

Series: God Reveals Himself #1640

Title: Various Scriptures

God's Special Revelation

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. It's always good to be with one another and I hope you are benefiting from our conversation on the ways in which Almighty God reveals Himself to us. We rejoice and give God much thanks for how He has taken the initiative to tell us about Himself. The nature and character of the One and Only God comes bursting forth from the pages of His Scripture. As we, thoughtfully and intentionally, read the Bible we hear the Lord speaking to us. The divine revelation, this is our choicest possession. I hope you own, open, read, and re-read, diligently, faithfully, and genuinely God's Word!

Today we are going to get into the Word. We will. I say this because last time we ended our time together outside of the Scripture, yet gaining valuable perspectives on God and how He works in both His General and Special Revelation. We considered that men and women, both ancient and modern, have a proclivity towards making themselves the center of the universe and working from within their own abilities to reason their own way to God or, more common to god or gods (small g). God becomes a figment of one's own imagination even if this god is based on what one can observe from natural revelation. Human reason seems to rule the day in one's approach to knowing God.

But this is not the way to know God. What all of us need to do is to be humble before *The God* and to welcome His revelation of Himself in our lives. And primarily His revelation through His Son Jesus Christ and His Word (the holy Bible) in partnership with God's revelation through His creation. As I have said, it is crucial that we take both General and Special Revelation together and that we not set these up as opposites or contrasts to each other. Do not be dualistic.

It will be helpful, I think, if we hear from theologian Louis Berkhof on this. Writing about how the pastors and theologians of the Protestant Reformation drew together God's General and Special Revelation, he writes, "The Reformers rejected the dualism of the Scholastics and aimed at a synthesis of God's two-fold revelation. They did not believe in the ability of human reason to construct a scientific system of theology on the basis of natural revelation pure and simple.

[The Reformers] view of the matter may be represented as follows: as a result of the entrance of sin into the world the handwriting of God in nature is greatly obscured, and is in some of the most important matters rather dim and illegible. Moreover, man is stricken with spiritual blindness, and is thus deprived of the ability to read aright what God had originally plainly written in the works of creation. In order to remedy the matter and to prevent the frustration of His purpose, God did two things. In His supernatural [or Special] revelation He republished the truths of natural [or General] revelation, cleared them of misconception, interpreted them with a view to the present needs of man, and thus incorporated them in His supernatural revelation of redemption.

And in addition to that He provided a cure for the spiritual blindness of man in the work of regeneration and sanctification, including spiritual illumination, and thus enabled man to once more attain true knowledge of God, the knowledge that carries with it the assurance of eternal life (*Systematic Theology*, 38)." End quote. I submit to you this is how we should receive God's revelation of Himself. Contrary to common practice, we should not rest on the ability of human reason to develop our ideas of who God is. We should rest, we *must* rest, on God's ability to shape our ideas of who He is. God takes the lead here. We do not.

Speaking of which, Special Revelation as given in the Scripture comes *not* from within us but from *outside* of us. Scripture is given in propositional statements. And by propositional we mean statements of assertion that express judgments and opinions (*God's* judgement and *God's* opinions). So, God speaks to us and God tells us who He is. We do not speak to God telling *God* who *He* is. Grasp this truth by listening to the Bible itself. Here are some verses to highlight.

Exodus chapter 20 and verses 1 and part of verse 2, at the giving of the Ten Commandments that came from God to people. **“Then God spoke all these words, saying, ²‘I am the Lord your God...’** This is followed by a series of ten propositional truths. From outside of ourselves God gives to us His commandments. We did not come up with these commandments from inside of ourselves. In fact, by our sinful nature we vehemently reject these truths.

We have this again in Deuteronomy 29, verse 1, which says, **“These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel...”** And again in Deuteronomy 31, verses 24-26, **“It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, ²⁵ that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, ²⁶ ‘Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you...’** And then we read of the propositional truth of God for them.

This New Testament text is likewise very clear. I am reading the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians, chapter 1, verses 11 and 12, **“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”** What is Paul saying here in Galatians 1? He is saying that he received revelation for who God is, not from another man or men or any person, he was not taught it, but the revelation of God came through Jesus Christ. The Special Revelation of Jesus taught Paul about the nature and character of the Living God. Special Revelation as given in the Scripture comes *not* from within us but from *outside* of us. God speaks to us and God tells us who He is. There is a propositional nature to Special Revelation.

Friends, God has to reveal Himself to us through Christ. We require Special Revelation because we are sinners through and through. As another theologian puts it, “Special Revelation has been necessitated because of [our] sinful estate through the Fall. In order to restore fallen humanity to fellowship with Himself it was essential that God reveal the way of salvation and reconciliation, hence, the essence of special revelation centers on the Person of Jesus Christ (*The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 159).”

And let me suggest three ways Jesus reveals God, or we can say how God the Son reveals God the Father to us. All three are well, revealed (no pun intended), in John’s Gospel. If you have your Bible nearby do open it to the Gospel of John chapter 1. (John 1.) I do encourage you, unless you are otherwise occupied (like driving with your eyes on the road, I hope), to read along in the Bible with us. This is John 1, verse 18. **“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”** Wow. What an essential verse in the whole of the Bible. None of us can see God. In fact, no one has ever seen God. (What about Moses, you ask? Please re-read the whole context on Moses’ meeting with God and see if you can definitively say, “Moses saw God.”) God is unseeable. (And yes, unseeable is a word.)

But, Jesus has seen God. Jesus – who has seen God, living in the bosom of the Father – comes to us and explains God to us; reveals God to us. Jesus is seen. And Jesus explains God to us. Hebrews chapter 1, verse 3 says this, **“[Jesus] is the radiance of [God’s] glory and the exact representation of [God’s] nature...”** When we look at Jesus, we look at God. Jesus, being God’s Son, Jesus being in nature God, He is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact (note: *exact, precise*) representation of God’s nature! So, in this sense Jesus – who has seen God, living in the bosom of the Father – comes to us and explains God to us; reveals God to us. Do you see why it is so essential that the revelation of God comes through Christ? (John 1, verse 18.)

This is why we have a desire to look to Jesus in the Bible. Our attention is turned towards the Gospels where we read Jesus and hear Jesus and watch Jesus. For anyone who wants to know God, Jesus is essential. Jesus is *the* way to God. Well, I am going to run out of time so we will save more from the Gospel According to John until next time. We are now into God’s Special Revelation and I hope you will stick with us with still much left to learn and to apply to our lives. So do plan to be with us next time as, together, we continue to discover who God Is.

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