

**ACBC Exam Study Guide**  
**Theology Exam 4**

**Q: Define general revelation and special revelation and describe the nature of their authority as well as their relationship to one another.**

**1. Definitions**

**A. Revelation**

XII. The Doctrine of Revelation. God discloses himself to humanity in two ways. Special revelation is God's disclosure of himself to his people in the pages of Scripture. General revelation is God's disclosure of himself to the entirety of humanity in the things that have been made. General revelation and special revelation each come from God and so are of equivalent authority, though they differ in content. Special revelation discloses detailed information about the character of God and how to live all of life in a way that honors him. General revelation is a disclosure of the beauty and power of God, which leads to judgment. The subject matter of general revelation is the character of God, and not mere facts about the created order. General revelation requires special revelation to be properly understood and applied.<sup>1</sup>

**B. General Revelation**

“God's witness of Himself to all men of all times.”<sup>2</sup>

“God's disclosure of himself to the entirety of humanity in the things that have been made... General revelation is a disclosure of the beauty and power of God, which leads to judgment. The subject matter of general revelation is the character of God, and not mere facts about the created order.” (ACBC)

**1) Creation (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-31; Genesis 1:26-28)**

**2) Conscience (Romans 2:14-15, 13:5, Acts 14:16-17)**

“That there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute, since God himself, to prevent man from pretending ignorance, has endued all men with some idea of his Godhead, the memory of which He constantly renews and occasionally enlarges, that all to a man being aware that there is a God, and that He is their Maker, may be condemned by their own conscience when they neither worship him nor consecrate their lives to his service...we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to behold him.”<sup>3</sup> Calvin's Institutes

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<sup>1</sup> XII. The Doctrine of Revelation. <https://biblicalcounseling.com/certification/standards-of-doctrine/>

<sup>2</sup> Definition from Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries conference of 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. (Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, 1996), p 129.

“God’s self-disclosure through creation and conscience that helps man to understand (1) that there is a God and (2) everyone has violated God’s standard and thus has a great need.”<sup>4</sup>

### C. Special Revelation (Psalm 19:7-11; Romans 1:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)

“Special revelation is God’s disclosure of himself to his people in the pages of Scripture... Special revelation discloses detailed information about the character of God and how to live all of life in a way that honors him.” (ACBC)

Theophanies (Genesis 2, 18, 32; Exodus 3, 14, 19, 24, 33, 40)

Visions and Dreams (Joseph and Isaiah)

Incarnation and ministry of Jesus (John 1, 8:19, 14:9; Hebrews 1:1-3)

Prophecy and sign gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14)

God’s Word for us today (2 Tim. 3:14-17; Romans 15:4)

## 2. The Nature of Their Authority

“General revelation and special revelation each come from God and so are of equivalent authority, though they differ in content.” (ACBC)

The Bible “demands absolute subjection on the part of man.”<sup>5</sup>

*“The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws.”* (Grudem; Systematic Theology; pg. 116)

## 3. The Relationship to One Another

“General revelation requires special revelation to be properly understood and applied.” ACBC

### Resources:

Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, rev. ed. (Moody, 2008), 158-161.

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 122-124.

Wayne Mack & John MacArthur, eds., *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* (Word, 1994), 71-78. (NOTE: Reprinted 2005 version entitled: *Counseling: How To Counsel Biblically*).

Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Baker, 1983), 177-223.

ACBC Standards of Doctrine, *XII. The Doctrine of Revelation*. <https://biblicalcounseling.com/certification/standards-of-doctrine/>

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<sup>4</sup> Definition from Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries conference of 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. (Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, 1996), p 164.