considering the New Testament, by itself and especially as used or taught by any mere man, no matter how studied and learned such a man might be, to be some sort of infallible manual or guide is ludicrous beyond measure.

The New Testament has much to say regarding spiritual revelation, especially in contrast to mere knowledge that puffs up its possessors. (1 Cor. 8:1) In fact it has so much to say on the subject that one could write at length and only scratch the surface of some of the implications contained in the Scriptures. In the Greek, we find three main words used to describe the process of revelation or illumination that God gives to His followers. “Open” (*dianoigo* [1272]), “reveal” or “revelation” (*apokalupto* [601] and *apokalupsis* [602], literally “take off the cover”) and “shine light” or “enlighten” or “illuminate” (*photizo* [5461]) In short, God must open and enlighten our hearts and minds and disclose and reveal His truths or else we can only choose

what is right and true in our own opinions. The former is called revelation – the latter is called lawlessness and earns one a dismissal from Christ on the last day. (Mt. 7:23) These are simply the fruits of the same two trees God made man choose from in the Garden of Eden – the tree of life and the tree of the independent knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 3:6, 22) There is nothing really new in the gospel – only a clearer expression of the choice every person must make to know and follow God or to reject Him.

Dianoigo [1272] (“open”) is used literally to speak of “opening” deaf ears (Mk. 7:34-35) and “opening” the womb. (i.e., a firstborn child – Lk. 2:23) But we also find it used, especially by Luke, to speak of a more figurative sense. The eyes of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were “opened” and they were suddenly able to recognize Jesus for who He was even though He had been walking and talking with them for some time. (Lk. 24:31) After He had left them, they then exclaimed to one another how their hearts burned while Jesus had been “opening” to them the Scriptures, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained [literally, interpreted] to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” (Lk. 24:27) Then those two returned in haste to the other disciples in Jerusalem at which time Jesus Himself appeared to all of them. Luke records, “Then He opened [all the disciples’] minds to understand the Scriptures...” (Lk. 24:45) Before Jesus did this, the disciples were unable to grasp the significance of many of the Old Testament prophecies and statements that Jesus had previously and even repeatedly taught them.

Apokalupto [601] and *apokalupsis* [602] (most often rendered as “revelation”) are words that perhaps would be best rendered as “disclose” or “disclosure” because this rendering points to how we are required to seek God in order to know with accuracy. God must disclose, “take the cover off of,” His truths to us or all we will know will be error and darkness. Perhaps the clearest instance we see in the gospel record is Jesus’ answer to Simon Peter: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed [601] this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Mt. 16:17) This particular revelation, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt. 16:16), is of particular importance for this is the rock on which Christ has established His people. (Mt. 16:18) Apart from receiving this revelation from God, we cannot be part of His people! This alone makes revelation imperative and not optional.

Photizo [5461] (“enlighten”) is also given a place of importance. Paul, in a letter that may well have been written in anticipation of the needs of the end times people who would face off against the great falling away from the faith, the apostasy (2 Ths. 2:3), prayed incessantly “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation [602] in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened [5461]; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power...” (Eph. 1:16-19) Paul is telling us that, unless God gives us revelation and enlightenment, we will not know the hope of His calling, the riches we are inheriting nor the exceeding greatness of His power. This becomes even more dangerous for the believer because, as the writer of Hebrews warns us, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened [5461], and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” (Heb. 6:4-6) The time of the end, where deception abounds (Mt. 24:4, 2 Ths. 2:9-10, etc.), is indeed a perilous time because those

who have been illuminated and led by His Spirit, if they fall away entirely, cannot be brought back to repentance. This is indeed a serious and sobering business!

Jesus said to His disciples, “It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.” (Mt. 13:11-16) The danger for Jesus’ disciples was that even though they were physically seeing the prophecies and promises of the Christ fulfilled, until Christ opened their understanding, they still failed to grasp the spiritual reality. We face a similar danger today.

How then, do we learn to receive God’s true revelations and reject the deceptive “revelations” of hucksters and demons? First, we must remember that Jesus clearly said, “My sheep hear My voice.” (Jn. 10:27) Any person then who does not hear His voice needs to be concerned that perhaps Jesus is *not* his or her Shepherd! But as one learns to sit at His feet and hear His voice, loving truth no matter what it might cost, that one will begin to understand – from God’s perspective – gospel truth. There is no other way. Listening to any other man for too long will hinder or even prevent this process of hearing God. This is why having the “pastor” (or any other titled spiritual guru) standing between us and God is an abomination of the worst sort.

By what means, then, can we know whether the revelations we have received are genuinely divine or merely deception? Paul wrote, “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:3) It is only in the unity of the Spirit, characterized by “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23), that we can know that we are participating in God’s truth. Only when our wisdom is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits” will we be functioning in God’s wisdom. James goes on to say, “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (Jas. 3:17-18) As Jesus so clearly warned, and especially in the last days, we will need to know men by the fruit they produce (Mt. 7:20) and not make judgments merely according to the appearances men put forth (Jn. 7:24) and we must take care, as Paul did, to know that “our knowledge of men can no longer be based on their outward lives (indeed, even though we knew Christ as a man we do not know Him like that any longer.)” (2 Cor. 5:16 Phillips)

But as we produce this genuine fruit of the Spirit of God, we will “all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; [and we will] no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive.” (Eph. 4:13-14) The only genuine route to doctrinal and practical unity is through the unity of the Spirit of God. This is why Paul could plead with the Corinthians, “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same

judgment.” (1 Cor. 1:10) This is why he could instruct the Romans to “note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.” (Rom. 16:17) And this is why he warned Timothy, “If anyone teaches otherwise [things contrary to sound doctrine] and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.” (1 Tim. 6:3-5)

Jesus said, “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.” (Jn. 16:13) The Spirit of Christ and God will progressively lead us into more truth. We must not be like those who are ever learning but never able to come to the truth (2 Tim. 3:7) but we must be being led into all truth or we are off course. Only those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. (Rom. 8:14) Only the sons of the kingdom, the wheat in Jesus’ parable, will remain after the angels are sent to remove the tares, the sons of the devil, from their place of evil influence upon the sons of righteousness. (Mt. 13:38-43) The war will be fought to its ultimate conclusion and the victory is already obtained and is certain – but whether we will stand in Christ’s victorious army or we will prove to be only a casualty and a turncoat is our choice to make. Let no man, no matter how high sounding or “reasonable” his “theology” might seem, convince you otherwise!

Let he who has ears hear.

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