

BASIC DOCTRINE – THE FUNDAMENTALS

PART 2: REVELATION – GENERAL REVELATION

God wants us to know Him and He wants us to know Him to the extent that He, a holy God, invites us, who are sinners by nature, into His presence for personal fellowship. The Lord spoke through the prophet Jeremiah saying that the glory of a wise man is not in his riches or in his wisdom but “that he understands and knows Me” (Jer 9:23-24). But how can we know a God who is virtually invisible to our human eye and silent to our ear. The Bible says that God dwells “in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:16) and that He is “eternal, immortal, invisible” (1 Tim 1:17). This good news is that we can know Him simply because it is God’s good pleasure to reveal Himself to us. Knowledge of God is not found in earthly wisdom or science but by the realization that God has made Himself known to us through the medium of revelation. The word Revelation means to unveil something that is has been previously concealed from us. This unveiling from God is necessary for three major reasons

First God is our Creator knowing not only His own thoughts but ours as well. We, on the other hand, are His creatures who are wholly dependent upon Him not only for our existence but knowledge of Him as well. If we are to know God He must disclose Himself so we can understand Him and relate to Him as He wishes.

The second reason is because of sin. Due to the fall of our first parents in the garden (as recorded in Genesis) sin entered into our lives and left an ugly mark on our minds. One of the scars it left is that we are no longer able to comprehend the things of God. The natural fellowship our first parents enjoyed with God is now gone. One result of this broken fellowship is that our thinking is all messed up. Paul wrote that before we were saved we lived in the futility of our minds having our “understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God“ (Eph 4:18) and “alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds” (Col 1:21--ESV).

The third reason is that we have an enemy Satan who delight in keeping us chained in spiritual darkness. Paul warned, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe.” (2 Cor 4:3-4)

If we are to know God He must disclose Himself so we can understand Him and relate to Him as He wishes. God has granted to us two kinds of revelation of Himself in order to help us overcome these hindrances: General Revelation and Special Revelation

General Revelation

General Revelation is that way by which God gives knowledge of Himself to all human beings throughout history. General Revelation occurs in the basic forms:

the created order of our world and the universe, inward sense of morality and the inward sense of God that points to an eternal transcendent being.

1. Creation

The natural world speaks of the power of God and His wondrous work of creation. The Psalmist says that all of nature demonstrates the reality of God.

The heavens declare the glory of God;

And the firmament shows His handiwork.

Day unto day utters speech,

And night unto night reveals knowledge. (Ps 19:1-2)

Paul points to the goodness of God in creation as he preaches the gospel to the people of Lystra saying that: *"the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, ...did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."* (Acts 14: 15-17)

This is why it is no surprise that many famous scientists throughout history have come to acknowledge that God created the universe; there is just no other way to account for creation.

2. Our inward sense of morality or conscience.

Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Romans that all people have a natural built-in ability to know right from wrong. This is why Paul can say that even those who are without the written law are *“a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”* (Rom 2:14-16)

There is no way to account for this natural moral awareness other than that the Creator has given it to us. Evolutionists try to argue that this moral awareness is just an instinct for survival, that our basic built-in ideas of right and wrong are what help our species to survive. But this is nonsense. The guilt we feel when we have cheated people, even we know that they will not suffer greatly from our injustice, again makes no sense if our morality is merely a product of evolution. Our basic sense of right and wrong is built into our nature and there is no account for it outside of God putting it there. And because that moral awareness is there, God will hold all human beings accountable for the evil that they do.

3. Our inward sense of God

God also gives to all human beings an awareness of Himself. It is usually acknowledged that all people throughout history have shared a common need for something bigger than themselves in order to give their lives meaning. This need for something transcendent is sometimes expressed in the desire to know and

experience the supernatural or the need to worship a god or gods of some kind. This desire is so strong in human beings that it cannot be suppressed either by the deluge of atheist teaching that has inflicted our culture or by the command and threat from secular governments.

General Revelation does not necessarily lead to the knowledge of salvation but it does reveal God's existence and His basic moral requirements. Moreover this revelation is substantial enough to render us without excuse in our duty to acknowledge and honor Him. According to Paul's letter to the Romans (chapters 2-3) the resistance to this revelation can be attributed only to a willful act of rejection by human beings, to a persistent resistance to the outward and innermost awareness of a deity, and to a denial of our common moral obligations.

General Revelation, while by no means perfect and in need of further revelation (namely, the Bible and personal witness of the Holy Spirit) if we are to have a personal relationships with God, does serve an ultimate and good purpose. It gives to all human beings a basic awareness of God's existence along with moral responsibility, provides a check on sinful humanity's natural inclination toward wickedness, and prepares the heart for repentance by directing us to the realization of guilt and a future impending judgment, which may lead to salvation if the Gospel message is preached.