

How Has God Revealed Himself?

Do you know what an epiphany is? The dictionary defines an epiphany as: *"A sudden, intuitive perception or insight into the reality... of something... especially of a deity."*

Did you know that John Lennon experienced an epiphany? It happened some time in the late 70's when John and Yoko were living in New York's Dakota Building. Two of Lennon's biographers tell the details in their books. While living the life of a virtual recluse, Lennon became an avid viewer and reader of American TV evangelists. One of his biographers, Robert Rosen, writes:

"One day [Lennon] had an epiphany – he allowed himself to be touched by the love of Jesus Christ, and it drove him to tears of joy and ecstasy."

Another biographer, Geoffrey Giuliano, pinpoints this to a Palm Sunday after Lennon had watched a series on Jesus broadcast by CBN. He writes:

"...he broke down in tears. In the following weeks, he attended church services and took his son, Sean, to a Christian theater performance. He even called The 700 Club help line to request prayer for his health and troubled marriage."

Unfortunately, Yoko was not pleased and eventually reeled Lennon back into her world of astrology, psychics and tarot-card readers. It's unclear at the time of His death, whether Lennon had experienced a real Christian conversion or not. But one thing is indisputable – Jesus had graciously revealed Himself to the one who once claimed to be more popular than He. ⁱ

John 1:18 affirms that, *"No one has ever seen God..."* But God also says through the prophet Isaiah:

**I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;
I was found by those who did not seek me. (Is. 65:1)**

This revealing of Himself takes two forms that I want us to examine before we come to this miracle table. First, there is what theologians call...

I. General Revelation

The Greek word for revelation literally means, "disclosure" or "unveiling." So, revelation in the Bible signifies God "unveiling" Himself to us. Had God not revealed Himself, we wouldn't know Him. General Revelation speaks of God's revealing Himself through history and creation. This is what Romans 1 is proclaiming when it says:

...what may be known about God is plain to them (all people), 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. (Rom. 1:19-20)

The British philosopher and atheist, Bertrand Russell, was asked what he would say if, after he died, he met God and God asked him why he didn't believe in

Him? Russell replied that he would say, “Not enough evidence, God, not enough evidence.”ⁱⁱ Really? And exactly how much evidence IS enough?

Throughout the world, an increasing number of scientists are accepting the existence of God through the evidence they find in their research. This is particularly true in the field of astrophysics, because we now know that the fine-tuned balances in every area of the universe, from sub-atomic particles to quasars, had to be so exact for life to be formed that it absolutely could not have happened by chance.

Astronomer George Greenstein writes:

“As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency... must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly... we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being?”ⁱⁱⁱ

Physicist, Paul Davies, moved from promoting atheism to conceding that:

“...the laws [of physics]... seem themselves to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design... [There] is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all. It seems as if somebody has fine-tuned nature’s numbers to make the Universe... The impression of design is overwhelming.”^{iv}

Alan Sandage, winner of the Crafoord prize in astronomy remarked:

“I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is a mystery but is the explanation for the miracle of existence, why there is something instead of nothing.”^v

And Mathematical Physicist, Robert Griffiths, quipped:

If we need an atheist for a debate, I go to the philosophy department. The physics department isn’t much use.”^{vi}

What these scientists are talking about is the cold hard facts of measurable evidence that lead to only one conclusion: chance plus time absolutely could NOT have brought this universe into existence. What these physicists have discovered is exactly what the apostle Paul said they would discover:

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. (Rom. 1:20)

This doesn’t say you will know everything about God, but you will know of His “eternal power and divine nature;” you’ll know there is a Being more powerful, wiser and more intelligent than you are. Will you know of His goodness, His mercy and His plan to save you? No, you won’t know that from His Creation. But you will know that He exists. The evidence is simply overwhelming.

So, how is it possible that so many other scientists have not come to this conclusion? The simple answer is that they violated their own first rule of science: “Follow the evidence wherever it leads you.” Has there ever been a scientist who “adjusted” his or her research so that it produced a predetermined outcome? When millions or billions of dollars are at stake or when reputations have been built defining and defending a certain position, I think we’re all aware of dozens of “studies” that were fixed by a corporation or a university or a government, so that the research would prove their very lucrative point. And that’s exactly what Rom. 1:18 describes:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness (Greek word *adikia*- “wrongdoing”) of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness...

Friends, there’s no conflict between the Bible and science. The conflict is between the Bible and bad science. Scientist who follow the evidence of their research with a truly scientific mind find God.

But God has provided another kind of revelation because He didn’t only want us to know OF Him but to KNOW Him personally. That form of revelation is...

II. Special Revelation

Special revelation has a narrower focus. It reveals to us how we can have a personal relationship with this eternally powerful God. This revelation is not abstract and hidden in the forms and laws of nature. It is plain. It is specific. Essentially, it all consummates in the person of Jesus Christ because He is the answer to the question, “How can I know God personally?” Hebrews 1 spells it out:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Heb. 1:1-2)

There are many important truths in these two verses but let me point out two that are pertinent to the issue of special revelation. First, “*God spoke... through the prophets.*” What’s the definition of a prophet? A prophet is: *A mediator or spokesman between God and men who received direct revelation from God, revealing God’s will to man.*^{vii} The physical Creation will tell you, basically even prove to you, that God exists. But it won’t tell you about His heart. It won’t tell you what is good and what is bad or what is right and what is wrong. It won’t tell you about His grace and mercy and love. But His words will!!

God sent prophets with His words, not so that we could know that He existed. We should’ve already known that by the evidence of the physical world. No, God sent His prophets so that we could get to know His heart. Science tells us the what and maybe the where of God. But God’s Word tells us the why, the how, the when. Science shows us the math, the engineering and the physics of God. His words declare to us His justice, they explain to us His personality, they sing to us His poetry. His words invite us out for a long walk and coffee. The prophets invite us to a personal relationship with God.

Secondly, in these first two verses of Hebrews, we see that the work of the prophets was always leading somewhere. It was leading us to a personified version of God; what the apostle John called, “*The Word became flesh...*” (Jn. 1:14) The book of Hebrews is summarizing what the prophets taught about how we could know God. First, it describes the Godness of Jesus. Listen to that again:

The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (Heb. 1:3a)

You see, Jesus is the only 200% person. I know that seems mathematically impossible, but as the angel said to Mary, “*...nothing is impossible with God.*” (Lk. 1:37) Heb. 1 tells us that Jesus was 100% God, “*...the exact representation of his being...*” And Heb. 4:15 tells us that Jesus is:

...one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.

Jesus was also 100% human. 100% God, 100% Human: the only 200% person who ever has lived or whoever will live. Why is this important? This is important because it was essential for Him to accomplish the mission for which He came. Creation shows us that God exists, but Jesus, the ultimate prophet, came not only to tell us how we could be friends with God, but He came to do what was necessary for us to become friends with God.

We saw last week in Isaiah 59 that what separates us from God is our disobedience, our sin. **Only one thing can remove our sin – a perfectly clean sacrifice.**

This weekend on the Jewish calendar is Yom Kippur, which is the holiest sabbath in the Jewish year. It is the Day of Atonement, the day in the Old Testament when the High Priest of Israel would go into the Holy of Holies with the blood of a perfectly clean lamb and offer it for his sins and the sins of his people. God said through the prophet Moses:

For the life of a creature is in the blood... it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. (Lev. 17:11)

The book of Hebrews explains that what the High Priest of Israel was doing was just a drama. The blood of animals never actually caused God to forgive anyone's sins. It was just a drama that pointed to the single event in all of history that WOULD cause sins to be forgiven – the death of Jesus on the cross – a sacrifice of a perfectly clean, sinless man. Here's why being 200% was essential for Jesus to carry out His mission: this sacrifice needed to be a human, because humans had sinned. But it also needed to be a sinless human and only God is sinless. Voila!!! This is why no other religion can lead you into a friendship with God – only Jesus is qualified!!

And that's what Heb. 9 describes:

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. (This means, He went with His own blood to the Temple in heaven.) He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption... How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Heb. 9:11-12, 14)

This is the ultimate Special Revelation of God because this is how you and anyone you know can become an eternal son or daughter of God. Now let me show you one more thing...

Remember how I said that General Revelation tells us about God but it doesn't explain how we can know God personally? Well, it may not reveal it clearly, but God has given us, even in our own bodies, some pretty big hints about the "how." Louie Giglio explains about how a molecular biologist told him about Laminin. Please watch this:

[Show Laminin video – about 5:15 min.]

The God who created this universe and created you has been revealing Himself from the very first day He created all this. So, the only questions left to be asked are these:

- Have you accepted these revelations of God?
- Do you understand that this book is His infallible Word and it will lead you into truth, satisfaction, joy and eternal life?
- Do you understand that, if you ignore His Word, the enemy of God will lead you to falsehood, pain and eternal despair?
- Have you entered into a personal relationship with this God who graciously reveals Himself to you?

Let's pray...

ⁱ Steve Turner, "The Ballad of John and Jesus," *Christianity Today* (6-12-00), p. 86 and "The Gospel of John Lennon," <http://thislandpress.com> posted by Lindsey Neal, March 7, 2011

ⁱⁱ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Mariner Book, 2006)

ⁱⁱⁱ George Greenstein, *The Symbiotic Universe* (New York: William Morrow, 1988), p. 27

^{iv} Paul Davies, *Superforce* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), p.243 and *The Cosmic Blueprint* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), p. 203

^v John Noble Wilford, "Sizing Up the Cosmos: An Astronomer's Quest," *New York Times*, March 12, 1991, p. B9.

^{vi} Tim Stafford, "Cease-fire in the Laboratory," *Christianity Today*, April 3, 1987, p. 18.

^{vii} Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2008), p. 720