

GOD'S WORD

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

God's Gradual Re-revelation of Himself

Glen C. Robertson

AFTER THE FALL of Man we lost much knowledge of God, and were denied the opportunity to know God the way our Heavenly Father had intended (God had intended that man know Him much more like how the Born Again Christian is now able to)! And later generations continued to backslide, alienating themselves even more, from following and knowing God.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel.

Judges 2:10 The BIBLE

But while man sank into sin, God's re-revelation of Himself began for man, a great and gradual march back toward a knowledge of God, which was eventually completed for mortal man by the revelation of God, Himself, in the form of Jesus Christ. Our Heavenly Father began this re-revelation of Himself to man just after creation, beginning in Genesis 3:15, when He hinted even to Adam and Eve of what was to come. He prophesied of Himself cryptically to Abraham, in Genesis 12:3. Our Heavenly Father gave us hints through His servant Jacob in Genesis 49:10. Five hundred years later, through Moses, He gave us His revelation of His righteousness in the Ten Commandments, arguably His first great revelation of Himself in written form. He followed with another similarly great written revelation of His righteousness in the form of the first five Books of the Bible, also through Moses, who again prophesied of Jesus in Deuteronomy 18:15. And Moses hinted of God's continuing revelation of Himself and of His holiness, telling the Israelites that what they were allowed to do during their lifetime would in the future be prohibited by God!

8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes

9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.

Deuteronomy 12:8-9 The BIBLE

After Moses more of God was gradually revealed through prophets such as Samuel and Nathan, and then more formally through the revelations and writings of revealing and teaching prophets such as David, in Psalms 22 and 69, and Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zechariah, etc. By Micah and Isaiah we see very clear hints given to God's people 700 years before Christ, of the One Who would be born in Bethlehem, in Micah 5:2, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Our Heavenly Father's spokesmen, the prophets, were gradually shown more of God, and through the written Scriptures that God gave them for us, we were given an increasing revelation of God, yet still only mere hints of Who/what was to come. These prophecies and revelations weren't a mere scattering of disjointed, unconnected words to random individuals, but a single, gradually-increasing revelation of God to His Nation on earth. And finally, God's revelation of Himself was made perfect, in the birth of His Son, Jesus.

10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ Which was in them did signify, when It testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

I Peter 1:10-12 The BIBLE

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Matthew 13:17 The BIBLE

The Old Testament's gradual revelation and growing/progressing knowledge of God is referred to by Theologians as, "Progressive Revelation." What began as an almost total ignorance of God,

5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.

7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Genesis 6:5-8 The BIBLE

6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Judges 17:6, 21:25 The BIBLE

12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they His counsel: for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

Micah 4:12 The BIBLE

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Ephesians 4:18 The BIBLE

... became, in God's people, a knowledge of God gradually and eventually fulfilled and completed for the Christian on earth, in the Person and teaching of Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself.

3 How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few Words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Ephesians 3:3-5 The BIBLE

But this knowledge is TO THIS DAY, STILL unknown by the world, by the unrepentant, those who have not been Born Again. And, for those who are Born Again, a revelation which will reach final completion only in heaven!

8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?

9 And He said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the Words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

Daniel 12:8-10 The BIBLE

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

John 13:7 The BIBLE**An Earlier Stage**

For this reason, the age of the Law (the Old Testament) was not merely a different, separate, old, and obsolete way to get into God's good books;¹ it was an *earlier stage* of God's gradually-increasing revelation of Himself, what has been termed, "Progressive Revelation (God's gradual and progressively greater revelation of Himself throughout history, culminating in Christ's birth)." As such, the Old Testament's provision, through law and animal sacrifice, of a means to make atonement for man's sins, was merely

¹ 17 Think not that I Am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I Am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.
18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17-19 The BIBLE

an early and, by definition, incomplete part of the subsequent progressively clearer revelation of God. God's Revelation was finished with the incarnation of God Himself in the form of Jesus the Christ (and Jesus' work on earth was completed when He finally ascended, and returned to heaven). It was not merely an old, different, and inferior method of salvation. It was, rather, an earlier *stage* in God's increasing revelation of Himself, in what was a single process, begun at Adam, continued by Moses and the other prophets, and completed by Jesus Christ and His writers of Scripture.

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I Am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:18 The BIBLE

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:37-40 The BIBLE

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

II John 1:5-6 The BIBLE

The New Testament, "Church Age," isn't a different work of God from the Old Testament; it is the same work. It is the finish, the culmination, the completion of the Old Testament, and of that which came before the Old Testament: the Covenant of Faith!² So it is not possible that the New Testament could be annulled and made obsolete, and no longer in effect, as that would be cutting denying God's entire work throughout history. It would be attempting to make God's work once more incomplete – and to conceal what (Who) has already been fully revealed!

4 For Christ Is the end (*not, "elimination," but, "completion"*) of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Romans 10:4 The BIBLE

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth He it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?

² Romans 4; Galatians 3

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.
8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,
preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.
9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.
10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse: for it is written,
Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of
the Law to do them.
11 But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just
shall live by faith.
12 And the Law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.
13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us: for it
is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:
14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that
we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if
it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.
16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds,
as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.
17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the
Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should
make the promise of none effect.
18 For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to
Abraham by promise.
19 Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the
seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the
hand of a mediator.
20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God Is One.
21 Is the Law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law
given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law.³
22 But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus
Christ might be given to them that believe.
23 But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which
should afterwards be revealed.
24 Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be
justified by faith.
25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.
26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male
nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

³ 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.

Hebrews 10:4 The BIBLE

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:1-29 The BIBLE

It would be a denial, not merely of any part or of complete salvation, as much as it would be a denial of the complete program of the self-revelation of God, which of course God cannot deny.⁴ (Our Heavenly Father's self-revelation was not as much for the salvation of man as it was for the glorification of God Himself.⁵) It would indeed be also (although necessarily to a lesser extent) a denial of the complete program and provision God made for man's salvation, Old and New, as, because it was all part of the whole and was a part of the self-revelation of the unchanging God, denial of one part of God's self-revelation would be a denial of the whole, and would require an entirely new plan of salvation⁶ for only the poor wretches left after a supposed PRETRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE. This would require a new revelation of God,⁷ and a new Gospel which both would be 'absolutely out of the question.'⁸

29 For the gifts and calling⁹ of God 'are without repentance' (*'will not be withdrawn.'*).

Romans 11:29 The BIBLE

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law,

Galatians 4:4 The BIBLE

This passage, Galatians 4:4, speaks, in fact, of the present as "the 'fulness' (*'end'*) of time," the final act. "...When the fullness of time was come..." Christ, by His death on the cross, summed up history and God's design, and declared finished, His Work in fulfilling prophecy, in earthly ministry, and in finishing God's revelation. Jesus, the Personification of the grace of God/New Testament was, "... made under the Law;" in other words, to destroy the New Testament would be to thereby destroy the Old Testament, as Jesus was, "made," as the (finishing) part of the Old Testament. And the Old Testament *cannot* be destroyed, in whole nor in part!

⁴ 13 If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny himself.

II Timothy 2:13 The BIBLE

⁵ Isaiah 43:7; Revelation 4:11

⁶ Although no new revelation of God Himself would be required, as that has been already accomplished and finished in Jesus Christ.

⁷ Because the Old and New Testaments are less about salvation than they are about the progressive self-revelation of God, yet a new revelation of God would be impossible as His self-revelation was completed with the incarnation of Jesus.

9 For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead Bodily.

Colossians 2:9 The BIBLE

⁸ Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19

⁹ That "calling" is salvation:

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Luke 5:32 The BIBLE

14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

Matthew 22:14 The BIBLE

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

33 But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write It in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

35 Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of Hosts Is His Name:

36 If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever.

37 Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 31:31-37 The BIBLE

19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

20 That they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 The BIBLE