

Sunday, November 1, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 6: Understanding Basic Terminology: Revelation

Review/Clarification

- Please note the change in the title above. In the past two weeks, I received feedback from folks watching the classes online that my method of numbering the classes was creating confusion. As a result, I have elected to drop the term number followed by lesson number method for keeping track of the lessons. From here on out, all lessons will just possess a singular numbering system.
- In our last lesson we addressed “The Problem of Exact Sameness” by outlining a continuum of positions with respect to the Bible issue. On one side, we had the Originals Only Position (the view that only the Original Autographs are inspired and inerrant) and on the other side, the King James Inspired position (the view that the KJB was a second divine act of inspiration). In the middle we noted a variety of positions including the following: 1) I Prefer the KJB, 2) Majority Text Only, and 3) *Textus Receptus* or *TR* Only.
- In doing so, we observed that both positions on either side of the continuum are seeking to address the problem of “Exact Sameness” or the fact that there is variance in all manuscript traditions. The Originals Only position was forged by Warfield and Hodge in the late 19th century in response to contemporary attacks on the word of God. Meanwhile the King James Inspired position is a response against the Originals Only view and its advocacy for the Critical Greek Text and its support of modern versions.
- While I stopped short of articulating a position of my own, I did say that truth lies in the middle. The Originals Only crowd is correct in that God did not overtake the pen of every scribe who ever copied God’s word to ensure “Exact Sameness” or verbatim wording. Yet the doctrine of preservation ensures that we possess more than a shell of the “Original Bible” that the scholars are still searching for.
- One of the primary objectives of this class from here on out will be to accurately articulate a position that is both in line with the relevant Biblical doctrines as well as both the textual and historical facts. It is here that I beg your patience as we will begin our study of the Biblical doctrine in this lesson. In short, we cannot put the cart before the horse.
- Furthermore, during our last study, I was asked a question regarding the feasibility of a new translation of the *Textus Receptus* (*TR*) into English. I said that such a translation was “theoretically possible.” I would like to take a few moments to clarify those statements.
- While I hypothetically acknowledge that a new translation of the *TR* into English is possible I am not calling for one. Furthermore, I would be highly skeptical of any such call for the following reasons.
 - The KJB is a literary masterpiece. The extended verb ending “eth” enhances the rhyme and meter of the text.
 - The KJB has a proven track record of being considered the word of God in English for the better part of 400 plus years.

- The KJB, while possessing some archaic language, facilitates study in a way that modern English versions do not.
- The KJB's archaic wording is more precise in conveying the truths of Scripture. For example, the word "ye" is plural whereas the word "you" is singular.
- The KJB clearly maintains the integrity of the dispensational approach to Bible study.
- The KJB's translators were the most scholarly and linguistically gifted group of men ever assembled to complete the task of translating the Bible into English.
- The KJB was produced using the best methodology i.e., the company approach where each company checked the work of the others and culminated in an audible reading of the text.
- The questionable existence of such a company of scholastic men today who would faithfully follow the *TR* when doing the work of translating.

Introduction: Textual Criticism and Christian Faith

- Many encounter problems studying manuscript evidence because they approach the subject from the vantage point of human viewpoint. In other words, the subject is broached with a lack of thorough understanding of the fundamental underlying doctrines.
- "The Christian Church has long confessed that the books of the New Testament, as well as those of the Old, are divine Scriptures, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. . . Since the doctrine of divine inspiration of the New Testament has in all ages stimulated the copying of these sacred books, it is evident that this doctrine is important for the history of the New Testament text, no matter whether it be a true doctrine or only a belief of the Christian Church." But what if it be true? What if the original New Testament manuscripts actually were inspired of God? If the doctrine of divine inspiration of the New Testament is a true doctrine, then New Testament textual criticism is different from the textual criticism of ordinary books." (Hills, 1-2)
- "Thus there are two methods of New Testament textual criticism, the *consistently Christian* method and the *naturalistic method*. These two methods deal with the same materials, the same Greek manuscripts, and the same translations and biblical quotations, but they interpret the materials very differently. The *consistently Christian* method interprets the materials of New Testament textual criticism in accordance with the doctrines of the divine inspiration and providential preservation of the Scriptures. The *naturalistic method* interprets these same materials in accordance with its own doctrine that the New Testament is nothing more than a human book." (Hills, 3)
- Consequently, before proceeding any further with this course we need to thoroughly study the following basic terminology: revelation, inspiration, illumination, and preservation. In this lesson we will focus on revelation. In Lesson 7 we will focus on inspiration and illumination.

- Grounding ourselves in these basic concepts will help us wade through the manuscript and textual issues later on. Possessing the ability to judge the textual and historical information from the vantage point of what the Bible teaches about itself is the only source of clarity on these difficult issues. In short, if our doctrine is correct it ought to commend itself to us in both history and our experience.

Revelation

- Hebrews 1:1—the term “revelation” is talking about God’s disclosure of Himself. Without God taking the initiative and revealing things about Himself, you would never know anything about Him.
- Romans 16:25—*apokalupsis* is the Greek word translated “revelation” and it literally means “to unveil a thing.”
 - I Corinthians 2:7
 - Galatians 1:12
 - Ephesians 3:3
- According to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*, the English word “revelation” carries the following meanings:
 - The act of disclosing or discovering to others what was before unknown to them; appropriately, the disclosure or communication of truth to men by God himself, or by His authorized agents, the prophets and apostles. How that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words. Ephesians 3.
 - That which is revealed; appropriately, the sacred truths which God has communicated to man for his instruction and direction. The revelations of God are contained in the Old and New Testament.
 - The Apocalypse; the last book of the sacred canon, containing the prophecies of St. John.
- Essentially, revelation is *the content of God’s communication to man*. Revelation is God’s disclosure of Himself to mankind. Mankind cannot know anything about God apart from God choosing to reveal Himself to mankind.
- In order for revelation to occur the following three prerequisites or preconditions must exist:
 - A being capable of giving revelation—God is an eternal being (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-4)
 - A being capable of receiving revelation—Man is a rational and moral being made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27)
 - A medium through which revelation can be given—reason and language (Isaiah 1:18, Genesis 2:16-17, 3:8-10) (Geisler, 49)

- Brother Jordan teaches in Grace School of the Bible that there are three types of revelation: natural, special, and written.
- *Natural Revelation*—is the revelation that God has provided of Himself in creation. All men have access to the revelation that God has placed in creation.
 - Romans 1:18-20
 - Psalm 19:1
 - Romans 1:19—God has given natural revelation *in creation* and also *in man*.
 - Romans 2:14-15—there is natural revelation. All men have it. They have it from creation; they have it within themselves from conscience.
- *Special Revelation*—this is what Hebrews 1:1 is referring to.
 - Genesis 18—God appeared to Abraham and conversed with him in his tent.
 - Genesis 32—God wrestled with Jacob.
 - Exodus 3—God appeared to and spoke with Moses in the burning bush.
 - Matthew 16:17—God the Father gave a special revelation to Peter as to the person of Christ.
 - Galatians 2:2—Paul got some information from God that told him to go up to Jerusalem.
- *Written Revelation*—is not just something that God has placed innately in man, or in nature, as a testimony. It is not just a special time when God communicated with somebody, but it is what God caused to be written down.
 - John 20:30-31—God has those things written down for a purpose.
- The main point of revelation is the fact that God communicates, unveils, and reveals himself to mankind. Without revelation man would be incapable of knowing anything about God.
- Other Bible teachers break things down slightly differently. For example, in his *Systematic Theology* Norman Geisler distinguishes between God’s General and Special Revelation.

General Revelation	Special Revelation
In Physical Nature	Bible Alone is Infallible and Inerrant
In Human Nature	Bible Alone Reveals God as Redeemer
In Human History	Bible Alone Has the Message of Salvation
In Human Arts	Bible Alone Contains the Written Norm for Believers
In Human Music	

- Geisler summarizes the relationship between General and Special Revelation as follows.

General Revelation	Special Revelation
God as Creator Norm for Society Means of Condemnation In Nature	God as Redeemer Norm for the Church Means of Salvation In Scripture

(Geisler, 53)

- Dr. Geisler sees the doctrine of revelation as a prerequisite or precondition to Christian Theology. Therefore, he includes a chapter on Revelation in the Prolegomena or Introduction section of his *Systematic Theology*. Other Preconditions identified by Dr. Geisler include the: Metaphysical, Supernatural, Rational, Semantical, Epistemological, Oppositional (Exclusivism), Linguistic, Hermeneutical, Historical, and Methodological.

Works Cited

Geisler, Norman L. *Systematic Theology: In One Volume*. Bethany House, 2011.

Hills, Edward F. *The King James Version Defended*. Christian Research Press, 1956.

Jordan, Richard. *Manuscript Evidence 101*. Grace School of the Bible.