

Gentiles Indicted (vv. 18-32)

What They Knew, and What They Repudiated (18-20)

VERSE 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness

(Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων [*pres.pass.ind.3s. apokalupto reveal + conj gar + noun nom.f.s. orge wrath + noun gen.m.s. theos + prep apo + noun abl.m.s. ouranos + prep epi upon; “against” + adj.acc.f.s. pas all + noun acc.f.s. asebeia ungodliness + conj kai + noun acc.f.s. adikia injustice, unrighteousness + noun gen.m.p. anthropos + d.a.w/pres.act.part.gen.m.p. katecho suppress + d.a.w/noun acc.f.s. aletheia truth + prep en + noun loc.f.s.adikia*]),

VERSE 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for

God made it evident to them (διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς· ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφάνέρωσεν [*conj dioti because + d.a.w/adj.nom.nt.s. gnostos known + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. theos + adj.nom.nt.s. phaneros evident + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi + prep en + pro.loc..m.p. autos + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. theos + conj gar + pro.loc.m.p. autos + aor.act.ind.3s. phaneroo reveal, make known, make evident*]).

VERSE 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes (τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα

αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου [*d.a.w/adj.nom.nt.p. aoratos invisible; of God see Col. 1:15; Titus 1:17; Heb. 11:27 + conj gar + pro.gen.m.s. autos + prep apo + noun gen.f.s. ktisis creation*],

His eternal power and divine nature [ἢ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης, [*d.a.w/adj.nom.f.s. aidios eternal + part. te + pro.gen.m.s. autos + noun nom.f.s. dunamis power*],

have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made

[τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἢ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης, [*d.a.w/noun dat.nt.p. poima what is made; “what has been made” + pres.pass.part.nom.nt.p. voeo perceive*

“being understood” + *pres.pass.ind.3s. kathoreo perceive clearly; “haven been clearly seen”*], **so that they are without excuse** [εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους [*prep eis + d.a.w/pres.act.infin. eimi + pro.acc.m.p. autos + adj.acc.m.p. anapologetos without excuse; also at 2:1*)]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 18-20

1. From v. 18 thru 3:20 the theme of the epistle documents the condemnation of all humanity under spiritual death and the resident sin nature.
2. The solution for the individual to escape the consequences of sin and death is the gospel of grace.
3. Verses 18-32 focuses on the apostasy and degeneracy of the Gentile world.
4. This section constitutes an indictment against Gentile depravity and unbelief.
5. Paul begins by declaring “that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven” due to Gentile “ungodliness and unrighteousness.”
6. The verb (*pres.pass.ind. apokalupto*) stands first in the Greek text for emphasis as it does in v. 17.
7. In v. 17 divine righteousness is said to be revealed “from faith to faith.”
8. Here God’s wrath is revealed “from heaven.”
9. God’s wrath is a manifestation of His righteousness.
10. His wrath is directed “against all ungodliness.”
11. The term is used of impious behavior (also at 11:26; 2 Tim. 2:16; Titus 2:12; Jude 1:15, 18).
12. The cognate adjective (*asebes*) is a synonym for unbelievers (Rom. 4:5; 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:5, 6, 7; Jude 1:4, 15).
13. In this context it probably is used in reference to pagan religious practices featured in v. 23.
14. “All unrighteousness” refers to Gentile moral depravity featured in vv. 24-32.
15. God’s wrath proceeds from heaven where God’s rule is conducted over the inhabitants of the earth.
16. The wrath (divine judgment) is operative at all times and in all places.
17. This wrath constitutes in large measure the basis for human suffering.
18. This would include natural disasters (weather, seismic events, plagues, droughts, floods, etc.) as well as wars, crime, revolutions, and the like.
19. The news keeps us informed of this wrath, which they call mother nature, accidental, bad luck or fate.
20. A critical aspect of this indictment and consequent wrath is the fact the Gentiles were fully aware of the something that should have curtailed their religious and moral evil.
21. This is noted in the phrase “who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”
22. Suppression of truth is a common human trait.
23. The upshot of all this is that they knew better!!
24. In v. 19 Paul states the relationship between the wrath of God manifest and the truth manifested or “made evident to them.”
25. “That which is known about God” is specified in v. 20.
26. This truth about God is “evident within them” because “God made it evident to them.”

27. The Gentiles did not descend into religious and moral depravity oblivious to divine revelation.
28. So God cannot be charged with hiding Himself as so have an excuse for their gross misbehavior.
29. The nature of Gentile awareness is specified in v. 20.
30. We call this awareness God-consciousness, which comes to all at some point soon after birth.
31. In v. 20 Paul asserts that “since the foundation of the world” God’s divine attributes “have been clearly seen.”
32. The external creation, God’s repeated retributions understood due to a moral compass, called a conscience, not to fail to mention—His countless gracious provisions (cf. Acts 14:19) all add up to their being without excuse.
33. That which (*to gnoton* the know/knowable v. 19) even the unregenerate can discern by observing the external creation is “His invisible attributes.”
34. That which cannot be seen can be known by observing that which is observable.
35. The divine attributes that make up His essence are invisible (Jn. 1:18; 6:46; 1 Jn. 4:12, 20).
36. They are: E.L., Sov., Love, +R, J, O, O, O, I, V.
37. What is not perceptible by the sense of human sight is nevertheless ascertained by man’s ability to reason (from the lesser to the greater).
38. So that which can be known are the invisible divine attributes by those things that are observable.
39. Paul uses an oxymoron (apparent contradiction) when he asserts that the invisible things of God can be clearly perceived by mental deduction.
40. The vehicle that makes this possible is “being understood through what has been made.”
41. The most obvious thing about God known via the physical creation is “His eternal power.”
42. Again, the original creation has always been how God has advertized His person.
43. The term “divine nature” (*theiotes*) only occurs here in reference to God and His essence.
44. It is a more abstract term and means “Godhood” (not Godhead as in the KJV).
45. “His eternal power and divine nature” stands in apposition to “His invisible attributes.”
46. All creation proclaims the reality of a Creator God.
47. We call this revelation natural theology.
48. Psalm 19:1-6 teaches this silent unwritten revelation made known to the hearts and minds of mankind.
49. Paul provides a clear declaration to the effect that the visible creation reveals the invisible reality of God’s essence.
50. Men do not need a written document or a human teacher to arrive at God-consciousness.
51. The final phrase in v. 20 expresses both purpose and result.
52. God’s purpose was (and is) to make humanity culpable “so that they are without excuse.”
53. If people do not seek the known they have no excuse for their negative volition.
54. The heathen are not heathen because they were without a witness, but because they suppressed the truth evident within them!
55. Here we have an example of intellectual dishonesty (or motivational viscosity).