

The Doctrine of Revelation

How God reveals Himself to us

Where the term comes from:

αποκαλύπτω - *to reveal, regulate, make clear what was hidden.*

Revelation is necessary because...

1. God is infinite and we are finite.
2. We are fallen.

The Noetic Result of Sin: Our mind is completely affected.

The only reason we get to do theology is because God has revealed Himself to us when He did not have to.

- The Word of God is our authority for studying theology.

“If we are going to know God, we need Him to reveal Himself to us and to open our eyes to see Him”

Two Categories of Revelation:

General / Natural Revelation: *Speaks to everyone, everywhere, throughout time.*

- A. God reveals Himself through His creation.
 1. Universe (Psalm 8:1, 3-4).
 2. Humanity (Psalm 8:2)
- B. Humanity: Imago Dei (Image of God - Genesis 1:26-28)
 1. Sensus Divinitatis: Human beings have a sense of the Divine and propensity to believe in God and worship Him.
 2. Conscience: Sense of right and wrong.
- C. Natural Revelation should not be confused with Natural Theology.
 1. Natural Theology: *we can develop theology without special revelation, through reason alone.*
- D. Should be evident to us through intuition (however, our depravity tends to get in the way).
- E. Mankind hardens heart against natural revelation. We need a new heart. (Romans 1:18-32).

Heresies to Avoid:

- Pluralism: There are many ways to God. (Popular in most modern, new age, unitarian groups. Stems from over reliance on general revelation alone).
- Inclusivism: “While Christ is the only way to God, it does not mean you explicitly have to put your faith in Him to be saved.” (Essentially universalism. This is what false teachers like Joel Osteen teach. It is not enough to just acknowledge Jesus existed or that there is a God. You must surrender to Christ and place your faith and trust in Him.)
 - The question of the person in the jungle who has never heard the gospel.

General Revelation alone is enough to condemn, but not enough to save. Special revelation is required for salvation.

Special Revelation: God revealing particular content about Himself to a particular audience at a particular time and place.

- We only know this because it is written down as Scripture. We have never personally receive special revelation from God and never will because we have the Bible and the canon is closed.

Special Revelation is necessary not because God is required or obligated to reveal Himself to us; it is necessary because in our finiteness and fallenness, we will not seek or be able to understand God. Thus, in order for salvation to be accomplished, God reveals Himself to us by His grace.

Examples of Special Revelation:

1. Historical Events: God makes Himself known to certain people at a certain place.
 1. Example: The Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1-9), Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17), think of others.
 2. Significant not because we were just told *that* they happened, but because we were told *why* they happened.
2. Divine Speech: God spoke out loud at times to people.
 1. Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 4).
3. The Incarnation: the highest form of Special Revelation.
 1. Hebrews 1:1-4
 2. John 14:9
 3. When Jesus, the Word, God in the flesh, walked on the earth.
4. Scripture: The Bible. God's written, inspired, holy Word.
 1. Contains every documentation from God we need to know to be right with Him.
 2. We affirm human authorship, however, these humans were inspired by the Holy Spirit, thus, there are no errors.

SCRIPTURE:

What does it say about itself?

2 Timothy 3:16-17

- "God-breathed" (theos-neustos) - analogy of respiration; we should view Scripture as being the product of God.
- "All" - every bit of Scripture is inspired.
- Contains the power of God (2 Pet 1:21).

Although men had a role in producing Scripture, they were not the source.

The NT attests the NT is viewed as Scripture as well; not just the OT (2 Pet 3:15)

The Bible contains not just SOME inspired words, but ONLY inspired words.

When dealing with ultimate authority for anything, you will need to rely on its own testimony for authority. The Bible is strong enough in its own testimony to prove itself reliable.

Reasons we can trust the Bible:

1. Fulfillment (Luke 4:21, 1 Corinthians 15:3).
 1. Prophecies which were written centuries before were fulfilled centuries later.
2. Archaeological Discovery.
 1. Has not contradicted. The more which is found only bolsters the reliability of Scripture.
3. Eye-witness Testimony.
 1. Luke 1, Acts 26, 1 Cor 15:5.
4. Miracles.
 1. Exodus, Resurrection of Christ, Apostolic Miracles.
5. Internal Coherence.
 1. The overarching plot line (66 Books of various genres, 40+ authors with varieties of backgrounds and education, over 1500 years, 10 civilizations, 3 continents, 3 languages) is striking. Diversity in writing, yet one plan, plot, champion, and King.
 2. Few tensions but zero contradictions.
6. Witness of the Holy Spirit.
 1. In order to understand Scripture, we first need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts.
 2. The Testimony of the Holy Spirit works in conjunction with Scripture.
 3. 2 Cor 4:3, 1 John 5:9.

To summarize it all:

“God’s revelation is His communication of truths that people otherwise would not know, or at least not know with certainty. God has revealed Himself and His will on a level that human beings can understand and communicate to one another so that we may receive His revelation because He made man in His image. He communicates with people through *general revelation*, which He gives naturally through the created world, and *special revelation*, His Word, which He gave supernaturally to select people. God applies special revelation to His people so that they respond with faith, love, obedience, and prayer” (Dr. Joel Beeke).

Next week, we will continue our study of Scripture and how we got it!

Any Questions?

Let’s Pray!