



Revelation Beyond the Bible?

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Is there revelation beyond the Bible?

- Of course there is!
- General Revelation
 - Revelation of God in nature and in conscience
 - Ps 19:1-4
 - Rom 1:18-20
 - Acts 14:15-17



General Revelation

1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

2 Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.

3 There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.

4 Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world...

Psa 19:1-4 (NIV)



General Revelation

18 (NIV) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Rom 1:18-20



General Revelation

15 (NIV) "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way.

17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." Acts 14:15-17



Is there revelation beyond the Bible?

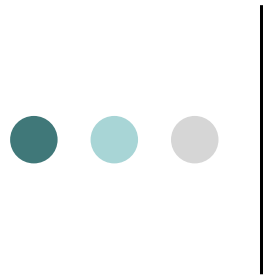
- Of course there is!
- General Revelation
- Special Revelation in Bible times not recorded or not preserved, e.g.:
 - John 20:30; 21:25
 - 1 Cor 5:9
 - 1 Chron 28:11,12,19



Many Acts & Words of Jesus

John 20:30-31 (NIV) Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 21:25 (NIV) Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.



Probably some apostolic teaching, even a letter...

1Cor 5:9-10 (NIV) I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- 10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.



Old Testament

- Probably numerous words of Moses and the prophets
- God's plans for the temple:
 - 1Chr 28:11-12 (NIV) Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.
 - See also verse 19



Our Concern Here

- Here we are concerned with what is happening today...
- Do we have continuing revelation today?
- If we exclude general revelation, this is a hot topic of controversy, and not so easily answered as we might like.



Do We Have Continuing Revelation Today?



Rev 22:18-20

...is commonly used to exclude continuing revelation.

Rev 22:18-19 (NIV) I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.



But...

- By itself, Rev 22:18-19 is not decisive.
- Similar statements appear in:
 - Deut 4:2
 - Prov 30:5-6
 - Both earlier than the completion of the Bible, so not intended to rule out continuing revelation.
- Rev 11:3ff indicates God will send two witnesses as prophets in the last days.



Deuteronomy 4:2

Deut 4:1-2 (NIV) Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

2 Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.



Proverbs 30:5-6

Prov 30:5-6 (NIV) Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

6 Do not add to his words,
or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.



Revelation 11:3ff

Rev 11:3-6 (NIV) "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. 6 These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.



A Case from Salvation History

- A stronger case can be made by looking at salvation history.
- Suppose we divide up salvation history into five eras:
 - Pre-Mosaic
 - Mosaic
 - Prophetic
 - Messianic
 - Apostolic



Pre-Mosaic Period

- Abraham and patriarchs
- Here the Mosaic era is predicted
 - Gen 15:13-16 (NIV) Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. 15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. 16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."



Mosaic Period

- Moses and the Exodus
- Here the coming of prophets is predicted.
 - Deut 18:14-15 (NIV) The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so. 15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.



Prophetic Period

- The various prophets of the Old Testament
- Here the coming of the Messiah is predicted.
 - Psalm 22
 - Isaiah 7, 9, 53
 - Daniel 9



Messianic Period

- The ministry of Jesus
- Here the activity of the apostles is predicted.
 - John 14:25-26 (NIV) "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."
 - John 16:12 (NIV) "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."



Apostolic Period

- The activities of the apostles
- Here the second coming of Christ is predicted.
 - Frequently in the New Testament
 - Only others predicted:
 - Two witnesses
 - Beast (Antichrist) & False Prophet
 - False prophets
 - False Christs



Salvation History

- But even here, those claiming to have special revelation can point to Acts 2:17-20:
 - Acts 2:17 (NIV) In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
- It is hard to argue this was explicitly intended to cease when the apostles died.



What about written revelation?

- For this, we can make a strong case that the Book of Revelation is explicitly designed as a mirror-image of Genesis to form a sort of bookend:
 - Creation
 - Curse
 - Death
 - Tree of Life
 - Paradise
 - God's Presence



What about written revelation?

- Therefore, we should not expect more written revelation.
- This would not rule out more informal, unwritten revelation like that of Agabus, etc. (Acts 11:27-28; 21:8-11)
- It is not possible to say beyond a quibble whether there is additional revelation today, but...



What about written revelation?

- ... frequent references to false prophets, false Christs, the antichrist, etc., suggest that the burden of proof is on one claiming to be a prophet.
- It is better not to go beyond Scripture in seeking to give a dogmatic answer, but rather handle the problem the way Scripture does.



How Should We Distinguish True Revelation from False?

Biblical Tests



Tests for True Revelation

- Presence of Miraculous Signs
- Prediction without Error
- Message Fitting Previous Revelation
- Lifestyle Consistent with Holiness



Presence of Signs

Miracles distinguish fake revelation from real supernatural:

- Deuteronomy 13:1-2
- 1 Kings 13:3
- 2 Kings 20:8



Deuteronomy 13:1-2

Deut 13:1-2 (NIV) If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder,
2 and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place...



1 Kings 13:3-5

1Kin 13:3-5 (NIV) That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out."

4 When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back.

5 Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD.



2 Kings 20:8-11

2Kings 20:8-11 (NIV) Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, "What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the LORD on the third day from now?" 9 Isaiah answered, "This is the LORD's sign to you that the LORD will do what he has promised: Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?" 10 "It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps," said Hezekiah. "Rather, have it go back ten steps." 11 Then the prophet Isaiah called upon the LORD, and the LORD made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.



Presence of Signs

- But Satan has supernatural powers too!
- So while this test rules out mere charlatans, it does not rule out supernaturally-empowered false prophets.



Prediction without Error

This is a fail-safe test, since only God can predict the future without error:

- Deuteronomy 18:20-22
- 1 Kings 22:24-28
- Isaiah 44:24-28



Deuteronomy 18:20-22

Deut 18:20-22 (NIV) "But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."
21 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" 22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.



1 Kings 22:24-28

1Kin 22:24-28 (NIV) Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from {[24] Or Spirit of} the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked. 25 Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room." 26 The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son 27 and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.'" 28 Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"



Isaiah 44:24-28

Isa 44:24-28 (NIV) "This is what the LORD says... I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, 25 who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, 26 who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be built,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,' 27 who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,' 28 who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." ' "



Prediction without Error

- Yet Satan can occasionally get a prediction right...
- And we may misinterpret the meaning of a prediction...
- And some predictions haven't come true yet that may in the future...
- So additional tests are desirable.



Consistent Message

The message must be consistent with previous divine revelation:

- Deuteronomy 13:1-3
- Galatians 1:8-9
- 1 John 4:1-3



Deuteronomy 13:1-3

Deut 13:1-3 (NIV) If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, 2 and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," 3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.



Galatians 1:8-9

Gal 1:8-9 (NIV) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!



1 John 4:1-3

1 John 4:1-3 (NIV) Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.



Consistent Message

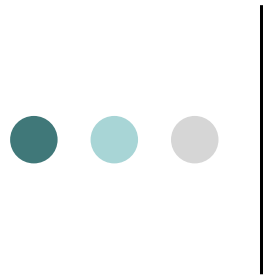
- This is a good test, combined with the others.
- A charlatan may initially have a good message, but he won't have supernatural powers.
- Satan cannot afford to continually agree with the Bible!



Consistent Lifestyle

A lifestyle consistent with biblical holiness is also a good test.

- Matthew 7:15-23
- 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12



Matthew 7:15-23

Matt 7:15-23 (NIV) "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit....21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' "



2 Thessalonians 2:7-12

2Thes 2:7-12 (NIV) For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.



Summary on the Tests

- Presence of Miraculous Signs
- Prediction without Error
- Message Fitting Previous Revelation
- Lifestyle Consistent with Holiness



Conclusions

- It will not be possible to convince all Christians that prophecy & revelation have ceased.
- We should not therefore resort to strained interpretations to try to make our point.
- Rather we should apply biblical tests for recognizing true & false prophets.
- Notice these tests require us to:
 - Know the Bible
 - Know what righteousness looks like
 - Use our God-given mental powers rather than surrender them to our teachers.



The End

Whether there will be true revelation continuing to the end is debatable; that there will be continuing false revelation is not!