Psalm 19 – General and Special Revelation

Introduction

Often in our lives we know how to do things and we believe many things, but often we don’t really know the reasons behind them. And for many things it doesn’t matter. But for some things it does.

For instance, you don’t need to know the principles and theories, or even the mechanisms behind how you get heat in your house. All you really need to do is have the money to pay other people to install it, and have the money to get fuel.

But quite often, we assume that we know things, when in reality we don’t. Take faith for instance. Quite often, many struggle with certain aspects of their faith because they don’t know and understand how they know what they know and why they know it.

Two types of revelation

Today we are going to look at Psalm 19 and see two very important ideas or doctrines that have to do with our knowledge of God and our accountability to him: General Revelation and Special Revelation.

As we look at these two concepts, we are going to see that Special Revelation is the only way we can find salvation. This revelation is only
found in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, the Bible. It is
the full explanation of who we are, what our purpose is, how we miffed
it, and what God did to restore us.

General Revelation

In verses 1-6 we see General Revelation. It speaks to all of humanity
and tells us that there is a God, he is real, awesome, and we are
accountable to him. This revelation leaves us without excuse.

This is why we see every nation throughout history worshipping some
god. This is implanted in our DNA. We know we didn't make ourselves
and we can't keep ourselves alive, we know the wonder of the world
and its complexity. We know there is some sort of god by default.

Though there are many who deny the fact that there is some sort of
god, at bottom, atheists try to disprove the very god they know in their
heart exists, and though they argue that native tribesmen believe
because they are weak-minded, rather, could it be that they have
simply not been corrupted by a small group of philosophers who want
to deny God for some reason or another?

This General Revelation is sufficient to leave humanity without excuse
before God, but it is not able to bring us to a knowledge of God that will
bring us into a right relationship with him.
Weight or fame

This is why the psalmist says that *the heavens, the place where the stars are, or the invisible realm of God, make known or announce the kavod, the weight or fame of God*. Quite literally, the expanse announces his craftsmanship.

Every single day the skies speak, every single night the beautiful heavens give knowledge about who God is and how wonderfully amazing, creative, awesome, and powerful he is. They don’t even have to use words, for they speak inaudibly simply by their continued existence and marvelous display. There is no place where their witness does not touch, everyone is under these same skies.

Every single person that lives hears the stars, planets, and galaxies above them saying, “Look at us! God is real. God made all of us. God is awesome beyond what you can think or imagine. God deserves all your praise. God deserves all your honor.”

Then, if that wasn’t enough, there’s the sun. God made that too! What a testimony! Everyday it comes out in beauty and majesty, like a radiant bridegroom just after the wedding. It is ready every day to run its race of going up then going down. It brings light and heat. Nobody can escape it. It too tells us, and everyone, how amazing God is.

Is this enough?
All these things reveal that everyone is without excuse. They show us that there is a God. The problem, however, is that this God is so far above us that we don’t know from this general revelation how we can actually get to know him or even have an audience with him.

If he is eternal and above all, and we can’t see him physically or hear him audibly, how can we know him? Especially since he is infinite. Is it even possible? The answer is that we can’t know him in and of ourselves. We need him to disclose himself. We need him to tell us exactly who he is and how he wants us to get to know him.

**Special Revelation**

In verses 7-13 we see Special Revelation, the answer to our dilemma. It is the very words of God himself. It tells us where the world came from. It tells us who the Creator is. It tells us what our purpose is, how we have rebelled against our Creator, and why our world and ourselves are so messed up. It also tells us what God did to solve this problem, and what will happen at the end of time. In short, it reveals all we must know in order to be made right with our Maker as well as how to live.

**Our accountability**

Where do we find this? In verse 7 we are told that the *Torah* of Yahweh is perfect or blameless. It refreshes or revives our soul. For the psalmist, the Torah is the revelation of God from the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the Bible. He would have seen it as the primary source
of God’s revelation of his saving work, the good news of God’s deliverance from slavery and sin. Today, we can, however, think of this principally as the entire word of God revealing our salvation in Christ.

Also, we are told that the testimonies, edut, of Yahweh are trustworthy, bringing wisdom to people who aren’t naturally wise. This refers to those things in Scripture that tell us our duty since we have been saved from slavery to ourselves and Satan by God’s mighty acts.

In verse 8 we see that the precepts, instructions, regulations or procedures, piqqudim, of Yahweh are right, straight, or just. These are the things that God tells us we should do, the way we should act and think. These instructions are the right way or path. When we do them joy is brought to our hearts. We experience the delight of knowing that we are walking in the path that our Creator has laid out for us.

Also, the commandment or commission, mizah, of Yahweh is morally pure, it tell us exactly how we should live. Every commandment is good and morally upright. They give light to our eyes, showing us exactly where we should go, helping us to keep from evil and immorality.

In verse 9 we see that reverence or awe for Yahweh is clean, there is no corruption in it. It lasts forever. Why? Because when we realize how awesome he is and understand his eternity and power, we only go deeper in our understanding and love for him. Reverencing Yahweh is like a cycle of continued awe and reverence, reverence and love.
Finally, the judgments or decisions, *mizpat*, of Yahweh are true, *emet*, and each decision or judgment that God makes is fair or just. God’s decisions and rulings are righteous and good, they are the best for all.

And so, to sum it up, these 5 descriptions of how God reveals himself to us in his word are all valuable to us. His word is true and clear, wonderful and wise. In his word we find him and he is beautiful. We seek to love and obey him because he is wonderful and amazing, lovely in and of himself. We don’t simply act like a mercenary and follow him because of what we get, but rather because of who he is.

Desirous and useful

Then, in verses 10-11, we read, “*More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*” What is the psalmist getting at?

This special revelation is more valuable then anything in life. Why? It is the voice of God to us. It is a gracious and kind word that tells us the truth about our need of God and the way that God has provided for that need through his one and only Son, Jesus. It tells us what God loves and hates. It tells us all about him. It is like the opportunity that a person has to see their newly found love. They would give up all to be with their love. Looking into God’s word is the opportunity for the psalmist and us to get to know God truly and deeply.
This special revelation is also the way that we can learn to do what is right and not hurt ourselves or our relationship with God. It is God’s way of telling us that the stove is hot and the knife is sharp. It is the protection and guidance we need to live a joyful, happy, and safe life.

Let me mention something briefly about the three uses of the law. The first use is to be a mirror to show us God’s righteousness and our sin. It shows us our failure as we try to fulfill its requirements. It essentially shows us our need for forgiveness and mercy. It drives us to Christ.

The second use is as a barrier to restrain evil. In other words, the civil government imposes sanctions and punishments to keep people from being as bad as they could be. God’s law does the same thing. It threatens people with judgment if they do evil. It restrains evil.

The third use is as a guide to lead us into the good works that God has planned for us. It shows us how we can live a life that pleases our Heavenly Father. It is kind of like our family code. Though you and I are free from the law as a system of salvation, it is our rule of life, the law of Christ. It is a guidebook.

And so, the law of the Lord is wonderful, desirous, and useful. But as we think about all that the law of God contains, and God’s absolute perfection, it can make us sweat a little. Why? Because we aren’t very good at keeping his rules. And we know that God sees everything.
A big mess

And so, we would be foolish to hear all of this and think that we are ok before this eternal, almighty God. We know that often we don’t want to do what God says, and we don’t like what God says, commands, reveals, and desires. Our hearts want to go after their own way.

I think we can relate to verses 12-13. If we take time to self-reflect, we find that we don’t know how bad we are, we have many hidden sins. When we read God’s word, we start to see them, but we quickly want to turn down the volume and turn away our eyes, it is too painful.

So, when we are faced with our known sins, missing God’s mark, and then our unknown sins, we are in trouble. We see that we need cleansing. And we know that we can’t do it. Why? Because a dirty rag can’t clean. We must have a clean rag to clean up a dirty mess.

But it isn’t just our hidden sins, quite often, we find ourselves deliberately disobeying God. We do what we want to do and don’t care what God says. In fact, quite often they control us. We are in trouble.

We need God to cleanse us from our sins for he alone is clean. But, we also need God to help us defeat them because we can’t do it on our own. We need God to take our guilt and declare us innocent of our great or massive sin. Then we will be blameless before him.
Our only hope

This psalm shows us in 5 short sentences (vv. 12-13) what is elaborated in all the rest of Scripture. You and I are sinners. We are in rebellion against God. We sin against God even if we don't know it. We need God's help to be free of sin. He must cleanse us so we can have hope.

Redemption

And so, in verse 14, since our only hope is God, we see that we must rely on him from beginning to end. We must ask God to guard our mouths and our hearts. He is our rock and our redeemer. He keeps us safe from the penalty of sin and he redeems us from the power of sin. God is our redeemer who buys us back at his own cost. And after he buys us back, he makes us and enables us to live for him in what we say, and what we spend our time dwelling on.

Worshipping Jesus

But this cleansing that was spoken of only happens through the good news of Jesus Christ, his life, death, burial, and resurrection. The reality is that this Special Revelation is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Let’s meditate on him for a few minutes.

Jesus lived out the life of a perfect human, the way God designed us to live. His entire life pleased God and then he died to remove our guilt and bring us back into right relationship with God. But this wasn't the
end of the story because Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, proving all that he said to be true and securing redemption and the forgiveness of sins for us by ours sins being placed upon him and paid for by his death, as well as his good works being placed upon us.

*Jesus alone perfectly followed all the Torah (law), edut (testimonies), piqqudim (regulations), mizah (commandments), and executed God’s mizpat (judgments).* He alone was the fulfillment of the Torah, all the law and prophets testified of him coming and being the perfect man making the perfect sacrifice to satisfy God’s justice and making a holy people through his life. He alone knew all the testimonies and fulfilled all the duties required, for he loved God perfectly and loved others as himself. He followed all God’s regulations, and in fact all the regulations pointed to what he would do on the cross. He followed the commandment and commission of God by doing what God wanted and not his will; he was perfectly submissive all the time. And, finally, not only did he live a life of doing justice and mercy, proclaiming God’s judgment, but he willingly bore the judgment of God upon himself.

And what we must not forget is that Jesus gave us all of this and counts us as righteous and holy before God. We are named children because Jesus was the perfect Son of God who took away our sin.

Jesus is our Special Revelation, and no one can be saved without his message and his life. This revelation of Jesus is only found in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, the Bible. It is the full explanation of who we are, what our purpose is, how we miffed it, and what God did to restore us.
Application

But what of this, how does this help us today, where we are? Well, our own imagination about who God is and what he requires of us is not helpful. Most of the time we add or take away requirements. We think we have to please God by doing such and such a thing when in reality he never asked it. We sort of wing it and bring ourselves into misery.

What Psalm 19 tells us is that there is one source of absolute truth. There is one set of righteous and good requirements, and that is found in God’s special revelation, the Scripture. Reading and meditating on it is critical to keeping us grounded in what we really should believe, and how we should act, as well as where to find how we should live.

Making up stuff about who God is and what he wants is a dangerous game, just as much as not knowing who God is and what he wants. Making up or ignoring God’s Special revelation leads many people astray and brings them into untold heartache and misery. God’s revelation in Christ is that which we should seek and desire above all else, for in it we find the truth and find our joy and delight.

And so, what will you do this coming week to make sure you are digging into this perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, reliable revelation of God? What will you do to treat God as if he is more desirable then gold and sweeter than the honeycomb?