

Lesson 22: God's greatness displayed in nature

Memory Verse: The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. (Psalm 97:6)

Among the many calls to praise God in the Psalms, are a number that mention his character displayed in nature; including, as in the memory verse, nature outside our planet and star system. God is depicted as creator:

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere him.
For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded and it stood firm. (Psalm 33:6-9)

...designer:

It was you who opened up the springs and streams;
you dried up the ever flowing rivers.
The day is yours, and yours also the night;
you established the sun and moon.
It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth;
you made both summer and winter. (Psalm 74:15-17)

...sustainer:

You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.
You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.
You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.
The grasslands of the desert overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.
The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing. (Psalm 65:9-13)

And this may be the most well-known of all such passages:

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.

There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,
which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is hidden from its heat. (Psalm 19:1-6)

What can this focus on God as creator tell us about God? The book of Revelation mentions the “angel of the Abyss” which it calls Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek. Both words mean “destroyer.” We shouldn't have any problem figuring out what the ANGEL of the Abyss would refer to. Satan is the destroyer, so God is NOT. When you hear a teaching in which God must destroy things, then you know that the god that person is talking about is not the Creator, but the angel of the Abyss.

But there are other meanings for us in revering God as creator. First, he owns everything:

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the waters. (Psalm 24:1, 2)

I have no need of a bull from your stall
or of goats from your pens,
for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know every bird in the mountains,
and the creatures of the field are mine.
If I were hungry I would not tell you,
for the world is mine and all that is in it. (Psalm 50:9-12)

Second, he has assigned us a particular place in his universe:

When I consider 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,
the son of man that you care for him?
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings [angels in some versions]
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet;
all flocks and birds,
and the beasts of the field
the birds of the air
and the fish of the sea,

all that swim the paths of the seas. (Psalm 8:3-9)

Thirdly, he has all power:

Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.
The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.
The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.
The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.
The voice of the LORD strikes
with flashes of lightning.
The voice of the LORD shakes the desert
the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.
The voice of the LORD twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD is enthroned as King forever.
The LORD gives strength to his people;
the LORD blesses his people with peace. (Psalm 29)

Again we might be tempted to focus on the destructive capability of God's power. But recall that those who wrote the Psalms didn't really have a concept of Satan and tended to attribute everything that happened to God. And the last words of Psalm 29 tell us what God wants to do with his power. It isn't there to destroy, he wants to give us strength to meet our difficulties and lead us to peace.

Possible thought papers:

1. God says he didn't need bulls and goats from the Israelites. Why do you think he made animal sacrifices part of the religious ceremonies he set up for them?
2. With modern telescopes we can see a lot of things in the sky that people who lived in the time the Psalms were written couldn't have seen or known about. Does what we know now change our view of God? If so, in what way does it change?
3. Psalm 19 talks about the sun as if it runs a course across the sky. When science said the earth rotates and makes it LOOK like the sun crosses the sky, preachers said they had to be wrong because the Bible said the sun moves. Can the Bible be right and science be right too?