

God's Two Books: The Skies and the Scriptures

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[0 : 00] We're delighted to have our very own Terry McCutcheon preaching this morning from Psalm 19. So let's now read Psalm 19, and you'll find that on page 456 of the Blue Bibles.

So Psalm 19. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

[1 : 21] The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold.

Sweeter also than honey, and drippings off the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned. In keeping them, there is great reward.

Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins.

Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

[2 : 34] Amen. I invite you to take your Bibles and to turn with me to Psalm 19, which you will find in page 456 of the Pew Bible.

Page 456. And as you do so, let me say a word of prayer. Make the book live to me, O Lord.

Show me thyself within thy word. Show me myself, and show me my Saviour. And make the book live to me.

In Jesus' name. Amen. How can I know God? How can I find God?

It's an age-old question, isn't it? Maybe that's a question that someone has asked you this week. Maybe it's a question you've asked yourself in the past. Maybe it's a question you're asking presently.

[3 : 36] How can I know? How can I find God? Well, as I look around in church today, we've got many students in the church. And I'm sure that all the students would agree, although whether they do it is a different matter, but I'm sure that they would all agree that the way to get to know the subject they are studying is by a matter of research.

A matter of research. You read the books, but getting to know God isn't a matter of research. It's a matter of revelation. If we are to know God, God must show himself.

He must reveal himself if we are to know him. And it is to this subject that Psalm 19 brings us. The revelation of God. And just like our students at university, Psalm 19 encourages us to read the books.

To read God's two books of revelation. The skies and the scriptures. So let us look firstly to the skies. Verses 1 to 6.

God speaks in a general way in creation. God speaks in a general way in creation. We can see that the Psalm is written by David, who also wrote Psalm 8.

[4 : 50] And in Psalm 8, David writes, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory above the heavens. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?

And David again here in Psalm 19, points us to the heavens, saying, the heavens declare the glory of God. And what David does here in these verses is, in the first four verses, he sets the general principle.

The general principle that the heavens declare the glory of God. And then he gives us an illustration of this using the sun, from verse 4a to verse 6. Well, firstly, David sets the general principle, that the heavens declare the glory of God.

David here points us to a world, a world far bigger than our own planet, and to a universe that stretches beyond what we can see, even with the most powerful of telescopes. And David says, all these things are there to declare the glory, the power, and the majesty of God.

I heard a story about a student, and he said to a professor, he said, Sir, do you think there's life on other planets? And the professor replied, No. And the student then replied, Oh, sir, why would God go to all that trouble?

[6 : 16] And the professor replied, What trouble? No trouble at all for our God. All these things, all the universes, all the stars, they are there to display the power, and the glory, and the majesty of God.

So the sun, the moon, and the stars, act like a sort of a choir, that praise God, that show us in their magnificence, their splendor, the kind of God who has made them.

So what the psalmist is trying to convey to us, is that everything that God has created, bears his signature. I wonder if you're familiar with the program, the Antiques Roadshow.

I used to love watching it on a Sunday afternoon, before I was a Christian, with my mum and my dad, my mum and my dad and my brothers. And for you that are not familiar with the show, folks would bring along pieces of jewellery, or pottery, or family heirlooms, and they would bring it along to the experts, to get valued.

Really, all of us were interested in, is how much it was worth. And when you were watching the show, everybody's making guesses, as to how much the thing's worth. But there would always come a point in the proceedings, when the expert would take the piece of furniture, or the pottery, or jewellery, or painting, or whatever it happened to be, and he would point us to the place, where the maker had put his mark.

[7 : 29] Where the creator, had left their signature. And the psalmist is saying, there is nothing that you can see, that doesn't bear God's signature. Everywhere you look, everywhere you look, has been stamped, has been marked, made by God Almighty.

That's what we sung in a second hymn. In reason's ear, they all rejoice, and utter forth a glorious voice, forever singing as they shine, the hand that made us, is divine.

And friends, I want you just to take note, the psalmist, nor the Bible for that matter, doesn't argue the existence of God. The psalmist has no need, he's no interest in this. All he does, is to instruct every man, woman and child, to look up, to the glory of creation, and to say to everyone, look, behold, the splendor, of God.

So having said, that the heavens declare, the glory of God, the psalmist goes on to tell us, that this revelation, is a constant revelation, verse 2. Day to day, pours out speech, and night to night, reveals knowledge.

This summer, the city of London, will welcome, the Olympic Games, to its city. And one of the races, in the games, will be the relay race. And you know how, the relay race goes, one runner starts out, he does a lap of the track, he comes round, and he hands a baton, onto the next runner, he goes round, he does a lap of the track, and so on, and so forth.

[8 : 58] And this is the picture, that we have here, in verse 2. Day after day, pouring out speech, about the glory of God. And night to night, revealing knowledge. There is a constant, revelation.

There is also, an international revelation, verse 3 and 4. This voiceless testimony, crossing every border, every culture, and every language barrier. There is no speech, nor other words, whose voice is not heard.

And there are words, to the end of the world. Whilst all the stars, that round her burn, and all the planets, in their turn, confirm the tidings, as they roll, and spread the truth, from pole, to pole.

It's an international, revelation. And then David, illustrates this, with the sun, using two word pictures, for the sun. The bridegroom, and the strong man, or the athlete.

David says, the sun, comes out of its tent, like a bridegroom, leaving his chamber. I don't know if you know, but, this year is going to be, a busy year for weddings, in St. George's Tron.

[10:04] I think there's going to be, about eight or something. And that's not including, the ones of our members, who'll be getting married, elsewhere, like Andy Baxter, and Naomi Hill. In fact, there's that many weddings, happening in the Tron, that Kenny Sewell said, we should change the name, of the church, to the Chapel of Love.

I'm not sure, how Willie, and the leadership, think about that, but, I think it's got, a good ring to it. But if any of us, any of us have witnessed, weddings here at the Tron, we'll know how the proceedings go.

The bridegroom starts off, in there, in the vestry, and then there will come a point, in the service, when he'll come out, and he'll stand there, in front of, all the congregation, and all the congregation's, eyes will be on him.

That is until the bride turns up. And it's like that, with the sun, he comes out, and does a circuit, and all eyes are on him. It's the same, with the strong man, the athlete, when he's won his race, at the Olympics, and he's doing his lap of honour, all eyes are on him.

So there is no place, in no time in the world, when it's not possible, to lift your eyes to the skies, and see the wonders, that God has made, as an expression, of his majesty, and glory.

[11:18] So as there is nothing, hidden from the hear of the sun, verse 6, escaping from the revelation, of God's power, and majesty, and glory, and creation, is impossible. And that's exactly, what the apostle Paul writes, in Romans 1, verse 19.

For what can be known, about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them, for his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power, and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation, of the world, and the things, that have been made.

So they are, without excuse. But folks try, and deny this, don't they? And they try, and use things, that have been made, to back this up. My wife, Charlene, she loves, she loves nature programs.

And unlike Ewan Dodds, she loves animals. She has, all sorts of DVDs, and it's, the blue planet, the frozen planet. And David Attenborough, who narrates these programs, he's been up close, and personal, and seen more, of nature, and creation, than all of us, put together, are ever likely to see. But he's a total atheist. He loves to speak, about mother nature. He appeals, to the transcendent, while all the while, denying what's written, in the cosmos.

[12:37] But he, just like everybody else, cannot hide, from the wonderful testimony, God's world gives to him. The wordless message, of the heavens, concerning the majesty, of the creator, of the universe, has a universal scope.

There is no place, on earth, that's untouched, by the proclamation. God speaks, in a general way, in creation. But secondly, God speaks, more clearly, in scripture.

Verse 7 to 11. God speaks, more clearly, in scripture. Just before, we come to these verses, I wonder, if you would just note, the names used for God, in each section.

If you cast your eyes, over verses 1 to 6, and see how many, how many times, God's name is mentioned. You'll see, that God's name, is only mentioned once, in verse 1.

And the word, that's used to describe God, here is the word, L, E-L, L, which speaks of, God's majesty, power, and glory. But if you would look on, to verse 7 to 11, and you'll see, that God is referred, to six times, by the word, Lord, in capital letters.

[13:48] And anytime, you see that word, Lord, in capital letters, in your Bible, it refers to, the covenant name for God, Yahweh, Jehovah. He is the covenant making God, who binds himself, to his people.

He is the promise making, promise keeping God. He is the God, who has promised, to save, and to redeem, his people, from their sin. So you see friends, we can learn, from studying, creation, that God is powerful.

He is a God, who loves beauty, and order. But it is not possible, to deduce, or learn anything, about his character. Or what his attitude, might be to his creatures.

And above all, what his attitude, might be towards sinners. I suppose it would be like, looking at a watch. You could maybe learn, that the maker was clever. He was skillful.

He was precise. But you could never learn, anything of his character. Whether he was a good man, or a bad man. So that is why, after looking up to the skies.

[14:48] You must look down, to the scriptures. You could look at the skies forever, and it won't transform you. You could stare at nature, endlessly. And it will do nothing to you. That's why friends, coming together, as a collective body, under God's word, is so important.

God's word transforms us. And it also informs us, about how we should live, in God's world. In God's way. But there are those, who say they don't need, to come to church. Or to be under God's word, to be perfectly good Christians.

I was watching, songs of praise, a number of weeks ago. They were somewhere, down in England, as they usually are. And this guy, was being interviewed. He was a mountain biker. In fact, he was a mountain bike instructor.

And he took teams of people, out onto the hills, with their bikes. And during his interview, which was taking place, in the hills, he was referring to, the beauty, the peace, and the tranquility, and the spirituality, of the hills.

And then he said, that his wife, had been at church. And a lady, had asked her, which church, does your husband worship in? So it was obvious, he'd never been to church, with his wife. And his wife, answered the question, by saying, oh my husband, worships in the hills.

[15:57] The hills, are his cathedral. Friends, if we are to do that, we'll be left, with an imbalanced view of God. In fact, an impoverished view of God. We must look, to the scriptures.

And it is to the scriptures, the psalmist turns in verse 7, and following. And he lists here, for his, six different names, for the scriptures, and their characteristics, and the effect they have.

And so he begins, in verse 7. The law of the Lord, is perfect, reviving, the soul. When he writes law here, he doesn't mean, the ten commandments.

He means, the Torah of God, the instruction of God, the doctrines of God, all scripture, all scripture, is perfect. It is complete. It needs nothing, added to it.

It is lacking in nothing. And look at the effect. It revives, the soul. I think it's very interesting, that the first effect, the psalmist says, the scripture has on us, is the thing, that's most important, to any human being.

[17:00] And also the thing, that the studying, of God's first book, the skies, can't do to us. To restore us, to revive us, from being dead in sins, to being alive, in God.

That's why preaching, is so important. Listen to our minister's father, James Philip. This is why preaching, is supremely important. For in preaching the word, we are giving men God, offering Christ to men, and in him, pardon, joy and peace.

It is in the word, that he makes himself, known savingly to men, as their redeemer. And I wonder, if you notice here, the progression, in these verses. After the law of the Lord, reviving my soul, the testimony of the Lord, makes wise the simple.

God bears testimony, against sin. It is so solid, and sure. Nothing can weaken, the testimony. What is sin, in one generation, is sin in another. So I don't have to wait, for any commission, or committee, given their findings, on human sexuality, or any other ethical decision.

I just turn, to the word of God. The testimony of the Lord, makes the simple wise. Taking the convert, and making them a disciple. The precepts of the Lord, are right.

[18:16] God's precepts, and decrees, are founded in righteousness, and are right for man. So as a doctor, might give right medicine, or a counselor, right advice. So does the word of God, rejoicing the heart.

Him who has been revived, and disciplined, by the word of God, now has his heart, rejoiced, by that same word. The commandment, of the Lord is pure. Enlightening the eyes.

If there be any error, in our lives, or in this church, it's not because, of this book. It's because of us. The purity, of God's word, brings enlightenment, to the eyes. The convert, has become a disciple.

Has his heart, rejoiced. Now has his, eyes enlightened. Becoming a discerned disciple. The fear of the Lord, is clean, enduring forever. The rules of the Lord, are true, and righteous, altogether.

And you can see, what this is saying. That in the scriptures, I have everything, I need for life, and godliness. That when I get, all this instruction, all this direction, and all these principles, bang down, into my heart.

[19:24] Then there will be, no situation, or circumstance, that I can face, this week, this month, this year, or forever. That the sufficiency, of God's word, cannot meet. And when I receive this, and when I believe this, when I get this book, into my hands, and into my heart.

I will discover, that the word of God, is more precious, than gold to me. Sweeter than honey, to me. I discover, there is great reward, in living according, to God's word. It's an amazing picture.

But do I believe this, in the working, of my life, in the working out, of my own experience? Am I pursuing, am I desiring God, more than gold?

Is God, my priority in life? Are the ways of God, more sweeter to me, than the ways of the world? Well, when we move, from God speaking, in a general way, in creation, to God speaking, more clearly in scripture.

We discover, great blessings. But the blessings, come at a cost. Which is why, the psalmist ends, as he does, in verses 12 to 14. Our speaking, to God.

[20 : 35] The psalmist, begins to speak, about himself. He speaks, of his errors, his hidden faults, his presumptuous sins. His blamefulness. Why?

Well, you see friends, that's the difference, between God's two books. We look up, and we read the skies. But when we look down, to the book of scripture, it reads us.

As James says, in his letters, when we read this book, it's like a man, looking into a mirror. And as we listen, to what the scriptures say, and submit to it, it will bring to the surface, our rebellion against God.

All our errors, all our hidden, and secret sins. It will bring them all, to the surface, again, and again, and again. So what we have here, in these verses, is the prayer of the man, who studied both, the book of the skies, and the book of the scriptures.

And firstly, he prays for purification. Verse 12. Who can discern his errors? There is a frustration, a helplessness in the question. Men think that they know themselves, but the heart is deceitful, above all things.

[21 : 48] Sin is so much part of me, that I can't discern my errors. I don't know. I've got no idea. Which is why the psalmist goes on, verse 12. Declare me innocent, from hidden faults.

We all have hidden faults, don't we? Faults that we know about, but that others don't. I know that I often say to myself, no one knows just how great a sinner I am.

But the psalmist is saying here, Terry, even you don't know, how great a sinner you are. There is so much you don't know. There is so much that you can't discern. So much that is hidden from you.

And just as there is nothing hidden, from the heat of the sun, verse 6. There is no sin hidden from the Lord. So the psalmist prays, for forgiveness, for things he doesn't even know about.

Oh Lord, cleanse me from these. And after his prayer for purification, he prays a prayer of prevention. Verse 13.

[22 : 48] Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me. This earnest and humble prayer teaches us, that any of us can so easily fall into the worst of sins, unless restrained by God.

I am sure you know the saying, there but for the grace of God go I. That is what the psalmist is getting at here. He is saying, Lord, I know that I have it in me to run away from you.

But keep me back. Put a bridle in my mouth like a horse. Keep a hold of me Lord. In verse 12, he referred to hidden sins. Sins that were not known to him.

But here in verse 13, he speaks of presumptuous sins. Willful sins. Sins that he definitely knows about. Friends, all sins are great sins.

But presumptuous sins are particularly dangerous. For I willfully know I am walking in rebellion to God. But I think I am okay. I think I will just come back and ask for forgiveness.

[23 : 50] I mean, after all, I am a child of God. Friends, this is a dangerous road. For we begin to set a precedent, a trajectory in our lives that will lead to sin having dominion over us.

That was the warning God gave to Cain. Do you remember? Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you. And that's the warning that John Bunyan gives in his poem.

Caution to stir up, to watch against sin. Sin rather than it will, out of action be. We pray to stay, though but a while with thee.

One night, one hour, one moment will it cry. Embrace me in thy bosom, else I die. Time to repent, it says. I will allow, and help, if to repent, thou knowest not how.

But if you give it entrance at the door, it will come in, and will go out, no more. Oh, that I would be kept from presumptuous sin, that I may be blameless and innocent of great transgression.

[25 : 01] What is the great transgression? Walking away from God. Being cut off from God. That's where presumptuous sins can lead. Under Jewish law, atonement was provided for every kind of

sin.

But there was one exception. Presumptuous sins. Numbers chapter 15, 30 to 31. But the soul that sins presumptuously, whether he be born in the land of a stranger, that soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken his commandment.

That's why David's prayer is so anxious. Oh Lord, keep me from that. Don't let me be cut off from you. And friends, as this book reads me, it will convict me, and leave me with a burden.

A burden of sin. But God wants to bless me with forgiveness. But in order to do that, he must peel me. He must peel me like an onion.

Layer after layer of sinfulness. Before the words of this book will ever become sweet to me, they will be bitter. But friends, we need to allow him to take off the layers of deceit.

[26 : 18] The layers of pride. The layers of guilt. The layers of shame and bitterness. And he will do this, as we trust and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The one whom the skies, and the scriptures, ultimately bear witness. And only when he's done this, only when he's done this, can verse 14 be our prayer.

Our prayer for perfection. That the speech, the speech of our mouths, and the meditation of our hearts, may be acceptable in his sight.

O Lord, our rock, and our redeemer. Let us pray. Father, thank you for making yourself so wonderfully known, in your works, and in your word.

Father, we thank you that your word reads us. And Father, we pray, that his hearts have been read here this morning. Father, we pray that people would not leave here this morning, without coming to trust, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 29] Help us to come back to you again, Father. Revealing our hidden faults. Keeping us from presumptuous sins. O Lord, that the speech of our mouths, and the meditation of our hearts, may be acceptable, in your sight.

In Jesus name. Amen.