

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT History, Literature and Theology Lecture 2

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A. **[pre-class conversation]** Ok, I'm still working on names, so, you can keep talking, but I'll wander around and ask this gentleman here; what's your name? (Student: I'm Matt.) Another Matt?! Oh dear, we've got two Matt's to contend with. All right, who are you? (Student: I'm Wes) You're Wes.....Who's from Southeastern Pennsylvania? I read your cards; there are at least three of you (maybe you're not here yet) from Southeastern Pennsylvania. Nobody's going to say anything about that? No? Ok. Maybe they're coming from another class. I used to live there; that's why I'm so interested, so I can find out where exactly you're from. Ok. Near Philly? Yeah, are you near Philly? (Student) Which is what particularly? (Student responds) Ok. Do you know the Souderton-Telford area? Northwest of Philadelphia. That's where I used to live. Where are you from? (Student) Oh sure! Yeah. What brought you up to Boston? (Student) That's good. What was your name again? (Student: Wes) Wes, thank you.

It's about time to start, I think. It's cold today, isn't it, in this room? How many of you have had class in this room before? It tends in the wintertime to be chilly, please feel free to bring your blankets. I've had students do that in the past; it's kind of fun. At any rate, if you're using laptops, and you need to have some power supply, there's always this front row, which then makes it easier for me to connect with you, rather than sitting in the back row. But that's all right, we can do that too.

Please notice the announcements. Let me clarify a couple of them a little bit. I won't have this 'please turn off your cell phone thing' every time, but for now, just to get us used to it. Second thing: Carrie's review sessions have now been settled. Did I get it right? (*Carrie Responds*) Ok, great. I got it right. So, Tuesday, and that will mean this coming Tuesday, is when you're starting, I'm guessing that's true. (*Carrie*) Ok? Good. And then Matt won't start until the 26th because obviously we're not having class on Martin Luther King Day. But do, as I said last time, compel yourself to take advantage of

the review sessions. You'll find them eminently helpful and they're certainly going to give you a lot more peace of mind when you get to the day before the exams. I'm still working on your names by the way, and I'll have to do that for the next week and a half or so, and then maybe we'll get it down pat. If you've looked at your syllabus now and have downloaded it you may notice that next Wednesday evening, and that's our next class since we're not having class on Monday, next Wednesday evening there will be a lecture here, which is entirely optional, but I offer it every semester that I teach this class. My husband is an astrophysicist. He's also a strong Christian, so don't let the astrophysics outweigh that in any way; they integrate fairly well. But I always have him come in and give a lecture on the Big Bang as we're starting to discuss Genesis 1 and 2 and creation. I would encourage you to come if you have any interest in those kinds of things, because I think you'll get a good sense that, contrary to some strands of thought, the Big Bang as a scientific construct actually integrates very well with the whole idea of Creation as we see it in Genesis 1. So I'd encourage you to set that time aside if you can. Any problems with Blackboard, any problems with downloading the syllabi, or anything else that you need? We're all set there? Ok. Good.

B. Psalm 100

As I said last time, I always like to start class with a Psalm. And, I'd like you to turn to Psalm 100. Last time we did Psalm 86 verses 10 and 11, but I want to start this day with Psalm 100, because we're going to learn to sing the last verse of Psalm 100. We'll read all of Psalm 100 now, I'll introduce you to the last verse in Hebrew, and then, Lord willing, on Wednesday, we'll learn to sing it. But here we go. "Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth [NIV]." Or if you're reading the King James, "make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands." "Serve the Lord with gladness, come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who has made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise." In other words, this is how we are to come into God's presence as we worship Him. "Give thanks to him, and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." That's the verse

we're going to learn to sing in Hebrew, along with about five other Psalms throughout the course of this semester. So here's the way it is in Hebrew. You never thought you were signing up for a Hebrew class, did you, when you signed up for this class? But you're going to learn about, well, maybe 25 or 30 significant words in Hebrew, and some of the most important ones are right here in Psalm 100 verse 5. I'm giving you a painfully literal English translation of this: "because good is the Lord" - *ki tov Adonai*. "Forever" or literally "to eternity is his *hesed*." We're going to have a lot to say about *hesed* throughout the course of this semester. It's a Hebrew word that really can't be translated. Sometimes your translations have "mercy," sometimes they have "loving kindness," but it really means "everlastingly loyal, covenant love." Try to sing that in one word. So we will stick with *hesed*. It's a word that you have to practice your guttural sounds. Hhhhhh. Got it? Ok. *Hesed*. All right, *le'olam hasdo*. The "O" is on the end of it because pronominal suffixes that are possessives, in other words "his *hesed*," if they're masculine they end up with that "O" sound. Then *ve'ad dor ledor* "unto generation and generation, his faithfulness" - *emunato* (notice *hasdo* and *emanate* - his *hesed*, his faithfulness). Speak that with me if you will. Let's do it slowly. *Ki tov Adonai* (*Students repeat*) *leolam hasdo* (*Students repeat*) Well that didn't sound nearly "hhhh" enough! (*Students repeat*) Start from the beginning again; *ki tov Adonai* (*Students Repeat*) *leolam hasdo* (*Students repeat*) Oh Yes. *Vead dor vedor* (*Students Repeat*) *emunato* (*Students Repeat*) Again, Lord willing, we'll sing that on Wednesday.

C. Opening Prayer

But let's take some time to pray together as we start. "Our gracious God and heavenly Father, precious Redeemer, most holy Spirit of Truth. As we start this day together, we would pray earnestly for your presence with us. Father, teach us by your Spirit, which is living and active. Teach us through your word, which is also living and active. Teach us, Father, because we need to know you and know more about you. Teach us how to love mercy and do justice. Compel us to pray for justice and righteousness and truth, not just for ourselves, but for our communities, for our nation, for the places in the world that are torn apart by injustice and strife. Father, we would be bold to appeal to you

as Master of the universe for peace in Israel, for cessation of hostilities on both sides. Lord, be merciful to your people. And now, as we study together, may your Name be honored and glorified; we ask in Christ's name, with thanksgiving. Amen.”

D. Review from Last Session and Preview of the Day's Topic

Well, let's carry on a little bit here. We are going to talk about revelation and inspiration. Let me warn you ahead of time that what we're doing for most of today is going to be highlighting stuff that you've read, if you've read your assignment for today. So, if you've read the Theological Primer, some of these issues that are doctrinal issues came out in that and I'm going to highlight them. The reason I'm doing it, is because I think they're important. So, is that a clue? It's material you're going to want to know. In addition to that, we're going to talk very briefly about authority, about the idea of the canon of the biblical text, particularly the first Testament, and then about some overarching textual characteristics themselves. If you got the lecture outline downloaded, you know where we're going today.

A couple things to get started with, however. Review. What does TANAK stand for? Go ahead Mary. (Student). Right. *Torah*, which means? (Student) Instruction. *Nebi'im* or Prophets, which includes both historical writings and the writing prophets. And *Kethubim*, which means? (Student) Writings, including our poetry and several other things as well. Great.

Let's look ahead a little bit. This is drawing on what you've read for today. What doctrine is eminently clear in Psalm 19? Your options are: salvation through atonement, redemption via the payment of a price, revelation in nature and in Scripture, or creation and sustaining of the universe. Who says the first one? Nobody. Second one? So far, so good. Third one? We have a few tentative hands, am I counting.....about 5 or 6 or so. Fourth one? Lots of folks doing the fourth one. Here's the answer. The third one. The others are wonderful pieces of truth, and we're going to come to them, but it is in Psalm 19 that we have a very excellent combination that talks first about the heavens declaring the glory of God, and then at the end of the Psalm (that we're going to look at a little bit

later on) it's particularly clear that the Scriptures themselves are revealing things that we need to know. All right, those are our review and preview questions.

E. Introductory Questions Regarding the Nature of Scripture

Some questions that we also want to think about a little bit more....and these are not rhetorical questions, I'm just curious in terms of what you think. Why is it imperative for you and me to have a sound understanding regarding the nature and authority of Scripture? This is something that we don't have very much, even in the Christian context. We often say, "the Bible says..." with no basis for thinking that the Bible has any greater truth than *The Shack*, if anybody's read that. (Has anybody read *The Shack*? Ok. Interesting book. C+ in terms of literary capabilities. Maybe a B in terms of the issues it's dealing with. It's not quite up here with this.) What do you think? Is it *absolutely* necessary? Anybody want to venture into this? Go ahead. (Student responds). Ok. So, if we're indeed going to have a presupposition, and we're going to talk about those in a moment, that the God of the universe, who's transcendent, which has all sorts of implications that we won't get into right now, and also personal, which also has all sorts of implications.... If God has chosen to speak to us, it's really imperative that we have a sense that his word, as embodied in Scripture, is going to have some authority to it. And we want to know something more about it. Anything else? Tell me your name. (Student). You're Kayla? Ok, good. Go ahead. (Student). Good, let me just reiterate what Kayla has said for those of you who may not have been able to hear it. We need to have a sound understanding of the truthful nature of Scripture, and how we can indeed trust that to be truth or otherwise, why even assume that it has anything to say to us? I have really rephrased what you've said. Did I do it ok? Are you all right with that?

Let's go on to a couple more questions; we'll keep moving. As you think of Scripture, what troubles you? We're talking about (at least as far as our presuppositions go) the transcendent God of the universe, making himself accessible to our minds and hearts via words. If that doesn't knock your socks off, or whatever it is you're wearing on your feet today, something's wrong with you. Or else you've just been dulled by too many years of just hearing things and not thinking about them. I know, that sounds really

rude. But we're *all* in this position of being a little bit semi-comatose when it comes to thinking about the real implications of some of these things. Maybe because we've heard them too often. What questions do you have? One of mine is how could this possibly happen? That God himself actually spoke to folks like you and me.

Kayla, is that a question? Yeah? (Student) I'm sorry, say it again. (Student) Right, how can we claim, I'm going to put it in a positive sense, how can we claim that Scripture is infallible? Now what prompts that question? It's a great question. Say it again. (Student). I have a great thing for you to read. I'll put it on Blackboard. It might already be there. But that's a good question: if we've got this text that has come through the hands of human beings, for in some cases thousands of years, how is it that we can claim that it's infallible in its doctrinal statements? In its whole statement as a matter of fact? I'm going to come back to that, I hope, when we talk about 2 Timothy; we'll get there. Any other questions?

Tell me your name. (Student) Susanna. Thanks. (Student). Good, to what extent do we have, if not multiple meanings, at least the possibility of different interpretations from people coming from different contexts, asking different questions, another excellent question. What kind of major are you going to be taking? (Student) Oh, let me encourage you to take Biblical Hermeneutics, where we really do pursue that question at length. It's a good adjunct to the philosophy major. All right, we can go on and on.....do you think your questions have credible answers? I'm going to suggest they do; we may not have the complete answer to anything, but I'm going to suggest the questions that you have, maybe that you haven't asked yet, or been able to phrase at this point, do have some credible answers. I'm only going to begin to give some of them today as I do an overview. Let me encourage you - there are open forums for this class. They're on Wednesday evenings; first one being the Big Bang talk, but after that, please bring your questions to those and we can talk about them further if they don't get answered here. Rather than walking away saying, "this is not a reliable document."

F. Revelation

Artist Illustration All right, we're going to start with this. Rembrandt is one of my favorite painters; you're going to see a lot of him throughout the course of this semester. This is one of his absolutely *lovely* paintings. I hope you can see it from the back. What do you know about the artist as you look at this? Tell me your name. (Student) Nick. Ok. (Student). So, the artist has a profound sense of beauty; can we say that? Is that fair to say? Great. And, he's perceiving nature and able to represent it, which means he's skilled. What else? Should I know your name yet? (Student). Try me again. (Student) Ginger. Thanks. (Student). So, in other words, you're thinking this artist is presenting something about contrasts here. Able to perceive them, able to represent them, and maybe has some kind of a message in mind, although we don't know what that is yet. I mean, you're making some guesses about some moral components that are a part of this. Ok, good. Anything else? Don't tell me. Zach? All right. (Student). Ok, judging by his style, he is a non-contemporary painter. Right, of course we're going to move this back about 500 years as a matter of fact. Good. Anything else that you know about the artist, simply by virtue of looking at this picture? It's presenting beauty. He's skillful enough to present it. He's able to see something about contrasts and perhaps we can guess some implications there. We're going to come back to that idea, but think of this artist, and just think of what we can know *simply by virtue of looking at his work*. Ok? We can know skill, we can know ability, we can know ability to perceive sense of beauty, sense of representing something that is in nature and doing it fairly accurately. Ok? Just hang on to that. Let's go on.

Definition We're going to define "revelation" at this point, and we're going to move on to some things in a moment that may come back to our painting. This is a definition that you don't have to write down, because it's already in your lecture outline notes, *and* it's in the primer. Ok, but it's important to know when we're talking about "revelation." By the way, memorize it; it won't hurt you. This divine self-disclosure teaches otherwise inaccessible truth about God and it draws forth a response. That part of it is also important. As you looked at that picture, you know, you responded in some way. "Oh, I

don't like it. Oh, it's too old fashioned. Oh, that's really wonderful. Oh, he really knew what he was doing getting that bridge in there and color contrast." Some kind of response is there. Another way of thinking about this whole concept, and we're going to look at a couple of passages in a moment that support this, but divine communicative action is another way of thinking about revelation. Ok? Because what this particular phrase communicates to us, is that the Scripture itself, the Scriptures themselves, are not just words. They're words about God's actions, and the words themselves have an active component to them. Hebrews chapter 4 will tell us that. So, divine communicative action, if you like that better than revelation, which maybe has been overworked a little much.

Presuppositions All right, let's carry on a little bit. I mentioned a moment ago that we want to talk about presuppositions here; maybe you want to think of them of foundational understandings. This is not an attempt to prove that God exists. You can go to your philosophy class and try to work through some of those issues, but what I want to do is lay out some of the things that are foundational to our discussion. And yes, they come from looking at Scripture. But I wouldn't say that's circular necessarily. I think we're going to build and have sort of a spiral of understanding here. But first of all, in terms of our presuppositions, we're going to presuppose for now that a divine being, and Scripture does call him God amongst his other names, has indeed chosen to communicate. He's chosen to communicate, and, not only that, he's personal. Now, 'divine being' implies transcendence, at least in our sphere of being, but he's personal as well; those two going together is really remarkable. He's intentional and he's intentional in his communication because his creation, we'll talk more about that later on, has a need. (As for even discussing any of this, that's how we talk about doctrine, that's how we talk about these issues, such as salvation, redemption.) We're needy sorts; the purpose of revelation is the communication of truth, and indeed that is accomplished. We don't know everything there is to know about God; we can't. That's obvious, that's a no-brainer. But, contrary to some schools of thought, we can know enough. We can know enough to know the things that are going to shape and guide our choices, and what it is that God wants us to do in

terms of participating in his kingdom. And here's another thing that we want to keep in mind as well, because a lot of people look at Scripture and say, "well words, words are so inadequate. A picture is worth a thousand words." Well, not necessarily, sometimes a picture, such as the one we looked at a moment ago, needs words in order to understand it better. Ok? So they both have to work together. So words are adequate, fully adequate, even though not perfect, to communicate this, and I want to make a couple of comments here.

Logos Doctrine There's something called the "Logos doctrine" ... (I think it's in the primer that you've read)... One of the things we need to keep in mind is that when God created the universe (Genesis chapter one) he did it by virtue of speaking. And because he did it by virtue of speaking, that tells us something about the connections, and the interrelatedness, and the correspondence between what God says, and what's out there, the created reality that's out there. 'Logos' is a Greek word that means "word." But it has a bunch of other meanings too. Does anybody know what they are? Shouldn't we put Dr. Hildebrandt on the spot. That's wicked. What else does 'logos' mean, Ted? (Dr. Hildebrandt responds) And it also means... when you look at the meaning of 'logos' in a Greek dictionary that's outside the New Testament, it means 'logic' which you'd expect, 'correspondence' – interesting; 'reason' - also very interesting. So if you take that whole pool of meanings, and expand beyond "word," we can see that indeed when God speaks the created order into existence by virtue of simply speaking and simply by virtue of word, there can be a connectedness here between what he says and what we see out there, what we experience, what we measure, and what we re-present. Words talk about natural phenomena; they re-present them. I'm looking down at a desktop here, so are you if you're looking at your desktops. When you talk about it, you are re-presenting it for an audience that is out there. You can't see the one I'm looking at, but I can describe it to you and, by virtue of my words, you get a picture of what it's all about, especially if you've seen one before.

Words also talk about supernatural phenomena. In that case they present them. Now here's a fascinating little datum for you, if you have a little skepticism about

supernatural phenomena, and you can ask my husband more about this next Wednesday night. How many of you are coming from a physics background, or are going to study physics? Anybody? Natural sciences, physics, chemistry? Something of that sort? Maybe? How much of the universe, percentage wise, is stuff that you and I can measure and see, et cetera? How much of it, percentage wise? Do you know? (Student) Probably not a lot, that's great. 4.6 percent. Ok? Now, how do we know that? Because physicists do a lot of experiments; they're talking about things like dark matter and dark energy. Have you heard those terms? Right? Ok. Dark matter and dark energy combined make up about 95 percent of the universe. What they are we don't know. So if what I can talk about, see, measure, touch (I'm baryonic matter, so are you, so is the chair you're sitting on, so is that light up there) is 4.6 percent of the created order of the universe, the rest of it is stuff we can't measure. If that's true in the physical realm, doesn't that give you some kind of... think along an analogy now. If that's true in the physical realm, doesn't that give you some kind of a basis for thinking there is a remarkably complex, wonderful, rich, supernatural realm out there! And the Scriptures begin to talk about those supernatural realms, ok? That's exciting to me. At any rate, I've waxed a little too long on that. Let's go on, pick up some of the things that, again, I want you to highlight from what you've read for today.

Further Presuppositions God is the one who initiates this whole process of revelation. We won't take time to turn to 1 Corinthians 1, but there it's very clear; Paul is saying that humans *do not by their own wisdom come to know God*. This is true because God is holy, we are not. We're sinful. God is infinite, we're finite. And so it's God who initiates this whole process of revealing himself, divine self-disclosure, if you will. Now, I'm not in any way denigrating reason in saying this; it's just that we don't reason our way to God. But we can certainly see and these experiments, for example, that I just mentioned, demonstrate very clearly that there is something out there called dark matter and there is something else out there called dark energy. That's reason; that's the ability of human kind to know that there's *something* that's really remarkable out there, even though we

don't know what it is. So please don't ever get the sense that I am putting down reason in context of this discussion. I'm not.

G. Natural (General) Revelation – Biblical Bases

Well, need to go on just a little bit. We're going to define revelation a little more specifically; I'm going to use some very standard theological categories. The first one is general revelation, sometimes called 'natural revelation.' And we want to look at three passages of Scripture in regard to this; the first one is Psalm 19. So, if you've got your Bible's, let's take a breeze past Psalm 19, remembering that what he's revealing is his power and his attributes, and they're coming through creation. And, by the way, again think of an astrophysicist studying creation - studying stars, also studying black holes, dark matter, dark energy, both components here. At any rate, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day..." In other words, continually. This is an ongoing thing, "He" or "They, pour forth speech. Night after night they display knowledge." The next verse is a little hard to translate, "There is no speech or language, or their voice is not heard." That's the NIV's rendition, "goes out to all the earth to the ends of the world." Ok, so it's everywhere. This tells us that the work of God is evident and is a continual declaration. And again study astronomy, you'll get an appreciation for this in a greater way.

However, the Psalm doesn't stop there, notice that it goes on in verse 7 talking about the nature of the law of the Lord, and then the closing of this Psalm is wonderful because it sort of comes back and, helps us with part of our definition of revelation, which is calling forth a response. Notice verse 12. "Who can discern His errors? Forgive my hidden faults." In other words, the Psalmist is recognizing that he is very easily trapped by self-deception. And he's saying forgive my hidden faults. That's a response simply to the fact that he's been aware of and thinking about revelation and how it comes about. "Keep your servant from willful sins." Not just my hidden faults, but my willful sins. The Psalmist is really aware of the problems that he's got here. "May they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression."

And then, of course, the verse that many of us memorize as we grew up in the

Church, if we did. “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” This is a response. Ok? The revelation has called forth a response.

We see the same thing happening in Romans chapter one, if you want to turn over there. And again, I know I’m reiterating what’s in the primer, but you get the idea that this might be important stuff. Paul has said, starting at verse 16, he’s “not ashamed of the gospel, because it’s the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes.” All right, he’s recognizing the nature of the Gospel. Now, verse 18, “the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of humans who suppress the truth.” Ok, if they’re suppressing it, it must be accessible, and there’s something intentional. That’s a response. Tragically, it’s a negative response. “Suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them. God has made it plain to them.” Verse 20 is the punch line if you want to put it that way. “Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power, and his divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood by what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” Romans 1 is a pretty sobering passage. For what has been made from the things that we can observe out there, we are held accountable, because we’re supposed to know something about God’s divine power and his attributes.

As you looked at that picture earlier on, there are some basic things that we picked up about the artist simply by virtue of looking at the picture. There are some basic things that we pick up about God, simply by virtue of looking at the created order around us and studying it carefully.

Romans 2 - I won’t read the whole of this, I’m going simply to read verse 15. Paul has been making a tremendous argument here and we’re going to keep coming back to Romans throughout the course of this course. But here he’s setting the stage for saying that all humankind is held accountable for what they know. In chapter 1 he’s talked about what we can see in the created order, here comes chapter 2. Verse 15, “we show the requirements of the Torah are written on our hearts, our consciences bearing witness, our thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.” The very fact that we are created

with a conscience that recognizes what is good, as opposed to what is evil, and knows when we choose what's wrong. You guys, I think, read *Mere Christianity*, right, for CCC? Is that right? Do you remember his arguments there? People know what's right and wrong, and we know what's fair, and we know when we've been offended by something that somebody else has done against us. There's an intrinsic nature there that says, "that's not fair!" especially when it's been done against me. C.S. Lewis is simply drawing on what's theologically stated here in Paul's epistle to the Romans. There's much more we could say about that, but we need to go on.

H. Special Revelation

The Need for Something More We can get a whole lot from general revelation. Let's use our painting. What *don't* you know about that painting, picking up on... Ginger was it you who was talking about light and darkness? Right. You were sort of trying to, wisely, read in some motives perhaps, or some ideas, or some thoughts that Rembrandt might have had. But did you know for sure? I mean, maybe he was just painting a cloud and bright sky. What else don't we know about that painting? Remember it had a bridge. It had trees. Help me out with your name. Ok, we don't know the movement of the clouds, we don't know the weather patterns, we don't know how that might affect what's going on on the ground. Good. What else don't you know? We don't know why he painted it. We'd like to guess. We have really no idea, unless he were to write some kind of a document that says, "in the year such and such, I decided to paint this, and I was motivated to do this, because..." and then giving it to you because I like you, or whatever. Those are the things you don't know. You don't know motives, you don't know will, you don't know intentions.

The same is true in terms of God and his revelation. We can know a whole lot about him, but apart from special revelation, there are some things we simply don't know. And, therefore, we need to talk about the word of God. Again, a term that theologians use by way of contrast to general, or natural, revelation is "special revelation" - verbal statement of primarily propositional truth, which I'm going to define in a moment, regarding God's character. Again, we didn't know the character of

Rembrandt. We don't know exactly what he was like, simply by looking at that painting. We know God is powerful, but is he powerful for good? Is he a benevolent power? Or a malevolent power? We know that once we come to read Scriptures. God's character and will, the meaning of human existence, as well as the nature of the spiritual realm, are the things that special revelation so beautifully articulates for us. And, by the way, just a little bit of a definition here; when people use the expression 'propositional truth,' it has this meaning. It's not, "oh, I've got a proposition for you." Instead, it's talking about statements that have truth and falsehood components to them, ok? That chair is in front of me. That's a truth statement. "Ahhh, woe is me!" is not. Ok? That's an emotive statement, something expressing that I'm feeling kind of awful, but the "ahhh, woe is me!" well, you can infer from it something, but it's not a propositional statement necessarily.

Revelation in Word In terms of categories and special revelation, we want to talk specifically about word, because it is word in Scripture; it's word in the person of Jesus Christ. And, of course, the Scriptures are really kind of interesting in that you can think of them sort of like a big X if you will. All the stuff in the First Testament is looking forward to the place that the two lines of the X join. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all things after it are looking back and interpreting that Christ event. The Gospels tell us about it, the Epistles talk about the implications of it, and have exhortations and terms of how to live in regard to that. And, of course, isn't it interesting that the X is representative of the Greek letter Chi, *Christos*. Ok? And so, all those things kind of fit together. All right, that's been too long on that. We need to keep going.

Words of Scripture, word in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, and then by mighty act and prophetic instructive word, that kind of draws it all together, coming all the way back to our comment earlier, 'divine communicative action.' Are we doing ok so far? I'm looking at the time. Any questions? Have I been blathering and twaddling to the point where I've lost you? Yes? Supernatural. Yes, that would work just fine. The reason I call it special is because it is indeed set apart in a way, and it doesn't have to necessarily use the term supernatural. It's a fine term to use, but once you have

the text, it's there as written text, when you have Jesus as Jesus incarnate, he's a human being. Now, granted, he's fully God, but he's also fully human. And people experienced him in that context as fully human. But, it's fine if you want to use that in contrast, that's great. Any other questions? Ok, we've got a little bit more to do.

I. Inspiration - Definition

And this gets to some of the questions that were brought up earlier, and hopefully we can address a few of those at least. This is another definition, to be perfectly honest with you, I'd like you to memorize. Do you know that your brains have a phenomenal capacity for memory? Much more than we give them credit for. I have to tell you about my favorite hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, anybody know that name? A woman who was blind. Do you know how much Scripture she memorized? All the Gospels, all the Psalms, and by the time she was in her 30's, she decided to start working on the minor prophets. And I have trouble with a verse or two. So, you know, memorize some of these things. Memorize some Scripture; it's great. At any rate, [inspiration] "is a special act of the Holy Spirit" - here's the thing, and we'll look at the passages about this in a moment. The Holy Spirit is guiding the writers of Scripture to accomplish some things, and there are a couple of 'so that's' that I want you to have in mind here. "So that their words would convey the thoughts" (this is not a dictation process, but their words will indeed convey the thoughts) that the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, wants communicated." The second "so that," is "they'll bear a proper relationship to the rest of Scriptures;" in other words there's not going to be blatant contradictions and discrepancies here. That doesn't mean it's simple. There are some very interesting things that are part of this coherence, and they're complex. But nevertheless, there is going to be a coherence--proper relationship to the rest of the Scriptures.

And then, of course, the third 'so that' is also very important; they "should be infallible in thought, fact, doctrine, and judgment." Now, this is, of course, where sometimes antennas go up. What does 'infallible' imply? How do we understand that particularly with regard to the fact? Thought, doctrine, judgment, you know those are theological constructs, but what about fact? Can we say that the Scriptures are infallible

in terms of facts as well? Of course, the areas where this really becomes a challenge for some folks are the areas of science and history. In regard particularly to science, come on Wednesday next, because some of those might be addressed from the scientific perspective, just in one area of creation. At any rate, thought, fact, doctrine, judgment.

J. Expanding the Definition of Inspiration

Let's take a quick look at first an expansionist definition, and then at some of the passages, and we'll come back to what it is Paul says to Timothy. Here's the important issue: the Holy Spirit doesn't squelch those writers of Scripture. Instead, he enhances who they are in their cultural backgrounds, with their particular capabilities. So, you need a combination of cultural background. For example, when Jeremiah has to write, how many of you were in chapel on Wednesday? Remember when Dean Carmer spoke from Jeremiah? Right? And the kind of things that Jeremiah was enduring in his cultural context, which was his nation falling apart around him. You know, what Jeremiah has to say was shaped by who he was and what was going on around there. It's going to be quite different from what Isaiah would say some years before that. So cultures and cultural context are going to shape--personalities as well. Language, backgrounds, et cetera. The point is that regardless of when these writers are living and who they are, the Holy Spirit is going to ensure that what is said in Scripture is both culturally relevant, as well as transcending culture so that it speaks to you and me as well. That's the thing we need to keep in mind. It will speak to you and me. It's particular in terms of its historical background. We study that and we want to know it, just like we want to go back and find out when Rembrandt painted and why. But it also transcends cultures, the words of Scripture, just like looking at that painting as a good deal of beauty that transcends culture, so Scripture transcends in terms of its truth.

K. Biblical Bases for Doctrine of Inspiration

Well, I have something else coming up here. What does the Bible say about itself? And just so that we want to circumvent the problem here, Aristotle, none other than Aristotle, says something, and I think it's important to keep in mind as we start talking about what the Bible says about itself, because some people may say, "oh, you can't go to

the Bible to find out what it's all about in terms of whether it's truthful and reliable!" Aristotle, a fairly decent philosopher I think would be fair to say, said the following about texts - "the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to him or herself in our culture." So, in other words, we as readers don't have a greater say in terms of the component parts, and the nature, and the authority, and the reliability of the text, than does the author himself. At any rate, the New Testament text over and over again says 'thus saith the Lord.' That says something to us. It's God speaking through prophets, yes, but it's God speaking.

And then, of course, this is the one we want to land on just a little bit--2 Timothy. If you've got your Bibles, it's probably worth looking at it - chapter three. Notice this is Paul talking, and Paul is not talking about the originally penned manuscripts when he's talking to Timothy. I'll start with verse 14, "But as for you, continue in what you've learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you've learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures." From whom did Timothy learn Scripture? Do you know? If it says "from infancy," take a good guess. It's his mother, isn't it? And, interestingly enough, they're actually named - "your mother, Eunice, and your grandmother, Lois" - in chapter one. We have the names of the individuals who have taught Timothy. And Paul's simply affirming that "you know those from whom you've learned, and how from infancy you've known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ." So a purpose of Scripture is that it is "able to make you wise for salvation." And then of course, here's the passage we're really aiming for in terms of the nature of Scripture. As Paul is writing this, he says, "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Now, what Paul is saying is that all these Scriptures, not just the parts you and I like, but all these Scriptures are here because God has breathed them (we'll come to Second Peter in a moment in terms of the Spirit's work), and he's breathed them that they might accomplish the important purposes of teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. That's pretty

comprehensive. Which Scriptures are these? Well, most likely the First Testament. Most likely already in translation, because Timothy was living in Ephesus.

Well we need to also look at Second Peter. This gives us a little window into the role of the Holy Spirit in this process. Peter's going to say in verse 16, "we didn't follow cleverly invented stories, we were eyewitnesses." I didn't put that up here, that's actually starting on verse 16, but please notice the importance of eyewitnesses. In the first century, when Peter is writing, when the Gospel writers are writing, when Paul is writing, eyewitnesses who were actually involved in events were deemed *the most* reliable sources for the truthfulness and the veracity of an event. It's not a wonder that Paul will emphasize eye-witnesses in 1 Corinthians 15. It's not a wonder that Peter does the same thing. It says we were eyewitnesses.

But having said that, notice verse 19. "We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it." Verse 20, "Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." That's what lots of scholars say now. Do you know that? There's lots of folks who write about the Old Testament that say, "well it's just the product of the community, a particular religious community," or, pardon me "communities, throughout the span of a thousand years or so, and these people came up with their own ideas in terms of relationship with God, and a divine being, and spirituality." Peter's saying, "No. No, that's not true."

Instead, verse 21, "For prophecy didn't have its origin in the will of humankind. Men spoke from God as they were carried along by [none other than] the Holy Spirit." This is what the text says about itself; we need to take it seriously.

Not only that; as Matthew presents the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus affirms the ongoing importance and truthfulness of the Old Testament. "Not a jot or a tittle is going to pass away from it," he says. And then, interestingly enough, John chapter 14 has Jesus words as well. What does Jesus...? Well, what's going on in John 14? You guys have come from New Testament, I think? Last semester, right? What's happening in John chapter 14? Does anybody remember? He's got a band of very

faithful followers; they're in the upper room. All right, that's what he's talking about at the last supper, and he says, he promises the coming of the Holy Spirit in chapter 14. Also in chapter 16 it's reiterated. And one of the things he says the Holy Spirit is going to do is "teach and remind you." Now, gathered in that room were some of the folks who were going to be writing Scriptures later on, and the Holy Spirit would serve to remind them of the events, and do it properly in terms of their writing of them.

Paul will also say, and I won't turn to this, but in Ephesians chapter 2 he talks about this whole building, that is, the church, being built on the foundation of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone, with the prophets and the apostles, notice he equates both of them, prophets being the First Testament writers, the apostles being those who are contemporaries of Paul. Paul puts both of those on the same footing in terms of their truthfulness in addressing the Christ event, if you will, of the revelation of God. So, that's a brief thumbnail sketch in terms of what the Bible says about itself; you've read about that already, I trust, if you've read "The Primer."

L. Authority of Scripture

We need to carry on a little bit, and just make a couple of comments about authority. One of you mentioned earlier the importance of inspiration and knowing the nature of the text in terms of our accepting it as authoritative in our lives. If it's a text, if we firmly believe that this is a text which God has revealed, and is inspired by him, how on earth can it not be authoritative? What foolishness if we don't affirm its authority in our lives? As my pastor at Park Street Church repeatedly says (Gordon Hugenberger, you'll hear me over and over referring to him because he's a wise person): "if God is the Designer, and you're the person that's been designed, then here we've got the owner's manual. We might as well take the words pretty seriously from the Designer in terms of how to function." That's what the Scriptures serve as. Ok, at any rate we submit to that authority as the rule of faith and practice, and I want to talk more about that in just a moment when I talk about canon.

But are there any questions so far? I know I've just skimmed the surface. I know I've skimmed the surface in terms of these issues of inspiration and revelation, but any

questions before we move on to talk about canon a little bit? Sarah? (Student). Yeah, it's a great question, when does the New Testament become recognized as authoritative? Well, my easy, nasty answer to you is come take Biblical Hermeneutics where we deal with that at length. Here's a quick, quick response: it's apparent that right away Paul knows that he's writing something that's profoundly important. The very fact that he'll equate, as I said earlier, apostles and prophets and say, that is what you need to listen to, with the chief cornerstone being Christ. Peter's going to do the same thing. When Peter in Second Peter chapter 3, is talking about, I think it's verse 16, but it's somewhere or other, 15, 16, he's talking about the writings of Paul. And he says, "You know, some people distort the writings of Paul, they're a little hard to understand," but he says, "some people distort the writings of Paul, *as they do other Scriptures.*" And he's using the word "Scripture" there to refer to what Paul is writing, in addition to what other people are doing too. So it's kind of an interesting recognition right away that you've got something going on here that's significant. Already at the end of the first century one of the Church Fathers whose name was Clement, was quoting Scripture, and clearly doing it as authoritative, and this just grows and grows and grows, in terms of ongoing numbers of people and communities around the Roman, well, around the Mediterranean Sea. Let's say that they are recognizing this text as authoritative. Having said that, I'll say this in a minute when we talk about canon, but it's pretty clear to me, at least this is my affirmation, that the Holy Spirit didn't die in 50 AD. Ok? And I would submit to you the Holy Spirit is as active in forming and shaping the canon of Scripture as he was in inspiring the text in Scripture. And I think that's important to keep in mind, sometimes, you know, there are those of us who think only of the Holy Spirit in terms of inspiration, and then the Holy Spirit in terms of the charismatic gifts that are part of some of our backgrounds. But the Holy Spirit's role is also extremely important in terms of shaping the canon. That's who does it.

M. Canon

Continued Response to Previous Question By the time you have the demise of the apostolic witness, in other words, those who were there, who saw, who were

eyewitnesses to what Jesus does, that's the end of canonical text. Now, certainly you have important things going on and you know I wouldn't in any way deny for a moment that the councils, as they appealed to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, are certainly being guided by that. But I wouldn't say it's the same thing you have when you've got the actual production of the text. But I see the force of your question, because if I'm going to talk about the Holy Spirit shaping the canon, I don't put that as late as the church councils, I know some people do, but I think New Testament canon is actually pretty much affirmed by second century. I know that runs contrary to what a lot of people's say, some folks don't allow to be recognized as canonical until the fourth century, with Athanasius' list of canonical books. But I think we've got something earlier.

But interestingly enough, you've got Origen, who makes a fairly nice sweep in the third century and finds that the lists of people, of texts that people are recognizing as canonical, are pretty uniform. And then you can back up to the Muratorian canon as well, which is second century. Now, again, some people have trouble dating that thing. But, by and large, it's a second century text and that is listing for us the books that are a part of the New Testament. It's a knotty issue, but I'm trying to make a little bit a distinction between what we have in terms of the close of the first century, the close of the written canon, certainly affirming the Holy Spirit's activity in preserving that canon, and the community's recognition of that canon. Now, how that works its way out in terms of how the councils work, I don't know. But, I guess I'd like to make a bit of a distinction, if that makes any sense to you. We can pursue it further; come to open Forum, we'll push it a little further.

Definition of Canon Let me say a couple things about canon before we run out of time here. The word "canon" is actually a Hebrew word, and a Greek word for that matter, and it's a word that is originally used to describe a reed, papyrus reed. Papyrus reeds grow to be somewhere between 12 and 15 feet tall, so it becomes a very great thing that is a measuring stick. And so that is our kind of derived meaning from which we're going to get two parallel uses of the term "canon" in the context that we're talking about it. It is something with which we measure; the first idea of this is folks develop criteria for

determining whether certain books were authoritative or not. In other words, whether they were going to be canonical. And those criteria were the measuring standards. So the canon functions in that way, ok? We measure whether books are canonical. The two basic ones, with regard to Old Testament, as a matter of fact New Testament as well, are whether or not something is theologically orthodox: Is it teaching truths that fit with the rest of Scripture? For example, those of you who know the Deutero-canonical texts, or the Apocryphal texts, and have read them, are aware that there's fascinating stuff in there. But, for example, if you read the book of Tobit, which is one of those texts, there are some rather odd magical events going on; there's probably a rather unorthodox approach to how you deal with dead bodies and what kind of merit that earns you. You know, those things don't exactly fit well with theological orthodoxy. Likewise, they have to be historically accurate. Those two things are generally speaking the tests; there are several others, but those are the major ones. I've already mentioned the role of the Holy Spirit.

Second thing in terms of measuring: Ok, so the first measuring idea is that we're talking about measuring the texts themselves; are they going to meet the criteria and therefore become considered "canon"? The second avenue of exploration is that the canon becomes a measuring stick for us as we affirm the authority of that text. Are we going to indeed live up to the practices and the beliefs that it sets forth for us? So canon has those two kinds of applications.

Well, two more things we need to do, and we'll do them fast. What are the characteristics of the text as we have it? Well, it's been copied and translated. The minute you get something into people's hands, you know that we're humans and we are fallible. The truths that God reveals are not fallible. But we're talking about a process of copying and a process of translation, and again I'll post on Blackboard, if I already haven't, a quick article that may help you think through this a little bit. Then we have to recognize that our own finiteness and our own fallibilities get involved in this process. We've got to recognize that. The second thing we've got to know, and we're going to pick this up right away when we start doing Genesis, this text of the First Testament is composed of different sources. Even the whole 39 books come from a span of, if we're going to

assume Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, somewhere in the 1400's, probably right on through the 400's if we're talking Malachi, in that general time frame. Within those books, Moses himself was using sources. We need to acknowledge that, talk about it, figure out how it works. There are different genres, different kinds of literature if you will. "Torah" does indeed mean instruction, but there's also narrative in there. The history books *are* history books. They talk about events as they unfold in the light of God's covenant people. There's poetry, there's prophecy (and by the way the prophecy includes lots of poetry). So, there are all kinds of different genres that are going to be wound into this; we need to recognize that. And then, finally, this is where the book *Old Testament Parallels* comes in. In the past, some folks have kind of resisted reading *Old Testament Parallels*. Let me encourage you to absorb what's there, and recognize that there's a cultural context within which these texts are rising, and *Old Testament Parallels* is going to give you a little bit of a flavor of that wider cultural context. So will *Our Father Abraham*, Dr. Wilson's book. Because that gives us the whole Jewish context as an ongoing history of understanding this text within Judaism.

Alright, it's 10 past 10 and we've raced through this last part very quickly. One of the things that I will always wish you on Friday, and it's Friday today, I think, is *Shabbat Shalom*. That's a Jewish greeting, if you will. *Shabbat* means rest; peace, *Shalom*. So, *Shabbat Shalom*.

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