

Two Ways God Has Revealed Himself

Psalm 19

Psalm 19 – *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun that is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end. Nothing is hidden from its heat. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes 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 judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.”*

Background Notes

In Psalm 19, a hymn of praise, David described how God has revealed Himself:

- Through **creation**: His “natural revelation” and
- Through **Scripture**: His “special revelation.”

Has an unbeliever ever told you that he or she would become a believer if God would just reveal Himself? “Show me and I’ll believe,” they say. If you ask this unbeliever how God would have to reveal Himself or show Himself, they usually want God to do some great miracle, or they want God to write them a personal letter – in black & white. Well, God has done both of these things - and that’s what David discussed in Psalm 19.

You want a miracle? Look at creation! How can you explain the sun and the stars apart from the miracle of creation? You can’t get “something out of nothing.” There must be a beginning. There must be a Designer who is responsible for creating the amazing intricacy and beauty of all we see around us.

And you want a personal letter from God? What about a whole book - written down in black and white? Have you even read the Bible? Read it, and you’ll see that God has revealed Himself right down to the personal level.

In Psalm 19, David talked about these two ways that God has revealed Himself to us: revelation: the **revelation of God in Creation** (v1-6), and the **revelation of God in Scripture** (v7-11). The creation around us is God's natural, or "general" revelation, because everyone on earth has been given this revelation.

The Scriptures are God's "special" revelation because they are specifically given to certain people. The Bible contains revelation of the one true God that cannot be determined from creation, or general revelation. For example, salvation through Jesus Christ alone – the One who is the Son of God and Savior of the world - could never be known through general revelation. We must have special revelation to know about God's plan of salvation for mankind, and His plans for the world.

Doctrinal Points

1. God has spoken with general revelation.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun... Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end."

The heavens and the skies display God's glory and power (v1). I remember driving in the mountains of Colorado on a clear, cold, moonless night. The stars stood out against the dark sky in all their glory and brilliance – I felt like I could almost reach out and touch them! I was driving with a colleague from work, an unbeliever, and I asked him how anyone could doubt that there's an all-powerful God when we see those amazing stars? He was completely silent, because the evidence was so overwhelming. Even for him, as an unbeliever, to say that "chance" or a Big Bang produced those stars seemed completely out of place and irreverent beneath the amazing panorama in the heavens!

Romans 1:20 says, *"For since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."* Psalm 19:2 states that the revelation of God in creation is continuous – day after day, and night after night. It does not stop. This revelation is non-verbal, but overwhelming (v3). Verse 4 emphasizes that this revelation of God is worldwide. It is general revelation that has been given to all peoples. As Romans 1:20 says, no one has an excuse.

There are probably several reasons why the sun is presented as evidence of an almighty God in Psalm 19:4-6:

- The sun is the dominant celestial body from our earthly perspective - in its glory (as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber), and in its power (as a strong runner).

- The sun was deified and worshiped as a god in pagan religions then - and still is today.
- As nothing in the natural world is hidden from the light and heat of the sun, so nothing is hidden from the light and penetrating power of almighty God.

The sun provides a perfect transition from natural revelation to the special revelation of the Word of God in verses 7-11. In fact, the sun is a wonderful illustration of “the Word,” the Lord Himself. As Malachi 4:1 says, *“When the Lord returns with righteousness, it will be like the sun arising with healing in its wings.”*

God has spoken with general revelation.

2. God has spoken with special revelation.

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.

The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

The statutes 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 judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.”

In Psalm 19:1-6 (about the creation of God), and in Psalm 19:7-14 (about the Word of God), two different names of God are used. We can't pick it up in English, but it's clear in the Hebrew language. In verses 1-6, the name used for God is “*EI*” - a name meaning “the strong one.” It describes **the power of God**. In verses 7-14, the name used is “*Yahweh*” or “Lord.” This name stresses **God's covenant relationship with His people**. So the name “*EI*” was used for general revelation, but the name “*Yahweh*” was used for special revelation.

Six different terms were used for the Word of God, God's special revelation: pure, testimony, precepts, commandments, fear (or reverential trust), and judgments.

- As God's **Law** (v7), the Word of God is perfect and can restore the soul. You'll find that this is true if you read your Bible every day.
- As God's **testimony** (v7), the Word is sure and trustworthy. It will instruct you in the right way if you read it, study it and follow it.
- As God's **statutes** or precepts (v8), the Word of God will bring joy to the heart, because it is right and true.
- As God's **commandment** (v8), the Word of God is pure. It has no hidden agendas, and as a result it enlightens those who study it.

- As that which produces **reverential trust** (v9), the Word of God is clean from any mixture of truth and error. It endures forever.
- As God's **judgments** (v9), the Word of God promotes righteousness because it is true, fair, and just in every case.

The Word of God is more **valuable** than gold, the most expensive substance of that day, and the Word of God is more **satisfying** than honey, the sweetest substance of that day. Do you agree that the Word of God is the most valuable and satisfying treasure you own? If you agreed, now ask yourself - does your life show that the Word is a valuable treasure? By reading, studying and obeying the Word of God, we are kept in line with God's righteous standards. And the reward for righteous living is great! How true!

God has spoken this special revelation.

Practical Application

What is our response to God's "books of revelation"?

Notice - I did **not** say "the book of Revelation." I said "the **books** of revelation." In other words, we're not talking about the last book of the Bible, but rather about the two means by which God has revealed Himself in Psalm 19: the "book of creation" - His general revelation, and the "book of Scripture" - His special revelation.

In verses 12-14 we see David's response to these "books of revelation": *"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."*

In view of God's great glory and holiness that are revealed for us in His work of creation and His written Word, David's response was a yearning for righteousness in his own life. He wanted God to show him his hidden sins, so he could confess them and be cleansed (v12). He wanted the Lord to keep him from situations where he would deliberately or willfully sin - *"presumptuous sins"* (v13).

We find a similar request in the prayer the Lord Jesus gave to his disciples: *"May I not be led into temptation"* (Matthew 6:13). Like David, we should want all our words and all our thoughts to be pleasing to the Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer (v14)!

This was David's response. Now what is our response? What is our response to God's "books of revelation"?