

Introduction:

God uses the Holy Spirit and His Word to push believers to seek after these things which He would reveal. God chooses to give “Divine Revelation” in many sorts of manifestations. This divine revelation can be divided into two parts as God reveals Himself: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation is seen everywhere around us while special revelation is given specifically and especially through the Bible. Because it is generalized to all man in every manner, general revelation brings every person into condemnation if they refuse to acknowledge their need for Christ. Special revelation does not necessarily come to all people and is most often dispensed through the mode of Scripture. Through special revelation, man is able to not only know about God, but can also understand their faith must be placed in Him as well.

I. Revelation- “Communication of Truth”

- A. Definition: *Revelation* can be defined as the direct act of God whereby He discloses or unveils to man truth about Himself and/or His creation that man could not know otherwise.
- B. Explanation: The word “Revelation” in the Bible is the Greek term **ἀποκάλυψις; apokálypsis**, meaning disclosure: appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed.
 1. “A disclosure of truth concerning divine things before unknown—especially those relating to the Christian salvation—given to the soul by God himself, or by the ascended Christ, especially through the operation of the Holy Spirit, and so to be distinguished from other methods of instruction”
 - I Corinthians 2:10- “But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”
 - Ephesians 3:3- “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,”
 - Galatians 1:11-12- “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught by it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
 2. “Revelation of future things relating to the consummation of the divine kingdom”
 - Revelation 1:1- “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass...”
 - II Thessalonians 1:7- “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,”

II. General Revelation

- A. *General revelation*- All that God has revealed in the world around us, including man. General revelation is truth given to all people at all times. It is what is observed in creation, or in a natural way which show God’s power, deity, and supremacy. This type of revelation is general in four ways. First, it is general in scope because it is given to anyone at any time. Second, it is general in geography because it is given to people everywhere. Third, it is general in method because it is seen through man’s observation though sometimes man himself limits it. Last, it is general in content because it based upon natural theology or the creation around all people. Thus, general revelation is equally available to all men at all times and while it alone cannot save, it is nonetheless both essential and preparatory to special revelation.
- B. General Revelation is shown in three ways:

1. Nature/Creation-
 - a. Psalm 19:1-6- "The heavens declare the glory of God..."
 - b. Isa. 40:12- "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand"
 - c. Rom. 1:20- "the invisible things of him from creation are seen..."
2. Providentially Orchestrated History- Although God may, for His own wise and holy purposes, allow a more wicked nation to triumph over a less wicked, He will in the end deal more severely with the more wicked than with the less wicked (Hab. 1:1-2). In all of Israel's experiences, God revealed Himself, and that not only to the nation, but through the nation also to the whole world.
 - a. Rom. 13:1- "let every soul be subject unto the higher power"
 - b. Acts 17:27- "seek the Lord, if haply feel him and find him..."
3. Conscience- "General revelation reveals the fact that there is an absolute law of right and wrong in the universe, and that there is a Supreme Lawgiver Who embodies this law in His own person and conduct."
 - a. Rom. 2:14-16- "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

C. Is general revelation enough for salvation?

1. The short answer: No* "This revelation alone is insufficient for salvation; that it is intended, however, to incite man to search for a fuller revelation of God and His plan of salvation, and that it constitutes a general call of God to man to turn to Him." It does show a man that he is condemned and needs God.
 - a. Rom. 2:6-7- "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life."
 - b. Gal. 3:10-14- "no man is justified by the law...the just live by faith"
 - c. Rom. 1:18-23- "invisible things are seen, but they glorified not God"
 - d. Rom. 3:20- "by the deeds of law shall no flesh be justified: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."
 - e. Rom. 10:14-17- "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard...Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
2. However, the question should then be asked, "How will a loving God enable someone who has no special revelation come to a saving knowledge of Christ?" The answer is based on God Himself. If a person truly desires to know more about this Person who created the world and gave them a conscience, then I believe God would provide a way for that person to know about the salvation that He offers to all men (II Peter 3:9).
3. Examples: Cornelius from Acts 10; Ethiopian Eunuch from Acts 8

III. **Special Revelation**

- A. *Special revelation*- Various means God used to communicate His message in what was codified in the Bible. Special revelation occurred when God gave a specific message to a certain group at special times. It is the written Word of God which contains a number of characteristics. First, it is objective and external, meaning not

subjective or inside of man/man's teachings. Next, it is propositional, true statements which cannot and should not be distorted or misunderstood. Third, it is understandable by being taken at face value which makes the most sense. Last, it is autonomous and totally independent as Scripture does not need any other basis.

- B. Special revelation can be seen through a number of methods in Scripture. Scripture serves as the most inclusive method because it is the record of most of the other methods. The Bible contains enough for our faith to be proven true, but every single act of history is not found throughout Scripture. Simply stated, the Bible is accurate (John 17:17), progressive (Heb. 1:1), and purposeful (II Tim. 3:15-17).
1. Casting lots (Acts 1:21-26). This performance is not used today and no longer holds much value.
 2. Urim and Thummim of the high priest- These two stones were used similarly like the casting of lots (Num. 27:21), and is no longer used today either.
 3. Dreams were used to reveal truth, even to non-believers (Gen. 20:3, 31:24).
 4. Visions (Isa. 1:1, 6:1- Isaiah sees God on the throne).
 5. Theophanies of the Lord before Christ (Exodus 3:2- burning bush)
 6. Angels during various times (Luke 2:10-11- heralds the birth of Christ)
 7. Jesus Christ Himself served as a major avenue for the special revelation of God. Christ is the center of history and revelation. Heb. 1:1-3 shows the importance of Christ revealing God. Christ reveals God's existence, His nature, and His will. He performed many acts which are characteristic of the Father as well (I John 1:1-3). The Bible speaks continuously of the influence and revelation that Jesus had for God while he walked the earth (Rom. 9:5; John 1:1-2, 14-18, 20:31).
 8. History- Though general revelation is prevalent in history as well, some events have no better explanation besides the interference of God. In the history of Scripture, the deliver of Israel from the Egyptians (Micah 6:5) and acts of judgment (Ezekiel 25:7) reveal the righteous character of the Father.
 9. Miracles- An unusual event, accomplishing some useful work, and revealing the presence and power of God. Pg. 37 bottom paragraph of Theissen.
 10. Prophecy- Prophets gave God's message to mankind. One clear line of prophecy which shows God's special revelation would be found in the first coming of Christ. He was to be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), ride in on a donkey (Zech. 9:9), be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15), be forsaken of God (Ps. 22:1), and rise from the dead (Acts 2:27).

C. Difference between general and special revelation:

“Suppose you attend a concert of your favorite band with thousands of other people. Everybody in the audience gets to see the performers on stage at a distance and hear the beautiful music they create, but the general audience can't interact with the musicians or have personal interaction with them. But in addition to your ticket, you also have a backstage pass that allows you to go behind the scenes and meet the singers, band, and writers of the music. You learn their names and all about their families, hear them explain how the songs came into being, and learn in detail about the songs they are writing now and their plans for future concerts. Your backstage pass as opposed to just a general admission ticket is the difference between general and special revelation. Special revelation takes us from being in the “audience” at God's creation to intimate, personal fellowship and interaction with Him. Special revelation takes up where general revelation ends.”