

Origins

Through a Glass, Darkly

Lesson #7 for February 16, 2013

Scriptures: Job 41:11; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Genesis 3:17; John 12:31; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21.

1. In this lesson we will focus on two different types of revelation. General revelation is the study of what we can learn about God through looking at nature. Special revelation is the study of what we learn about God from His divine intervention in or to humanity through prophets, apostles, and especially through the life and death of His Son, Jesus.
2. Up until the middle of the 19th century, scientists basically believed that they were studying God's handiwork in nature. They believed that the orderliness of God's creation allowed the study of science. If God had not created an orderly universe, there would be no science.
3. But, in the middle of the 19th century partly as a result of the oppressive activities of the predominant Christian church, philosophers and scientists were seeking some way to explain origins apart from God. Today, many—probably a majority of—scientists believe that science and the Bible are in conflict with each other.
4. How much does God intend for us to learn through nature and science? Enoch, Noah, Job, and Abraham did. Is all the evil that we see in our natural world a result of Satan's activity? Or, is some of it the result of God's activity? If God is our Creator, does that give Him authority over us? To what extent does that make Him responsible for everything that is happening in our world? Do we really believe that God created everything?

A scientist once challenged the need for God; he argued that he could create humanity just as well as any God could. God said, "OK, go ahead and do it."

The scientist began to gather some dirt, but God said, "Wait a minute. Make your own dirt!"

5. Of course, this story is only hypothetical. But, it illustrates a major point. What should we learn from the fact that God has created everything? (Psalm 24:1,2; Job 41:11; Psalm 50:10; Isaiah 43:1,2; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20) In virtually all areas of human endeavor, it is recognized that creatorship implies ownership. That is why we have elaborate systems for copyrights and patents.
6. God created not only all the material from which our universe is made but also designed it specifically how He wanted it. Out of it He made every creature, including us. This does not make God responsible for evil. A God of love had to allow us the freedom to make our own choices. In order to choose to love, we must also have the capacity to hate. As a result of freedom, first of all Lucifer and then all the rest of us have followed him in our rebellion against God. God's response was the plan of redemption. Now we belong to God twice: He created us, and He redeemed us.
7. Read Genesis 3:17; 4:10-14; 5:28,29. Did God curse Cain and the ground? "In the days of Noah a double curse was resting upon the earth in consequence of Adam's transgression and of the murder committed by Cain."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and*

Prophets, p. 90.1. First of all, God told Adam that he would have to work hard to produce enough food for himself and his family. More than that, he would have to fight with thorns and thistles. As a result of Cain's sin, God told him: "If you try to grow crops, the soil will not produce anything; you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth." (Genesis 4:12) Of what did these two curses consist? Did God intentionally make things difficult for us?

8. What additional curse came through the flood? Clearly, the topography of our world was completely changed by the flood. While we do not know exactly what the surface of the earth looked like before the flood or even immediately after the flood, many parts of our world have become uninhabitable and the soil unproductive as a result of soil erosion and leaching and other factors which we may not recognize. Can we still see the evidence in our world of God's curse on the ground? Did that curse extend to human beings as well? Why did God do that? Would that make it very difficult for us to clearly distinguish between problems that are a result of God's curse and the problems that are a result of Satan's activities and sin?
9. One clear evidence of how things have changed is in the natural watering system which existed before the flood. There was no rain, but water came up from beneath the ground. (Genesis 2:4-6) Think how different our world would be today if all parts including places like the Sahara Desert were naturally watered by dew or springs that came up from underneath.
10. Whatever these curses consisted of, Romans 8:19-22 tells us that the groaning of all creation will be removed when the great controversy is over.
11. Read Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8. There is no question that Satan is active and determined to succeed against all odds. When the great controversy is finally over, Satan will be dead.
12. Read John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12. Jesus and Paul have made it clear that the one who claims to be the ruler of this world has been judged. However, that does not remove the fact that we are battling against a formidable foe. Remember what happened to Job.
13. Read Romans 5:12. Notice that because we are sinners following the example of Satan, we will die. Why do we commit sin? Read James 1:13-15. Most of the sins in this world come about because of our selfish and evil desires. Many of them probably came just from plain old evil habits. Other evils are brought about because of the deterioration that has happened in the human race from Adam's day until this. Many sins are also a result of the direct temptations of Satan and his angels. And there are probably some sins we commit because we want to, even without any temptation being presented to us. Have you seen the destructive influence of Satan in your own life? What was the result?
14. In the last 200 years, the amount of information in the form of knowledge has literally exploded. However, all of this knowledge has not necessarily produced wiser people. We may even understand things better, but that does not necessarily make us wiser.
15. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-21; 3:18-21. What do these verses teach us about human knowledge and wisdom? As we mentioned earlier, many of the early scientists such as Newton, Kepler, and Galileo were firm believers in God. They were certain that their scientific studies were simply ways of helping to explain the work of God. Kepler once wrote, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee." What do you think would happen if some scientist today made such a statement?

16. Many scientists believe that they now have an explanation for the origin of the universe and the origin of the human race without any supernatural activity by God. Some are now going an extra step and trying to explain the so-called “miracles” in the Bible, saying they are as a result of natural forces. They claim that the Red Sea was parted in the days of Moses by a powerful wind, etc. Scientists have even suggested that some of the visions in the Bible—for example when Moses was with God on the mountain—were actually cases where Moses was taking some kind of hallucinogenic substance and saw all those things simply as hallucinations. How would you respond to someone who suggested such an explanation? Was the nation of Israel a result of hallucinations of Moses?
17. Read Psalm 8. Clearly, David believed that because God created the universe, He is sovereign above all. More than that, He cares for us and gives us dominion over the other creatures on our earth.
18. We can learn something of God’s power and His glory by studying the universe He created. Read Psalm 19:1-4.
19. The Hubble telescope has just begun to reveal to us how small we are compared to the size of the universe. Why would a God who could create all of that and, no doubt, has millions and billions of creatures on other worlds care about this tiny rebellious marble?
20. But, nothing we can learn from nature comes close to the truths that we can learn by a careful study of the life and death of Jesus. And Jesus was just like His Father. (John 14:9) Notice these words from Ellen White:

Science, so-called, and religion will be placed in opposition to each other because finite men do not comprehend the power and greatness of God. These words of Holy Writ were presented to me, “Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” [Acts 20:30] This will surely be seen among the people of God.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 16*, 1890; *Medical Ministry* 98.1; *Evangelism* 593.1; *LDE* 176.3.
21. So, the world we live in and the world which scientists are studying today has experienced not only deterioration as a result of our sin but also the threefold curse of God. How different is it from the world which God originally created. Science only has the capacity to study the present world, and it only has human understanding to evaluate it. How can that be a safe criteria for disbelieving the Word of God? In light of all this, is it possible to reconcile Scripture and true science? From the Christian perspective, how would you define science? What does God want us to learn from general revelation and what should we learn from special revelation? Are there some areas where there is an overlap?
22. Many theologians and philosophers have tried to explain how it is possible for a good God to create a bad world. Can we explain that to the satisfaction of those who might ask us?
23. Our world, even the natural world, is so full of violence and killing. Carnivores could not exist without killing other animals. Soon after the Protestant Reformation took place, there was a lot of discussion about natural theology and how it fits with divine revelation. It was at that time that the distinction between special revelation and general revelation was clarified. The issue is: How do we interpret general revelation and special revelation?
24. But, we know that even in the awful times that will take place just before the second coming of Christ, God will intervene to protect His people. Have you ever had an

experience where God has apparently intervened, perhaps even as a result of some terrible event, to work something out for good? (See Romans 8:28) Primitive people who were animists worshiping various aspects of nature often had the idea that whatever “god” was out there was quite capricious. Death could come at any moment. God’s blessing might be shining upon a person at one moment and calamity the next.

25. Darwinists are not much better off. How could a person worship a god who was in any way responsible for a plan known as “survival of the fittest”? Earlier, we quoted David L. Hall from his article “The God of the Galapagos,” in which he said, “The God of the Galapagos is careless, wasteful, indifferent, almost diabolical.”
26. By contrast, Christian believers see a basic order in the universe. They see a rational structure in nature. And they believe that the basic order and natural structure are a result of the Mastermind behind it all. In fact, the order depended upon by scientists for their study implies an orderly Creator.
27. Fortunately, those of us who understand something about the great controversy realize that there is a good explanation for the problems we see in the world around us. God is not responsible for evil, but He is responsible for the freedom that allows evil to exist. In our day, we are seeing the final results of thousands of years of evil. In effect, sin is going to seed. Mass murders, tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, and tornadoes all suggest that our earth is coming to an end.
28. Why do you think God gave the three curses we mentioned earlier? Were they intended to be disciplinary? Did God plan that thistles and thorns would be disciplinary? Paul used to talk about a “thorn in the flesh.” Of course, that was no literal thorn but some kind of a physical problem which he repeatedly asked God to remove but which God refused to remove. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) Are thistles and thorns here to teach us an important lesson?
29. We have looked over the history of how sin began on this earth. With His foreknowledge, God could have done many things to prevent it. He could have specifically told Eve that she would be addressed by a talking serpent. He could have physically prevented her from getting too close to the tree. When Eve wandered away, He could have told Adam to go get her, etc. Why didn’t God do any of those things?
30. Freedom—and love—are so important to God that He would rather die than give them up or compromise them in any way. Are we glad that He has done that? Do you wish that God were more manipulative in our world? Or, are you happy for the freedom God has given us?
31. A lot of things may be confusing and even deceitful in our world. That is Satan’s way. But, that does not mean that while we are looking through a glass, darkly, (1 Corinthians 13:12) the truth is not there for us to discover and study.

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