

Revelation

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The word revelation is defined as making something manifest, especially something of great significance that was not previously known. Revelation can come to an individual on a personal matter, to a father for his family, to an ecclesiastical leader for a congregation, or to a prophet of God for the entire world.

Revelation Directs the Lord's Church

In the spirit of Hebrews 1:1-2, the Church of Jesus Christ is to be directed by God, with revelation being the "rock" upon which the Church is to be built (Matthew 16:16-18). Such was the case when Jesus instructed and directed leaders in establishing his Church, while receiving direction from God the Father. Though Christ left his earthly existence, he remains with us always unto the end of the world according to the promise given before his ascension (Matthew 28:20). He is with us through the power of the Holy Ghost (Luke 12:23 and John 14:26).

Christ spoke directly to Saul in a vision (Acts 9:3-6) and to Peter in like manner (Acts 10). Christ gave many revelations to John in what came to be the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. In all of these cases the revelation came long after the ascension of Christ. Prophets and others can have the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:39), in each case given in its proper order and in agreement with the scriptures.

Revelation Defined and Manifested Today

The apostle Bruce R. McConkie defined revelation in two parts: personal revelation and revelation for the Church. Personal revelation is given to individuals for their own personal guidance; revelation for the Church is given to Church-appointed leaders for the entire Church body (Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, Bookcraft 1979, pages 643-647). The ninth article of faith states: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (AOF 9), indicating on-going revelation.

There is comfort in the doctrine about a living God who would interact with his children on a personal level while providing broader guidance through appointed Church leaders. The doctrine of continuous revelation gives new meaning to prayer and to the importance of divine counsel. It makes God and his Son Jesus Christ more alive to all of us.

Upon studying the writings of the apostle Paul one can become even more convinced of the truthfulness of the doctrine of continuous revelation. In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 Paul writes: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Paul provides similar insights into revelation in the 14th chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians and in the third chapter of his letter to the Ephesians. Paul wrote these letters long after the ascension of Christ. He did not consider himself or others to be without the gift of continuing revelation, and nor should we.

Conclusion

It is surprising how many Christian churches today do not believe in on-going revelation. To limit revelation to that which was provided by Jesus Christ before his ascension into heaven would be akin to saying that God no longer speaks to his children, or has no further instruction to provide. One is reminded of a question concerning a quiet God and how preposterous such a notion is: "is God the great I am, or the great I was?"

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