**ILLUMINATION**

**The sixth and final step** of this process of bringing the Bible from God to us today is called Illumination. Illumination is what happens when I read the TRUTH,

**that** God **revealed** to the prophets by communicating it directly to their minds,

**that** the Holy Spirit i**nspired** through the life and experience of the prophets to write down in such a way that it

 was without error and exactly what God wanted communicated,

**that** God then **preserved** from loss or alteration through thousands of years,

**that** God **canonized** using the work of Godly scribes and scholars to recognize, collect and organize,

**that** God continually **uses** learned people to translate from the original linguistic expressions of the text, into the

 common languages of people all across the planet, **w**hen I pick it up and read those same words today,

**that God has** sovereignly, meticulously, step by step brought through time and space, and the Spirit of God

 takes those words and applies it to my heart, and brings it to life, and gives me understanding of it, **That is Illumination,**.and without it, the process would be incomplete. Every believer has had the experience of reading the Scripture and suddenly it is as though the words jump off the page and imbedded themselves in their souls. They met a particular need, or revealed the will of God for a particular purpose, or solved a certain problem.

**Definition:** “Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit that opens one’s spiritual eyes to comprehend the meaning of the Word of God”. It is the continued work of the Spirit by which He causes enlightened understanding of doctrine and how it should be applied to life.

**Without Revelation** we would have no truth.

**Without Inspiration** we would have no written truth.

**Without Preservation** some of the truth would be lost and we could not be certain of the accuracy of writings

 that claim to be truth.

**Without Canonization** we would not have **all** of the truth.

**Without Translation** we would not be able to read the truth. And -

**Without Illumination** we would not be able to understand the truth.

An Important Distinction of Illumination. Illumination should never be confused with Revelation and Inspiration…

Revelation is the communication of Divine truth [*New, ever before revealed truth*] to the mind of the prophet.

**Inspiration** is the transmission of that same truth, by the prophet, under the influence of the Holy Spirit,

 through the life experience of the prophet, to the parchment.

**Illumination** is the recognition and comprehension of ***previously revealed*** truth.

**Illumination is not receiving new truth.** That would be Revelation and God is no longer giving Special Revelation to man. We believe in a closed canon. That is, when the canon of scripture was completed with the writing of the book of Revelation, God ceased to give divine revelation. **Revelation 22:18** *“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.”* This is one way we know the writings and books of non-christian cults are not the word of God…

**There are five major characteristics used to identify cults.**

1. They all deny the deity of Christ.

2. They all look to a founder who claims that he or she has been chosen to restore the true Church to the earth...

3. They all mix truth with error. They will use just enough truth to make it attractive…

4. They all teach salvation by works. Only genuine Christianity teaches salvation by Grace alone, through Faith alone, in Christ alone.

**5. They all have a body of writing that they claim to be “The Word of God”.**

 **Mormonism** has the Book of Mormon, Doctrines and Covenants, The Pearl of Great Price.

 **Scientology** – has Dianetics, and the other writings of its founder, L. Ron Hubbard.

 **Christian Science** – has Health, Science, and the Key to the Scriptures by Mary Baker Glover Patterson

 Eddy.

The problem is that any additional revelation would be an addition to the book of **Revelation** and would fall under the curse in **Revelation 22:18** At the end of the first century and the completion of the last book in the New Testament, God stopped giving Special Revelation, **but He still provides Illumination**.

**Ok, now that we know what illumination is, let’s talk about who can receive illumination?**

**I. Only Believers Can Experience Illumination: 1Corinthians 2:14** "*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned*."

An unsaved person cannot understand the message of the Bible. He may understand the historical context or glean some philosophical insight, but he will never understand the Spiritual message of the Bible. The unsaved person here, is the person who is "*without the Spirit".* **Romans 8:9** "*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*" So an unbeliever does not have the Holy Spirit living in them, and as a result cannot be taught but the Spirit. **John 14:26** "*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*."

Through illumination of the Word, the Holy Spirit provides believers the capacity to discern divine truth.

**Psalm 119:18** *“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.”*

**:33-34** *“Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.”*

In **Luke 24** after the resurrection, Jesus has appeared to his disciples and he is explaining to them, what has transpired. **Luke 24:44** *“Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”*Now notice verse **:45***“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,”*

But an unsaved person can never experience illumination and so will never understand the truths revealed in Scripture. **John 5:37-39** *“And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,”*

A person without the Spirit, cannot, by human knowledge, or determination. or education, or even computation, figure out the Bible.

Only believers can truly understand the Word of God.

**II. Only Believers Walking in Obedience can Experience Illumination. I Peter 2:1-2** *“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,,”* **(NKJV)** Notice that **before** Peter encourages believers to grow in the Word of God, he first tells us to put aside *“all* *malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking”.* James tells us in **James 1:21** (NKJV), *“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”*Why? Because the Holy Spirit will not provide illumination if you have unconfessed sin in your life, if you are walking in the flesh…

**III. While the word “Illumination” is not specifically used in Scripture, the Bible has a lot to say about the doctrine**. Much of **Psalm 119** is cry from the author for God to give him illumination.

## Other Misconceptions About Illumination

 **A. Illumination does not mean that everything about God can be known and understood. Deuteronomy 29:29** *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”***Romans 11:33** *“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!”*God has revealed in scripture everything we need to know, but not everything there is to know…

 **B. Illumination does not eliminate the need for human teachers.** Some have wrongly interpreted **1John 2:27** to teach that. *“As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him.”* This verse simply highlights the adequacy of the Spirit's instruction and guidance, and tells us that the Spirit enables the believer to distinguish truth from error, that is - false teaching, but it does not eliminate the need for human teachers. That would be a contradiction of other scripture. **Ephesians 4:11-13** tells us that God uses the teaching of gifted men to bring the church to maturity. *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*

 **C. Illumination does not extend beyond God’s Word.** Illumination does not mean a Christian will be better, smarter, or more insightful in a secular job or profession than an unbeliever. It doesn’t mean that a Christian won’t have to study in school because the Holy Spirit helps them understand their subjects. God is not going to supernaturally give you knowledge about things you have not learned or studied. There were occasions in the Old Testament where God did that, (In the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness, God supernaturally enabled some with knowledge and skills in certain kinds of craftsmanship needed to fulfill the divine design for that structure.) but that was a **special ministry** of the Holy Spirit for a **special purpose** in a **special time** but it’s not something that God does in the Church age. (That’s a whole different study…That’s Pneumatology, the Study of the Holy Spirit, and particularly, the different ministries of the third person of the Godhead in different ages.) But today, Illumination does not extend beyond God’s Word.

 **D. Illumination does not eliminate the need for diligent Bible study.** **2Timothy 2:15** *“Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”****…***There is a vast difference between reading the Bible and studying it. Both are important. Neither are expendable. Sadly many who claim to be Christ followers don’t do either. And some who read it, never get past that and seem satisfied to settle for milk instead of meat. Because getting to the meat of the word, requires hard work. But it’s worth it.

There you have it.

**Revelation**

 **Inspiration**

 **Preservation**

 **Canonization**

 **Translation**

 **Illumination**

These are the steps that the living God has taken to communicate divine truth to us.