

GENERAL REVELATION VS. SPECIAL REVELATION

Dr. Charles Ryrie writes: “[General Revelation] is offered for all people...it is light and truth to all.”¹ Paul referenced this when he wrote, “*The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*”² Ryrie writes: “It reaches to all people (Matt. 5:45)...and encompasses the entire globe (Psalm 19:2).”³ God confirms His existence and communicates His sovereign love and care through General Revelation (beauty in nature, the vastness and precision of creation, what humans long for, etc.). Special Revelations are divine interventions designed to enhance humanity’s understanding of, and longing for, salvation through the Savior, Jesus. This paper presents a brief profile of these revelations.

1. General Revelation – The creation nature. Scripture notes. “Heavens declare the glory of God.”⁴ The glory of God can be glimpsed in the complexity and beauty of the smallest of particles and in the scope and precision of the largest of the cosmos. In creation, we see the fingerprints of God. Paul affirmed this truth when, inspired by the Spirit, he wrote: “*For from the creation of the world the invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*” (Romans 1:20).

2. General Revelation – mankind. After God created the earth, sea, land, and mountains, He said, “It is good.”⁵ But when God created mankind, in His image, God said, “It is *very* good.”⁶ Humans are created with a mind, a soul, and a conscience—these attributes separate us from all other life on Earth, and helps us long for and live for the one true God. Paul affirmed this truth when he wrote: “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them*” (Romans 1:18-19).

2. Special Revelation – God is beyond human comprehension and cannot be reached by human knowledge alone. The ant cannot aspire to create a craft and travel in space—an ant cannot even conceive the notion. Similarly, humanity cannot reach up and grasp the mysteries

¹ Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1995), 28

² Titus 2:11 * Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the King James Version.

³ Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1995), 28

⁴ Psalm 19:1

⁵ Genesis 1:10

⁶ Genesis 1:27-31

of God. God, therefore, reaches down from heaven and, via *special revelations*, intervenes in our economy via signs, wonders, angelic and Messianic appearances, and more so we can better understand and embrace great spiritual truths—the most important being salvation.

3. Special Revelation - Therefore, if man was to understand anything about God or His ways, it would be absolutely necessary for God to reveal Himself and His desires to mankind.

God revealed His “way” and “truth”⁷ through Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. Scripture notes that Jesus, the Word, “was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”⁸ Jesus’ ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection declare the goodness of God and His redemptive plan. According to Dr. Paul P. Enns, Special Revelation “centers on the Person of Jesus Christ. He is displayed in Scripture as the One who has explained the Father.” Through Jesus, Enns writes, “God revealed the way of salvation and reconciliation.”⁹ At the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus told Philip, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”¹⁰ The ministry of Jesus, then, is the supreme example of Special Revelation, for it is through Him we can be brought into right relationship with Him.

⁷ John 14:6

⁸ John 1:14

⁹ Enns, Dr. Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Chicago, IL, Moody Press, 1989) page 159

¹⁰ John 14:9