

REVEALED

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Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, December 28, 2014

Whether it's our fear of the unknown that drives us, or our sense of need for personal control of our lives, or just some insatiable curiosity, in so many ways we try to pull back the curtain of time and catch a glimpse (if not read the entire script) of future events.

From Nostradamus to Jean Dixon to Edgar Cayce, we seek knowledge from those few who claim clairvoyance. From astrology and horoscopes to palm reading and Tarot cards or séances and Ouija boards, we seek the aid of tools that purportedly reach beyond our shuttered sight.

Will time travel ever be possible? If so, will it be a read-only experience, like Scrooge's trips to Christmas past and Christmas future? Or, will we be able to influence a change of events, as in *Back to the Future* or the series of *Terminator* movies?

Even those who are deeply embedded in making the most of their present opportunities to ease the suffering in our world, share this desire to know, to see, to understand the causes that affect the future.

This desire is innately human. We know of no other species that works toward anything higher than simple survival. And God, who made us, has planted that desire within us, because He, for whom past, present, and future merge into the eternal now, wants to share with us something of the end that He has known from the beginning.

But not everything. Because we can't handle "everything." Truth be told, we cannot handle on our own the brief clip that is our life. And for some, peering toward the future is effectively a distraction from working through their own brokenness and dysfunction.

Yet, God is a Revealer—not of fantasy, but of truth and reality.

Accountability

Moses, whom God chose to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery to freedom and redemption (in a story more fantastic, yet more believable, than Hollywood's "Exodus"), wrote these words to anchor our thoughts again in the real world:

Deuteronomy 29:29 "The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.

Moses was referring to the volume of commandments he had provided concerning Israel's relations with God, with other people, and with their own families. Many of those

are universal—they apply to non-Jewish cultures throughout time. He clearly identified those words as a *revelation* of instructions for living.

His point, of course, was that the revealed instructions carry with them a certain accountability for obedience. This principle may be applied to God's revelations generally—they are not shared just for the sake of knowing, but for the sake of *shaping* our futures *through obedience*. We are responsible for what has been revealed to us.

An overarching theme for our church for the past year has been this word, "reveal." It means to pull back the veil in order to show something previously hidden. What was once hidden that God has now shown?

David, the shepherd-king, who gave us so many insightful and moving song lyrics, wrote this in Psalm 103:

Psalm 103:7 He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel.

God revealed His character—something we could not clearly perceive by the simple observation of the world that He created. For instance, through arduous studies over thousands of years, we may recognize the orderliness of His thought in the precise movements of the stars and planets, or... we may only perceive the precision by which things persist in a godless world.

The element that decides our conclusion from what we observe is faith—*faith fed by revelation*. Apart from the revealed words, faith has no object on which to fasten itself, no anchor in reality.

God revealed His character *and* He also revealed His deeds. That is to say, God intervened in Israel's history in observable acts. Those acts also revealed something about Him. What this verse reveals to us is that there were two different levels of perception.

Moses perceived character in God's words and deeds. But the people in general only saw God's actions, unable to grasp the significance and meaning beyond their own personal benefit.

How many people today also long to see God act in their lives and the lives of those around them! But will they perceive His character in those activities? Will they get to know God better because of what they see? As a result of God's actions, will they fulfill their accountability to obey Him more? Indeed, *that* is the question, for we are responsible for what has been revealed to us.

Trust

Jesus probed His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They responded with some of the things they had overheard: "Some say John the Baptizer, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets (risen from the dead)."

Matthew 16:15 Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being."

Today, there are many well-founded and thoroughly researched facts concerning Jesus (including His miraculous resurrection from the dead) that point us to this conclusion. But in that day, Peter had only Jesus words and deeds to consider. And, while others also had those same words and deeds to guide them, Peter reached a unique conclusion: *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

How was Peter able to perceive the character and nature of Jesus, while others only saw a great teacher and miracle worker? The answer is, a revelation from God in which he placed his trust.

In the Bible, it is written:

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One (Jesus), who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

When the disciples saw who Jesus was, they also caught a glimpse of who God is. For God was ready to give more than a glimpse through His words and actions—He opened a window through the person of His Son, Jesus. As the Letter to the Hebrews affirms:

Hebrews 1:1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. ² And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

Jesus did not come to make a name for Himself. If He had, He would surely have done some things differently. He would have enlisted at least one disciple as His Public Relations Officer, whose task it was to plan major events, announce Jesus' arrival, and follow up with "What's Next?" campaigns. He would never, as in fact He did, tell His disciples to keep quiet and make no report of His works until after He was gone.

Actually, Jesus came to reveal *someone else*. He came to reveal God the Father. He once prayed:

John 17:25 "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶ I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."

He came to reveal the Father so that God would be known for His great love, rather than suspected of arbitrary vindictiveness.

Saul of Tarsus was converted from the life of a persecutor and tormentor of Christian believers, whose representation of God he hated, to a life of self-sacrifice in order to make the Good News of Jesus Christ more widely known. This was his conclusion:

Romans 8:38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people.

Jesus revealed, by His person and by His deeds, the love that God has for humanity, the grace with which God receives all who come to Him in faith, and the salvation with which God rewards those who trust Him. And now, we are responsible for what has been revealed to us.

Unity

What's more, Jesus is not finished with us yet! He didn't come and die and rise again just to create another religion. His plan exceeds all expressions of religion. Here is how Paul described the ultimate scenario:

Ephesians 1:9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

Bring together—things as diverse as heaven (where all beings serve God's loving purpose) and earth (where most prefer to serve themselves and their own designs), things as divergent as yesterday (which we may regret) and tomorrow (which we may fear), things as different as you and me—all under the sole authority of Jesus Christ.

United in trust, united in love, united in peace, united in joy. No longer at war with ourselves, nor with one another. Instead, respecting and caring for others as we do ourselves. Growing together, instead of apart, while appreciating and celebrating our diversity.

Are you starting to get the picture? Can you see the character of the Kingdom, or only its outward actions?

Is this where you're heading? Is this what you support? Are you giving yourself to Christ for this purpose? Because, we are responsible for what has been revealed to us.

Conversion

God wants you to know more than simply *that He is*. He wants you to know and trust *who He is*. So, He sent His Son, Jesus, so we could see God's heart lived out in a human life.

Then Jesus laid down His life as a substitute and sacrifice for our stubborn self-will—our sin. And when that sacrifice was accepted as the just payment for our debt of love to our Creator, the Father raised Jesus from the dead and sent to us the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus, our Immanuel, God among us.

Do you know why God gave us the Holy Spirit? So that we could see what God has done for us and given to us, and not forget what we have seen.

1 Corinthians 2:8 The rulers of this world have not understood [the wise plan of God]; if they had, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord. ⁹ That is what the Scriptures mean when they say (quoting the Jewish prophet, Isaiah), "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."

¹⁰ But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. ¹¹ No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. ¹² And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

You see, we are responsible for what has been given to us. It is one thing to believe in God (that He exists), yet another to trust God (that He is for you, not against you). And this is just what God has been trying to reveal to you.

Your stubborn resistance, your refusal to trust and surrender, has created all manner of difficult and perplexing situations in your life, but even those have been intended to melt you, not to break you.

Though you may have resented God's invasion of your privacy and involvement in your life, in fact, you are an extension of His life. He has every right to reveal Himself to you and call you up to a higher way of living and a fuller way of giving.

If you would just die to your own will, God would delight to show you His will.

If you would just die to this life-without-God and trust Jesus Christ, He would give you real life—where the Creator and His created live in harmony and delight, where your movements and activities become energized by the current of God's purpose.

You *are* responsible for what has been revealed to you, whether you choose to acknowledge it or hide it among your secret thoughts. One day, it will come to light. A time is coming “*when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all*” (Matthew 10:26). And I can tell you this,

Romans 10:9 If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

It may be that the only thing standing between you and a saving experience of God’s grace is your decision to own it, to say with your own voice, “I trust Jesus as Savior and Lord.”

If you believe in God, that’s great. But even demons believe that—and they tremble because of it! (James 2:19)

Stop struggling about this. If you believe in God, put your trust in Jesus Christ.

John, the son of a fisherman and one of the first followers of Jesus, reflected on his years with the Lord and said:

¹ John 1:1 We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. ² This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life.

When Moses saw a bush that burned with fire but was not consumed, he turned aside to examine it more closely. As a result, he heard the voice of God and God began to reveal Himself to Moses, and to reveal His purpose for Moses’ life.

Will you “turn aside” today? Will you see and perceive what God wants to show you? Will you respond to God’s revelation of Himself in humble faith and worship?

For we are, each one of us, responsible for what has been revealed to us.