

Eleven Things You Need to Know About God's Revelation of Himself to Humanity

In his letter to the Roman Christians, Paul wrote,

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For 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 people are without excuse (Rom. 1:18-20).

From this text, we'll first note eight things about God's revelation of Himself to humanity. Then, as we discuss an objection people often raise about this issue, we add three more items to our list.

1. Those who deny or suppress the truth about God face His judgment (see Rom. 1:18).
2. People suppress the truth about God “by their wickedness” (v. 18; also see John 3:16-21).
3. The truth about God is plain to all, even to those who refuse to believe it, and even if they claim evidence for God's existence is lacking (see Rom. 1:19).
4. It is God who has made truth about Himself plain (see v. 19).
5. God has revealed Himself through His creation (see v. 20).
6. God's “invisible qualities,” specifically His “eternal power and divine nature,” have been made evident in and through creation (see v. 20).
7. God's revealed truth is understood (see v. 20). The word translated *understood* means “perceived with the mind.” Having seen God's revelation, people “get it.” They might not realize they've “gotten it,” but they have anyway.
8. Because of the God-given understanding they have, “people are without excuse” before the Lord (v. 20). They cannot say God didn't reveal Himself in clear, discernible ways—because He has done just that!

Sometimes people ask, “If God really is real, why doesn't He simply reveal Himself in ways that make His existence undeniable and undebatable? Why doesn't He just prove Himself beyond all doubt?” Let's respond to this objection with three points, all of which are interrelated. These will be the ninth, tenth, and eleventh items on our longer list.

9. If God were to disclose Himself in a way that would “blow us away,” His disclosure truly would blow us away! One day God will reveal Himself in this way, but because of His mercy, He hasn't yet. Here's the catch. With proof beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is real, we no longer would be able to choose to love Him. Mark it down! We cannot be free to choose to love God unless we're also free to reject Him and His overtures of love to us.
10. There is another reason God doesn't yet disclose Himself in totally irrefutable ways. Because it especially puts the onus on us, this truth should make us quake in our boots. Jesus indicated during His ministry that God reveals Himself increasingly to those who respond with open hearts to the revelations He already has provided. On the other hand, if a person already has his or her mind made up, that individual cannot blame God for not revealing more. People like this may be brilliant by human standards, but they lack true understanding. They are “always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 1:7).
11. Finally, God doesn't want mechanical allegiance, but real love. We should be quick to understand this, because we desire the same in our own relationships. It's appropriate, therefore, that the inspired writer of Hebrews declared, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (11:6). If you're not put in a position to trust God, you won't. Moreover, you cannot have a meaningful relationship with anyone you do not trust!

This page presents a summary of “Facing Reality, Part 4—God Reveals Truth About Himself: Eleven Things You Need to Know.”