

Theology notes 1.2

We serve a personal God who speaks, telling us about himself and ourselves and the world around us. There are two types of ways that God reveals himself: general revelation and special revelation. In this class, you will discover what God says about himself through creation and your conscience.

I. THE VOICE OF GOD IN CREATION

A question that is often asked is how do we hear the voice of God? It is, indeed, a critical question. As evangelicals we believe that we serve a **personal God who speaks**, telling us about himself and ourselves and the world around us. He tells us what he wants us to do in relation to him. Interestingly, when God created humans in Genesis 1, the very first thing he does is bless them. God created humans for a relationship and thus interacts with those he created. And so we still believe this.

We break this idea down into two categories: **general revelation** and **special revelation**. General revelation is to everybody everywhere whereas special revelation comes through speaking and certain events that would cause people to understand more about God.

General revelation talks more about the general nature of God but not particularly about the salvation work of God, more specifically God's redemptive work in Jesus Christ.

In general revelation, we can know a lot about God through creation.

For example **Psalm 19** is a Psalm of David that says that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day after day he pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. So what is he saying? The heavens declare the glory of God. And in verse, it says that this voice goes out through all the earth and to the end of the world. So in creation, the heavens and stars and the world, we see in the voice of God goes to everyone everywhere. Therefore general revelation is worldwide in scope. No one is ignorant of God's general revelation.

Now, starting at verse 7, the topic changes in saying that the law of the Lord is perfect and it changes the name for God from Elohim to Yahweh and in addition, the focus is changed. The general revelation is talking about the glory of God while the law of God is talking about his specific work.

- * **Elohim**, singular **Eloah**, (Hebrew: God), the God of Israel in the **Old Testament**. A plural of majesty, the term Elohim—though sometimes used for other deities, such as the Moabite god Chemosh, the Sidonian goddess Astarte, and also for other majestic beings such as angels, kings, judges (the Old Testament *shofetim*), and the Messiah—is usually employed in the Old Testament for the one and only God of Israel, whose personal name was revealed to **Moses** as YHWH, or **Yahweh**

II. God's Providence is Experienced by Everyone

Theology notes 1.2

In **Acts 14**, Paul and Barnabas are preaching in Lystra and as Paul is preaching, he is telling them to turn from their ways to the Living God who made the heavens and earth and sea and all that is in them. So he is talking about general revelation. And in **verse 17** he says that he has not left himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness. So these people have gone their own way, but they have no excuse because God has testified to his glory by showing them kindness. God has revealed power and glory, not just wrath, not just creativity, but kindness and goodness. Accurately, we can say that he has shown them grace. Grace means undeserved freely given help; this kindness comes in terms of rain which provides them with food and thus joy. You will find this in other places throughout the New Testament.

III. The Human Conscience Knows the God Exists

In **Romans 2:12-14** Paul is telling us that all who sin apart from the law perish apart from the law. This is the Law of Moses. So people who don't have the Law of Moses will not be held accountable for that, but those who don't hear the law should do by nature the things that are required by the law. They show that the nature of the Law is written on their inter-being, their consciousness or their hearts. This says that by nature, we know what is right and wrong. Thus, everybody understands the concept of justice where everybody is treated as human beings, where people's rights are taken into consideration by others. There is a longing for justice in every human being. Again, this is general revelation. There is a longing for community where people are just with each other; there is a longing for beauty. There is a longing for transcendence. Most scholars agree on these points.

IV. Human Responsibility We are all without excuse

Romans 1:18-20.

Another key passage is Romans 1:18 where it talks about the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. In verse 19, it says what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. This is God revealing information to us. Since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities have been clearly seen. It has been revealed through what has been made, such as the stars and moon and this world and humanity so that they are without excuse. So, although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him. This self-revelation of God has come to every person and thus every person at some level has understood it because God has made it plain to them and so there is no excuse for not responding.

Theology Assignment

Are all without excuse? What inference are we to draw from these passages?

Romans 1:18-20,

Romans 2:12-16

Romans 3 (particularly verse 9-20)

Romans 10 (Particularly verse 9-15)