

The Unfolding Revelation of God
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GFC – 3/26/17

We are in a sermon series entitled Knowing God. The most important thing about you is what you believe about God. That belief impacts every other area of your life on earth AND more importantly, your eternal destiny. John 17:3 says:

This is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

So, I want to look at the truth about God today in a message entitled The Unfolding Revelation of God. I'm calling it this because God has progressively revealed Himself to mankind in greater and greater detail. Jeremiah 10:10 says in the Amplified Version:

The Lord is the true God and the God of truth (the God Who is Truth). He is the living God and the everlasting King.

We can know the truth about God because He is true and He reveals truth to us. Now, I know that we live in a time where it is politically incorrect to say that there is only one true God. You might say, "Well, you know there are other gods that are true as well. And you know, all roads lead to God and everybody has their own ways that are valid." No! God says that is not true at all.

Let me make a bold statement – and I can be bold because it's Bible! There is only one true God, the Bible is the only true Scripture, and the Christian faith is the only true faith. All other religions are false religions built on false books written by false prophets.

"Oh, you can't say that!" Well, I just said it. And I say it with compassion because I want to reach people who don't know the truth and tell them the truth. But I also say it with confidence because Jesus proved that He was the way through His resurrection. The resurrection is a historical fact that proves that Christianity is true.

There are many conflicting beliefs about Jesus in different religions and they can't all be right because they contradict each other!

Muslims believe that Jesus was a prophet of God, but not God. They do not believe in His crucifixion or resurrection.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was a created being – actually Michael the archangel who became a man.

Mormons believe that Jesus was a man who became a god, just like all of us can become gods over our own planets. They also believe Jesus was the spirit brother of Lucifer.

Buddhists believe that Jesus was a moral teacher of less importance than Buddha.

Bahia teaches that Jesus is just one of many manifestations of God and He is not the only way to God.

My point is simply this: these cannot all be true. All religions are not the same. In fact, they are very different. And if you want to evaluate religions, find out what they believe about Jesus. If God's Word is true, then He is the one true God, and there is no other god.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul writes what he heard about the believers in Thessalonica:

They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

How do we know He is the true God? What is the final court of arbitration? If I decide He is the true God, does that make Him the true God? If we vote on it and a majority of us agree that He is the true God, does that make Him the true God? How do we know there is a God? Because He has revealed Himself to us.

There are three main ways God has revealed Himself to us.

1- God reveals Himself to us through His creation.

You see, creation requires a Creator. Genesis 1:1 states,

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

This means God created everything and that He existed before the beginning.

If you create something, you must exist before you make it.

God is self-existent. He is not created.

God is the Creator and His creation speaks on His behalf! Psalm 19:1-4 says:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

These verses show us that God reveals Himself in His creation. This is a universal language that speaks to all people everywhere.

You know the old question, "What happens to those people who have never heard about God?" Those people don't exist! God speaks through His creation to everyone everywhere in every language. We know this is true because every culture – every people group – no matter how remote they may be has a belief in God and some sort of morality – a belief in right and wrong.

The fact that there is a universal belief in God and a universal morality are two of the proofs there is a God. Now, some people believe it, some turn from it. For those who turn away and choose not to believe in the Creator, the results will not be pleasant. Romans 1:18-25 says:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-who is forever praised.

This chapter goes on to reveal the ultimate outcome of those who reject God – they end up rejected by God and without hope. But for those people who believe God reveals Himself in creation – God will send them additional revelation. God is omniscient and He knows the end from the beginning. He knows who will respond to the gospel and He will ensure those people will hear it. For instance, consider the Roman centurion Cornelius. Acts 10:1-2 says:

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

Most people would say – that's good enough! He is a devout man who believes in God, prays, and gives to the poor. Surely that's good enough to get him into heaven.

But Cornelius was not a Christian. He was just a man who was seeking truth and wanted to know God. And Jesus said all those who seek will find. So, God gave Cornelius a vision and told him what to do. An angel told him to send men to Joppa and bring back a man named Simon Peter. Cornelius obeyed and sent his servants after Peter.

In the meantime, Peter was praying and God gave Him a vision and told him to go with the men who came looking for him. The next day, Peter went to Caesarea where Cornelius lived. He saw a large crowd and told them about his vision. He then asked Cornelius -

"May I ask why you sent for me?" Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my

house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter.' So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right.

He then went on to preach the message of Jesus Christ to them and they became born again, spirit-filled believers.

I wanted you to see the great lengths God went to, to ensure someone truly seeking after God would be saved. I believe that God in His wisdom has arranged the world so that anyone who will receive Christ will have the opportunity to do so. Nobody dies without having the clear, understood opportunity to receive or reject God's revelation. Acts 17:26-28 says:

From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

We must come to grips with the truth about God. He wants to reveal truth to us. And He does that first by revealing Himself to us through His creation.

However, God, being good and wanting relationship with us, took a second step to reveal Himself to us in greater detail.

2- The second way God has revealed Himself is through His written Word – the Bible.

The Bible declares the existence of God. The Bible reveals who God is and what God is like. If we want to know what God is like – we need to know His Word. John 17:17 says:

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

God has progressively revealed Himself to us: first through His creation and secondly through His word. God stamped His power and attributes in the very fabric of creation. Then, He went a step further and wrote it down so that if we missed it in creation, we could see it in print. We can read about it – chapter and verse.

But God, in His mercy and grace, went even further to reveal Himself to us.

John 1:14 says:

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

3- The third way God has revealed Himself is through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-3 says:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Wow – what powerful truth! God has spoken many ways – through creation, through His written word, through prophets – but the highest revelation of God is in bodily form – in Jesus Christ.

God has manifested Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, who demonstrated His deity through the undeniable fact of the Resurrection. Colossians 1:15-20 says:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.

Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God. He made an invisible God visible. All the fullness of God dwells in Him.

The most important question you'll ever answer is "Who do you believe Jesus Christ is?" That's why Jesus asked His disciples in Matthew 16:13-17

"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

We get the same answers from people today. Most people believe that Jesus was a great man or a great teacher or a prophet.

But those are inadequate answers. The only true answer is that Jesus is the Christ – the Messiah – the Son of the living God.

Some people say Jesus never claimed to be God, but they obviously have not read the Bible. Why do you think they killed Jesus? John 5:17-18 tells us:

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God his own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Many people are so spiritually blind that they cannot see truth when it is staring them in the face! When Jesus was arrested and put on trial, he was brought before the Roman governor named Pontius Pilate. John 18:36-38 says that Pilate questioned Jesus about being a king.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

Pilate was standing in the very presence of truth and did not recognize it. Instead, he rejected the Truth, he judged the Truth, sentenced the Truth, mocked the Truth and crucified the Truth.

Little did he know that he was fulfilling the eternal plan of God by crucifying the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world!

The only people who cannot see this are described in 2 Corinthians 4:4.

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

What is God like? He is exactly like Jesus.

So we must make sure we have the right understanding of who Jesus is. He is more than a good man, more than a prophet, more than a teacher.

In the classic book *Mere Christianity* - C. S. Lewis addressed the false belief that Jesus was just a good man or a great teacher. He said, "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher."

This is because of the claims of Christ. Jesus claimed to be God in human form.

He claimed that He was born of a virgin, lived a perfect sinless life, died for the sins of the world and rose again. He claims to still be alive. He invites His followers to forsake sin and follow Him.

If none of this is true, how could you call Jesus a great moral teacher? How could a good man lead millions of people astray?

The claims of Christ to be God leave us with two alternatives: either His claims are true or they are false. If they are false, there are again two alternatives: either He knew His claims were false or He did not know His claims are false.

If Jesus knew His claims were false, then He deliberately misrepresented the truth, which would make Him a liar, a hypocrite and a fool, since He willingly died for a known lie.

If He did not know His claims were false, then He was sincerely deluded and a lunatic - as C. S. Lewis says, "...on the level of a man who says he is a poached egg."

However, if Jesus' claim to be God is true, then He is Lord. If He is Lord, then we are faced with two alternatives: We either accept Jesus or reject Him as Lord of our lives. That's your choices and your only choices, either Jesus is a fraudulent liar, a delusional lunatic, or Jesus is Lord! Which is He?

You can shut Him up for being a fool – you can spit on Him and kill him for being a demonic liar – or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord! But stop the nonsense about Him being just a good man or great teacher. He did not leave that option open to you!

I want to close with the most important question you will ever answer: Who do you say Jesus is? Your eternal destiny depends on how you answer that question.

I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
 He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.
 He is the Messiah – the Savior – the Redeemer.
 He is the Healer and the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit.
 He is the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd.
 He is the Light of the world.
 He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
 He is the way the truth and the life.

If you open your eyes – you can see Him in creation.
 If you open the Bible – you can see Him in its pages.
 And if you open your heart – He will reveal Himself in a personal way to you and live in you and through you forever.

Do you know Him?