

GOD'S EPIC REVELATION

I. Psalm 19:1-14

A. Psalm 19 is the poster child text for what theologians refer to as general revelation and special revelation. General Revelation being God's visible attributes seen in His creation, His Divine fingerprints and footprints left upon all that He has made--from galaxies and supernovas to molecular structures and nuclear physics. Everything from the Milky Way to Halley's comet to George Washington Carver's peanuts to Watson & Crick's DNA discoveries. Special Revelation is God's direct communication with people, through dreams and visions and miracles, theophanies and prophets, and through His law and the whole of His written Word with the Gospel at its core. While we can't look up at an eclipse or a constellation and know that murder and adultery are sinful in God's eyes, His revealed Word leaves no doubt. And while God's Word reveals that my sin leads to death, it also reveals that *He who has the Son, has life...*

B. Psalm 19:1-6 God communicates to people through creation...

1) **V1-2** *"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge."* (They declare God's omnipotence, His sovereignty, His transcendent glory!)

2) **V4a** *"Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."* (The created heavens and skies above don't speak audible words but they speak volumes to everyone gazing up--to those from every nation, tribe, & tongue...)

3) **4b-6** *"In them He has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat."*

(Every sunrise and sunset declares God's glory! *"From the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, the Lord's name, is to be praised!"*) Read Romans 1:18-23...

C. Psalms 19:7-11 God communicates through His law, by His written Word...

1) **V7-10** *"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb."*

(God's law is: perfect; sure; right; pure; clean; true, and righteous altogether...)

2) God's law is like a mirror or a plumb line--it reveals pimples and all things crooked. But as we know, the law of God, as perfect as it is, cannot save us from the sins it reveals in us. (*Just like an MRI can't remove a sick gall bladder or a cancerous tumor.*) Creation has no means of saving me nor does the law. Is there help for us? Yes!

D. Hebrews 1:1-4 God's epic revelation comes through His Son: *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through Whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs."* (cf Rom. 8:1-4; Titus 2:11-14...)

1) Is God's Creation spectacular? Yes! Is God's law good? Absolutely! But can they save us from sin and death and restore us to God? No.

2) But then comes Jesus Christ, God the Son, co-Creator of the universe; the Lawgiver and it's only Keeper; the One who fulfilled every jot and tittle. Is He spectacular? Is He good? Is He awesome? Can He save us from sin and death and restore us to God? All glory to God--Yes! Yay and Amen!

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Psalm 19:1-14 (ESV)

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tent for the sun, 5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. 6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they

than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. **11** Moreover, by them is Your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. **12** Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. **13** Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. **14** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Romans 1:18-23 (ESV)

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. **19** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. **21** For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Claiming to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Hebrews 1:1-4 (ESV)

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through Whom also He created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Romans 8:1-4 (NKJV)

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. **2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. **3** For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Titus 2:11-14 (NKJV)

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **12** teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, **13** looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, **14** who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"I believe in God as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

Film Clips & Other Links

How is General and Special Revelation Different? - John Piper

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zAJX_xGw2A

"May The Words" by Ellie Holcomb

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl1HF5NchLg>

The Glory of God (Psalm 19) - With Shawn McDonald singing, "Beautiful God"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKwA9ejGCws>

Psalm 19 - Sung by Juan and Miriam (An oldie but a goodie)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDqcle0-7yQ>

The Awe Factor of God - Francis Chan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ya12l036lq>

Sermon: "The Two Books" by Tim Challies (From the G3 Conference Mark attended)

http://www.g3conference.com/?page_id=2093

Bonus Stuff

Psalm 19 - Theological Note

In this psalm, David meditates on God's creation, God's Word, his own sinfulness, and God's forgiveness. As God reveals Himself through nature (19:1-6), we learn about His power and our finiteness. As God reveals Himself through Scripture (19:7-11), we learn about His holiness and our sinfulness. As God reveals Himself through daily experiences (19:12-14), we learn about His gracious forgiveness that frees us from guilt.

- Theological Note, *Life Application Study Bible*, Tyndale, p. 1135.

Psalm 19 - Theological Note

The psalm praise the Lord for His two great gifts to humanity: creation and the law. To use modern terminology, the psalm speaks of God's general revelation in nature and His special revelation in Scripture.

- Theological Note, *The Reformation Study Bible*, R.C. Sproul, General Editor, Ligonier Ministries, p. 752.

Psalm 19 - Theological Note

Psalm 19, a wisdom psalm, celebrates the Word of God in the context of creation. Thus it is both a creation psalm and a Torah psalm. Both the creation psalms and the Torah psalms are regarded as subgroups of the wisdom psalms. The poem begins with the heavens, centers on the Word, and culminates in the heart of the servant of God. The poem has three movements: (1) a celebration of the greatness of God's creation (vv. 1-6); (2) a celebration of the purity of the Word of God (vv. 7-11); (3) a contemplation of the life of the person of God (vv. 12-14).

- Theological Note, *The NKJV Study Bible*, Thomas Nelson, p. 836.

Quote by Tullian Tchividjian

"The law is God's first word; the gospel is God's final word."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it? A man feels wet when he falls into water, because man is not a water animal: a fish would not feel wet. Of course, I could have given up my idea of justice by saying that it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too--for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist--in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless--I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality--namely my idea of justice--was full of sense. Consequently atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning."

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

Quote by Leon Morris

"Redemption is substitutionary, for it means that Christ paid that price that we could not pay, paid it in our stead and we go free. Justification interprets our salvation judicially, and as the New Testament sees it, Christ took our legal liability, took it in our stead. Reconciliation means the making of people to be at one by the taking away of the cause of hostility. In this case, the cause is sin, and Christ removed that cause for us... We could not deal with sin. He could and did, and did it in such a way that it is reckoned to us. Propitiation points us to the removal of the divine wrath, and Christ has done this by bearing the wrath for us. It was our sin which drew it down; it was He who bore it. Was there a price to be paid? He paid it. Was there a victory to be won? He won it. Was there a penalty to be borne? He bore it. Was there a judgment to be faced? He faced it."

The Difference between General and Special Revelation

By [Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer](#)

<http://www.moodymedia.org/articles/difference-between-general-and-special-revelations/>

Revelation is the free act of God by which He graciously condescends to display and reveal His character, nature, and will to mankind. God has revealed Himself by what we categorize as general and special revelation. General revelation is broad in scope, available to mankind as a whole, but its composition is inherently non-redemptive. For instance, this is evidenced by creation in its various forms, which displays God's glory but lacks the salvation message (Romans 1:20). Also, the human conscience also is an indication of God's general revelation and is, however imperfectly, a reflection of God's law.

Is general revelation important? Yes. It is effective in communicating the existence of God and His moral law and will be the standard for personal judgment for those who do not have faith in Christ. Although general revelation is a sufficient basis for judgment, it, in itself, does not reveal the Gospel.

Special revelation is the appearance or manifestation of specific communication, especially involving God's redemptive will. The most compelling example is the coming of Jesus Christ to Earth to reveal the Father and to provide our redemption. The authors of Scripture received special revelation in theophanies, dreams, angels, and, in some instances, by personally witnessing the recorded events. All those who wrote the Scripture did so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that we might have available a precise, written revelation which we believe tells us all God wants us to know about Him and His purposes.

- Pastor Edwin Lutzer, Moody Church Media, <http://www.moodymedia.org>

General and Special Revelation - A Reformed Approach to Science and Scripture

From [Keith Mathison](#) May 18, 2012

<http://www.ligonier.org/blog/general-and-special-revelation-reformed-approach-science-and-scripture/>

In this series of blog posts, we have been discussing [Dr. R.C. Sproul's answer](#) to a question about the age of the universe during the Q&A at Ligonier's 2012 National Conference. In the previous post, we stopped in the middle of his answer to discuss his assertion: [All Truth is God's Truth](#). Following this statement, Dr. Sproul continued by making a very important point about general and special revelation. He said:

"I believe firmly that all of truth is God's truth, and I believe that God has not only given revelation in sacred Scripture, but also, the sacred Scripture itself tells us that God reveals Himself in nature—which we call natural revelation. And, I once asked a seminary class of mine that was a conservative group, I said, "How many of you believe that God's revelation in Scripture is infallible?" And they all raised their hand. And I said, "And how many of you believe that God's revelation in nature is infallible, and nobody raised their hand. It's the same God who's giving the revelation."

A Reformed approach to science and Scripture requires a Reformed understanding of revelation. The word "revelation" denotes a "revealing." In Christian theology, it refers to God's act of communication to man or to the content of that communication. Historically theologians have distinguished between different kinds of revelation. Many medieval theologians described the difference using the terms natural and supernatural revelation. The distinction had nothing to do with the source or origin of the revelation. Theologians who made this distinction believed that all revelation was supernatural in origin because God was its source. Instead, this distinction had to do with the mode of revelation. Natural revelation was communicated by God through so-called "natural" phenomena (His created works), while supernatural revelation was communicated by God through special divine intervention (dreams, visions, etc.).

General Revelation

A more common distinction among Reformed theologians is the distinction between general revelation and special revelation. Article 2 of the Belgic Confession (on the means by which we know God) states the distinction in the following words:

We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God, even his everlasting power and divinity, as the apostle Paul says in [Romans 1:20](#). All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

This distinction between general and special revelation focuses more on the extent and purpose of revelation. General revelation is referred to as "general" revelation because it has a general content and is revealed to a general audience. Through general revelation to all men, God communicates His existence, His power, and His glory, such that men are left without excuse.

A further distinction that must be made is the distinction between immediate and mediate general revelation. Immediate general revelation occurs without an intermediating agency. Mediate general revelation occurs through an intermediating agency. John Calvin described immediate general revelation in his Institutes of the Christian Religion:

"There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity [divinitatis sensum]. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty (I.3.1)."

In other words, God has revealed himself by directly implanting knowledge about Himself in all men. In a later chapter, Calvin described the mediate general revelation that God accomplishes through His created works:

The final goal of the blessed life, moreover, rests in the knowledge of God [cf. [John 17:3](#)]. Lest anyone, then, be excluded from access to happiness, he not only sowed in men's minds that seed of religion of which we have spoken, but revealed himself and daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe. As a consequence, men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him (Institutes, I.5.1).

God, then, reveals Himself through His works. Here, Calvin is simply restating what the Psalmist said in [Psalm 19:1–2](#).

*The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.*

The Apostle Paul elaborates on the same idea in [Romans 1:19–20](#).

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

As John Murray explains, “We must not tone down the teaching of the apostle in this passage. It is a clear declaration to the effect that the visible creation as God’s handiwork makes manifest the invisible perfections of God as its Creator, that from the things which are perceptible to the senses cognition of these invisible perfections is derived, and that thus a clear apprehension of God’s perfections may be gained from his observable handiwork.”ⁱⁱ

Special Revelation

General revelation, whether immediate or mediate, is directed to all men. It is, however, “not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation” (Westminster Confession of Faith, I.1). General revelation does not reveal Jesus Christ or His work of redemption for sinners. Thus there is a need for what is called “special revelation.” Special revelation is the revelation of the way of salvation.

One of the most important biblical texts describing God’s special revelation is found in [Hebrews 1:1–2](#), which reads:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

In times past, before the completion of Scripture, God revealed His redemptive work through the prophets by means of dreams, visions, and theophanies. But now, special revelation has received its permanent form in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (WCF I.1).

Given this summary overview of the nature of general and special revelation, we return to the question Dr. Sproul asked his seminary class. Recall that he asked: “How many of you believe that God’s revelation in Scripture is infallible?” And they all raised their hand. Then Dr. Sproul asked, “And how many of you believe that God’s revelation in nature is infallible?” And this time no one raised their hand. As we will see in our next post, the reason for the different responses had to do with the students’ right concern to recognize that Scripture is a higher authority than scientific theories. That, however, was not what Dr. Sproul asked. And therein lies the rub in many contemporary discussions of this issue. We end up talking past each other because we are not listening carefully. Dr. Sproul asked his students a question regarding something God does. And despite the misgivings of his students, the answer Dr. Sproul gave is correct. God’s revelation in creation is equally as infallible as His revelation in Scripture because in both cases, it is God who is doing the revealing, and God is always infallible. God cannot err in His work of revealing Himself. The question the students thought Dr. Sproul was asking is an extremely important question, but it cannot be answered adequately until Dr. Sproul’s original question is answered correctly.

In our next post, we will examine what may be the most important point Dr. Sproul raised in connection with the contemporary discussions, and that is the difference between God’s infallible revelation (general and special) and our fallible interpretation of that revelation (general and special). In connection with this topic, we will need to look at Dr. Sproul’s commentary on Article 12 of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy in order to understand the difference between scientific theories that contradict an interpretation of Scripture as opposed to theories that contradict an actual teaching of Scripture.

iLouis Berkhof, Introduction to Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932), 128).

iiJohn Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 40.