

"O Lord, our lord . . .

HOW MAJESTIC

**. . .is Your name in
all the earth. You
have set your glory
above the heavens."**

Ps. 8:1

***A Study of God, His Creation,
and His Providence***

By Keith S. Andrews

“HOW MAJESTIC . . .”

A Study of God, His Creation, & His Providence

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Lesson 1

God Personal and Transcendent

A. The Mystery of God

As we approach the study of God we must recognize that it is unlike any other study. God, in many ways, is and will remain a mystery. He cannot simply be “found.” His ways cannot simply be deduced and analyzed and codified. God Himself says: *“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isa. 55:8-9)

The word “mystery” is applied in Scripture to those things that are undiscoverable except by revelation.

Read the following passages and note what is considered “mysterious” in each:

- Rom. 11:25 _____
- 1 Cor. 15:51-52 _____
- Eph 1:9-10 _____
- Eph. 5:31-32 _____
- Eph. 6:19-20 _____
- Col. 1:26-27 _____
- Col. 4:3 _____
- 1 Tim. 3:16 _____

B. Man’s Search for Enlightenment

In spite of the inherent difficulties, man seeks to know and understand God. The primary problem is that God is infinite while man is finite. The mind of man cannot, regardless of its diligence, grasp the vastness of God. What do we learn from each of the following passages?

- Job 11:7 _____
- Job 36:26 _____
- Job 37:23 _____
- Eccl. 3:11 _____

Rom. 11:33

1 Cor. 1:19-20

Certainly the world has ideas about God. Most of those ideas are based on man's concept of who and what God should be based on human values and ethics. Such a god is clearly a creation of man, however, and cannot be the true and living God, who is Himself the Creator. Consider these words of Francis Schaffer:

"In saying God is there, we are saying God exists, and not just talking about the word God, or the idea God. We are speaking of the proper relationship to the living God who exists . . . As Christians, we must understand that there is no word so meaningless as the word "god" until it is defined. No word has been used to reach absolutely opposite concepts as much as the word "god". Consequently, let us not be confused. There is much "spirituality" about us today that would relate itself to the word god or to the idea god; but this is not what we are talking about. Biblical truth and spirituality is not a relationship to the word god, or to the idea god. It is a relationship to the one who is there, which is an entirely different concept. ---*The God Who is There*, 1968.

It is also true that man's sinful condition causes him to mistake and overlook clear evidences of God's revelation. Consider the following passages:

John 3:19-20

John 8:44

Rom. 1:18

2 Cor. 4:4

C. An Un-crossable Gulf

In Genesis God refers to Himself as *El Elyon*, which means "God most high." What that name implies is that God is above everything else. He is not just above, in some spatial sense, but he surpasses everything else. God is the unique sovereign LORD of all! The true and the living God exceeds in every way every aspect of His creation. Certainly His thoughts are higher, His ways are higher; but so are His power, His authority, His wisdom, and His grace.

The conclusion that we must draw is this: if God did not wish to be known He would be unknowable. If God did not desire to have fellowship with His creatures He would be unapproachable.

D. An Un-stoppable Grace

God *is knowable* and God *is approachable*. Not because of man's seeking but because of God's mercy and love. Man does not come to the knowledge of God through his reaching up to God. On the contrary, such knowledge comes through God reaching down to man.

Read and consider the following passages. What does each say about how man comes to know God?

Isa. 60:1-2

John 15:16

Rom. 9:15-16

2 Cor. 4:6

1 John 4:10

Read Ps. 113:4-8. Here we see an image of God, exalted over all that the world might consider great and powerful. He stoops over, not only to look upon the earth, but on the heavens as well! This is a picture of our transcendent God. Yet this God, mighty in power, is also great in compassion. He reaches down to help one that the world would look upon as insignificant, unimportant, and worthless. It is the poor and the needy that He raises up to sit with the princes of His people.

Significant Terms

Finite and Infinite –

Mystery (biblical term) –

Philosophy –

Religion –

Revelation -

Temporal and Eternal –

Theology –

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What do you think drives men to want to know about God?
- 2) How do you account for the disparity of religions in the world? Are they all seeking after God? Are they all seeking after the *same* God?
- 3) Does Christianity differ significantly from other world religions? If so, in what ways does it differ?
- 4) How can God be “high and lifted up” and, at the same time, be the “great Shepherd of the sheep”?
- 5) Reformed Christians talk about God’s “irresistible grace.” What do you think is meant by this phrase?

Lesson 2

The Knowledge of God: General Revelation

A. The Medium of General Revelation

A person who lives on the earth and who can sense the vastness of heavens, who can sense the order and power that exists in nature, and who has loved or has been loved; that person cannot claim ignorance of the meaning of the word “God.” Things such as these do not just “happen.” God has made Himself known through His creation – through the heavens and the earth. By the things He has made, things that can be clearly seen, men can know that about God. The implication of this is that no person anywhere can claim not to have been informed about the existence of God.

We might consider four ways in which God has generally revealed Himself:

1. The vastness of the universe
2. The order of nature
3. The character of man
4. The direction of history

The universe is both vast and complex. It is amazing that, as we build more and more powerful telescopes, we discover even greater vastness. There seems to be no end to what God has created. The majesty of it – galaxy upon galaxy – is astonishing.

God’s creation is not distinguished only by its immensity, however. It also points us toward God through its order and design. The planets continue in their courses. The stars do not collide. On the smaller scale, the cells of living things are like microscopic machines that able to grow and reproduce, to take in materials they need and to excrete those they don’t. If even one part is missing the cell ceases to live; and yet these are the “bricks of life” of which living things are formed. Even

on the smallest scale nature is complex and yet ordered. The structure of matter itself, from the sub-atomic particle to the molecule to the nebula in space, is clearly planned.

Man himself serves as an indicator of the existence of God. He reflects his Creator in several ways. First, he is a thinking self-aware creature. He also has the capacity to imagine and, to a limited extent, create. Second, he reflects God's dominion as he exercises dominion over the earth. Third, he has an innate moral and ethical sense. He knows the difference between right and wrong. Fourth, he considers himself to be more than a temporal being. He recognizes within himself that spiritual spark, that immortal component that points him back toward his Creator.

History favors the godly. In the rise and fall of nations we can see the blessing of God. God has particularly revealed Himself through the nation of Israel. The historian J. Froude wrote: "One lesson and one only, history may be said to repeat with distinctness; that the world is built somehow on moral foundations, that in the long run it is well with the good, in the long run it is ill with the wicked." Read and consider Psalm 1:1-6, 2:1-6, 33:12-22

B. The Content of General Revelation

What has God revealed about Himself through general revelation? Read the following verses and list the things that are revealed:

Psalm 19:1	_____
Psalm 90:2	_____
Psalm 119:90	_____
Psalm 139:13-16	_____
Isa. 40:26	_____
Rom. 1:20	_____

Certainly God's creation testifies to His existence. It also stands a testimony to His power, His wisdom and understanding, His mercy and compassion, and his transcendent holiness.

C. The Perception of General Revelation

If everyone had clear perception there would be no disagreement about the existence of God. The truth is, however, that sin has distorted man's perception. In Romans 1:18-20 Paul writes: *"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature— have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."*

Because of wickedness men suppress the truth. They refuse to acknowledge what is obvious and clear. Read Job 24:19-17; John 3:19-20; Eph. 5:12-14a. Why would men suppress the truth about God? _____

Because of sin's distortions men have become unable to think rightly about God. Their hearts are hardened to the light of the gospel. They reject the true and living God in favor of gods of their own making to whom they are not accountable. For the unregenerate man such substitution constitutes wisdom (see Rom. 1:21-22). As theologian J. Rodman Williams puts it: "the wine of the knowledge of God has become the vinegar of human confusion."

D. The Purpose of General Revelation

Surely God knows that men are hard of heart; that their ears are deaf to the truth and their eyes blind to His glory. What purpose, then, can general revelation serve?

The clear evidence that God has given through the things He has made can serve as a starting point for sharing the gospel. Even though it may have been suppressed, the essential truth of God's existence is known. That knowledge can serve as a foundation for evangelism.

The destiny of all men is to stand before God for judgment (Heb. 9:27). General revelation removes from man any excuse for, as we read in Rom. 1:19, "*what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.*"

Significant Terms

Animism -

Apokalypsis –

Apologetics –

Cosmos –

General Revelation –

Natural Law -

Natural Theology –

Pantheism -

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Do you think that it is right for God to hold men accountable based upon general revelation? Why or why not?
- 2) Is general revelation sufficient to lead men to salvation? Why or why not?
- 3) If God is revealed through nature does that mean that God and nature are the same thing?
- 4) In what ways has sin effected men's perceptions of God?
- 5) Do you think that science will lead men to a clearer understanding of the nature and character of God? Why or why not?

Lesson 3

The Knowledge of God: Special Revelation

A. The Medium of Special Revelation

If we think of general revelation as “natural” revelation, then special revelation is surely “supernatural” revelation. Special revelation is nothing less than God Almighty communicating to man in an extraordinary way through *inspiration* and *incarnation*.

The exact means by which God transmitted His Word to men to be recorded and preserved is unclear. We do know that this communication is the work of the Holy Spirit. The evidence seems to indicate, because of differing writing styles and vocabulary, that God considered and utilized the life experience of the writers. Still, the consistency and unity of the message speaks to a single author – God Himself. We also believe that the whole of Scripture, Old Testament and New, is the complete and true Word of God. Read the following passages and record what each says about the Scripture:

Ps. 119:89	_____
Ps. 119:160	_____
Isa. 55:10-11	_____
Matt. 5:18	_____
Rom. 15:4	_____
1 Thess. 2:13	_____
2 Tim. 3:16-17	_____
Heb. 4:12	_____
2 Peter 1:21	_____

It might be noted that, for the most part, the evangelical church believes in *verbal, plenary inspiration* of the Holy Scripture. That means:

Verbal – God inspired the very words of Scripture, not just the general ideas that they convey. In other words, God not only directed *what* was to be said; He also approved *how* it was to be said.

Plenary – God inspired, not just some, but all of the Scripture. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every word is God inspired and is, therefore, beneficial for faith and obedience.

God’s written Word is a clear communication of His will, His plan of salvation, and His righteous character. Clearer yet, however, is God’s *personal* revelation in Jesus Christ. Consider the following passages:

Isa. 7:14 _____
John 1:14 _____
Rev. 19:11-13 _____

B. The Content of Special Revelation

Evangelical Christians believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and that they constitute the Christian’s *only* standard for faith and practice. Therefore, it is by the Scriptures that we know *what to believe about God* and *what God requires of us*. General revelation proclaims the existence of God but it offers no clue as to how one might have true fellowship with the Creator God. Special revelation is required if one is to know God’s provision for man’s redemption. Read the following and summarize each:

Gen 12:2-3 _____
Gal. 3:8 _____
Heb. 1:1-2 _____
1 Pet. 1:23 _____

Special revelation is special because it is specific. It is not “generally” distributed but is given to a particular people. God has set aside a people for himself to whom He has made Himself known. He has spoken to them, he has inspired the recording and preservation of His Word of truth, and He has visited them by His Son and through His ever-abiding Spirit.

Through whom has God spoken?

Prophets – The prophets were men that God specifically appointed with the task of communicating His Word to His people. Their task included the recording of the past, present, and future works of God among His people. “The whole Word of God may in this general sense be spoken of as prophetic, inasmuch as it was written by men who received the revelation they communicated from God, no matter what its nature might be “ (Easton’s Revised Bible Dictionary). READ Jer. 1:9; Isa. 51:16a; Amos 3:7; and 2 Pet. 1:20-21.

God the Son – In the Words of Jesus we hear the Words of God in their most immediate and direct form. His words were authoritative and powerful. Their effect upon those who heard them was immediate. READ Matt. 7:28-29, 13:54; Luke 4:32, 36; Jn. 6:63.

Apostles – The apostles were those who were called by Jesus and sent by Him to proclaim the gospel to the world. All the books of the New Testament were either written by the apostles themselves or were written by those who were instructed by apostles of Jesus. READ Jn. 14:25-26.

C. The Perception of Special Revelation

In the course of ministering to people Jesus taught much, healed many, cast out demons, walked on water, fed multitudes, and controlled the wind and waves. In the midst of this the Pharisees and Saducees challenged Jesus by saying, “show us a sign.” Clearly they were unable to perceive what was happening right before their eyes!

Read the following passages and note in each how the natural man is unable to perceive spiritual things:

John 3:3	_____
John 10:26-27	_____
John 12:37	_____
Matt. 13:11,14	_____
1 Cor. 2:14	_____
2 Cor. 4:4	_____

D. The Purpose of Special Revelation

God has not *fully* revealed Himself. This is because the finite mind of man is not capable of comprehending the fullness of God. Still, God has by his own volition, removed much of the mystery surrounding His person. Special revelation serves, then, to *more fully* disclose the nature, purpose, and power of God.

Secondly, God has revealed to man all that is needful for him to “be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). He uncovers for us to see His purpose in history. He shows us His great love, mercy, and grace along side His holiness and power. Were it not for God’s special revelation we would never know that He has “loved us with an everlasting love.”

Significant Terms

Apostle –

Canon –

Continuing revelation -

Illumination -

Incarnation –

Inspiration –

Progressive revelation –

Prophet –

Word of God -

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Is there disagreement about the central message of the Bible? If so, what is the disagreement and why do you think there might be disagreement?
- 2) What do YOU think is the Bible's central message?
- 3) Do you believe in verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture? Why or why not?
- 4) How does your position on biblical inspiration affect your faith and actions?
- 5) Do you think that God is still revealing Himself? Is the process of special revelation continuing? Explain your answer.

Lesson 4

The Act of Creation: the Universe

A. What is Creation?

God's special revelation opens with these words: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." While much *can* be said about the creation of all things all that *needs to be said* is right there. Before there was anything else – even before time as we know it began to trickle away – God was; God and nothing else. From that point He created – from nothing – all else that exists. God brought the heavens and the earth into being from nothing. It must be noted that anything that falls short of *absolute origination* cannot be thought of as "creation." The doctrine of creation is also important because it begins with God alone. It doesn't depend on anyone or anything else. The clear implication is that the cosmos is God's because He made it according to His own will and purpose. He may, therefore, do with it as He wishes. God not only transcends His creation, He rules over it and cannot be overruled.

The *New Dictionary of Theology*, InterVarsity Press, declares: "God's sovereign creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) is the clearest biblical teaching."

Consider what each of the following passages teach about God's creation and sovereignty:

Deut. 10:14 _____
1 Chr. 29:11-12 _____
Neh. 9:6 _____
Ps. 24:1 _____
Ps. 145:13 _____
Jer. 32:17 _____
Isa. 40:26 _____
Rev. 4:11 _____

B. The Source and Method of Creation

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* states: “The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.” While much controversy seems to revolve around the idea that creation took place within the framework of six days it seems most significant to note that:

1. It is God who accomplished the work of creation.
2. It was accomplished through His word (i.e., at His command).

It is important to observe that the Scripture says: “In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth.” It is not an ongoing process. It is an accomplished fact. The work of creation is complete. All that ever will be in this physical universe – all matter, all energy, all time - has been made.

Creation is the work of the triune God (Gen. 1:26). Consider the following passages:

God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth - READ Gen. 1:1; Deut. 32:6; Mal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 8:6a.

God the Son, Creator of heaven and earth – READ 1 Cor. 8:6b; John 1:3,10; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2-3

God the Holy Spirit, Creator of heaven and earth – READ Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30

Consider each of the following portions of Scripture and note what each says about God’s powerful Word:

Read Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26 and notice the repetition of the phrase, “And God said . . . and it was so.”

Compare the following passages:

Psalms 33:6-9 _____

Psalms 148:5 _____

Heb. 11:3 _____

The basic outline for the creation in Gen. 1 is as follows:

1:1 - God creates heaven and earth

1: 3 - God creates the light – DAY 1

1: 6 - God creates the firmament - DAY 2

1: 9 - God creates separates the dry land, brings forth vegetation – DAY 3

1: 14 - God creates forms the sun, moon, and stars – DAY 4

1: 20 - God creates fish and birds – DAY 5

1: 24 - God creates cattle, wild beasts, and creeping things

1: 26 - God creates man in his own image, blesses him, grants the fruits of the earth for food – DAY 6

2:1 – God rested – DAY 7

C. The Purpose of Creation

Sometimes we look at the condition of the world around us and think, “Why would God even want to create a world like this?” We would do well to remember two things. First, God knows the end from the beginning. God has not been caught by surprise at the present condition of the cosmos. He is moving history along to a conclusion that is right and pleasing to Him. This brings us to the second thing we should remember. God looked at His creation and said, “It is *good!*”

What we need to know and believe is that God created the universe for His own purpose and pleasure. It exists for our good and for His glory. Psalm 19:1 says: *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”*

D. The Heavens, the Earth, and Light

In the first verses of the Scripture we see God creating the stuff of the universe; matter and energy. We can’t explain the mechanics of such a creation. We can learn from it, though, the awesome power of God. Everything that exists from the most infinitesimal subatomic particle to the farthest galaxy came to be just because God said it should. He spoke and it came to be.

Now, consider the energy that exists in this universe; from the blazing stars to the splitting atom. Where did that power come from? God said, “Let there be light, and the light was.”

Significant Terms

Absolute origination -

Ex nihilo –

Heavens and earth –

Sovereignty -

Cosmos -

Questions for Discussion

- 1) In what ways do science and the Bible disagree about creation? In what ways do they agree? What conclusions have you drawn from your observations of Scripture and science?
- 2) How important is the idea of absolute origination?
- 3) Do you think that the universe was created in six 24-hour long days? Why or why not?
- 4) What might we learn from God's pronouncement that His creation is "good"?
- 5) What roles did God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit play in the act of creation?

Lesson 5

The Act of Creation: Life

A. Plant Life

Read Gen. 1:9-13. Notice that, as the waters were gathered together to expose the dry land, God caused the land to produce vegetation; seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing plants. It is significant that by bringing plants into being God has done something quite different, though no less spectacular, than creating the heavens and the earth. Plants are living things. They grow and are able to reproduce themselves. Read Gen. 1:29; Ps. 104:14-15; Matt. 6:11; Acts. 14:17. Do you see any special purpose in this part of God's creation? _____

Consider each of the following passage and record how plant life honors God:

1 Chr. 16:32-33 _____

Ps. 96:12-13 _____

Isa. 55:12 _____

Matt. 6:28-30 _____

B. Living Creatures

On the fifth and sixth days of creation God made living creatures, first for the sea and air, and then upon the dry land. Living creatures constitute a completely different order of life. Now we have mobility and, more importantly, volition. A cat or an ant, or an amoeba for that matter, can move and it can move this way or that. Regardless of how much understanding there might be regarding the consequences of their decisions, living creatures make decisions all the time. With the creation of animal life we have the beginning of consciousness upon the earth.

Read the following passages and write a brief summation of each:

Isa. 45:18 _____

Ps. 24:1-2 _____

Ps. 50:9-11 _____

Ps. 104:24-25 _____

Ps. 147:9

Job 38:41

Matt. 6:26

It is really quite amazing when you think about what God has accomplished in creating life upon the earth. Every species from bacteria to the mole cricket to the jaguar, from plankton to the dandelion to the trees of the rainforest, has an essential place and purpose. Individually living things strive to meet their own purposes but together they fit into a grander scheme that is not of their own making. What does the ecology of our world teach us about God? _____

Read Gen. 1:26, 28 and Ps. 8:3-9. How do you understand man's role in caring for the things that God has created upon the earth? _____

C. The Question of Evolution

According to Webster, the word "evolution" means "development; any process of formation or growth; continuous progress from simplicity to complexity." Does evolution occur in nature? Do babies grow up to be adults? Do seeds develop into plants that produce flowers, which in turn, produce more seeds? Does your thinking about things change and develop as you learn more and experience more? The answer to all of these questions is clearly yes. What is described in each case is practical observable evolution.

The issue for Christians is not "does evolution happen?" The issue is "did the *species develop* through the process of evolution." Charles Darwin, until the latter years of his life, contended that they did. His theory on the origin of the species has been a major point of confrontation between academia and Christianity. We know what most modern scientists say on the subject. What does God say about it?

Carefully read Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 24-25. Do you notice the repetition of the phrase "according to their kinds." It is readily observable in nature that, while dogs may interbreed with other kinds of dogs, they always produce some kind of dog. Sometimes the offspring may be odd looking. Or, the offspring might be stronger or faster than others of its kind. In every case, though, the offspring will be a dog – it will be an animal of the same "kind." Generally, animals of different kinds cannot reproduce. In the rare cases when they do – donkeys and horses for example – the offspring is sterile. The word "kind" in Genesis 1 seems to refer to a

boundary that God has created for species that cannot be crossed. There is clearly evolution within species, but just as clearly there is none between species.

We must also consider the use of two different Hebrew words in the creation narrative. Those words are *bara* and *asa*. *Bara* is the Hebrew word for “create” and it is used for bringing into being something completely new. This word is uniquely related to God in the Scripture. No one else is a “creator.” The word *asa*, on the other hand is usually translated “made” and it refers to the assembling of something from preexisting material. This may have significance when we see that the word *bara* is only used in 1:1, where it says God *created* the heavens and the earth, in 1:21 where God *created* living creatures for the sea and air, and in 1:27 where God *created* mankind in His own image. All other things, the Scripture says, were *made* by God.

How do you understand vv. 11-12 where it says: “Let the land produce . . . and the land produced”? Consider the similar wording in vv. 24 and 25 before you answer.

Significant Terms

Darwinism –

Dominion –

Evolution -

Sentience –

Species –

asa –

bara –

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What does it mean for something to be “living”?
- 2) What do all “living creatures” have in common?
- 3) Is man creative in the way God is creative? Define “creativity” in man.
- 4) Do you think there are “living creatures” in other parts of the universe? How would it affect your faith if you learned that there were?

Lesson 6

The Act of Creation: Man

A. God's Image and Likeness

In the last lesson we discussed the meaning of the phrase "according to their kind" in the creation narrative. All living things were made in this same manner. Read Gen. 1:26-27. Notice that man is *not* created according to his kind. According to what pattern was he created?

When we think of man in God's image we must always be aware that we are talking about a reflection and not a copy. God is the divine Creator. Man is His living creation. When you look into a mirror you see your own image. It says something about you but it is in no way to be confused with you. The reflection has no meaning – in fact, no existence - apart from the original. So is the relationship between God and man. Man was created to reflect God's image but he remains a creature dependent upon his maker.

Read the following passages and comment on each:

Eccl. 7:29

Gen. 5:1

James 3:9

Man was created in holiness and righteousness. He has, of course, become a distorted image of God as a result of his fall into sin. It is God's purpose to restore the accuracy of that holy righteous image in man through the redemption that is ours in Christ Jesus. Read and consider the following verses.

Rom. 8:29

Rom. 12:2

Eph. 4:24

Col. 3:10-11

1 Cor. 15:47-49

1 Jn. 3:2

Since the Scripture declares that we have been created in the *likeness* of God we might reasonably ask, "How are we like God?" There are several divine attributes that are communicable to man, though they are imperfectly reflected. Those communicable attributes are: knowledge, wisdom, truth, goodness, love, mercy, grace, holiness, righteousness and dominion. God's incommunicable attributes would include: eternal self-existence, immutability, omnipresence, and omnipotence.

B. The Uniqueness of Man

Read Gen. 2:7. God formed man from the dust of the earth. We know that the "stuff" of man is not unique. We are made of earthly material and, in the physical sense; do not radically differ from other types of living creatures. Unique to man, however, is the fact that God Himself breathed (spirited) into man. This combination of living creature and divine breath made man a living soul. It is the living relationship between God and man that makes men unique in all the universe.

Read the following and note what each teaches about God's creation of man.

Ps. 100:3	_____
Ps. 139:14	_____
Isa. 64:8	_____
Ps. 103:14	_____
Eccl. 12:6-7	_____
Job. 33:4	_____

Man shares physical life and a certain level of consciousness with the animals. He stands alone, however, in his ability to commune with God. It might be noted that it is this vital link that was broken when man fell into sin. Consider Gen. 2:16-17, Eph. 2:1, and Col. 2:13. Although sin ultimately led to the death of the physical body, it is deadness of spirit that seems to be addressed in Genesis.

God has a love for man that seems to surpass His love even for the angelic host. Satan and his angels fell into disobedience and rebellion against God. He has not revealed any plan to redeem them from their position of condemnation. Mankind, however, He has sovereignly chosen to save. Read Jer. 31:3, John 3:16, and 1 Jn. 4:10. What lies at the foundation of God's decision to save men? _____
_____ Read Gen. 17:8, Jer. 31:33, Ezk 37:27, Rev. 21:3. What is the consistent desire of God that is revealed in these verses? _____

C. The Destiny of Man

It would seem that sin had two grave effects upon man. First, the spiritual connection with God was severed. Man remained a spiritual creature, but he lost

his ability to commune with the true and living God. Second, man began to die physically. Death is the wages of sin. Man, however, was made to live forever.

In the same way that God has restored man to fellowship with himself through the work of Christ Jesus, he will also restore man's immortal body through that same work. Consider what God's Word says:

Rom. 8:11 _____
Rom. 8:29 _____
1 Cor. 15:52-54 _____
2 Cor. 5:4 _____
1 Jn. 3:2 _____

The shorter catechism teaches this about the destiny of the believer:
"The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity."

Significant Terms

Imago Dei –

Communicable attribute –

Incommunicable attributes –

"living soul" –

Adam -

Questions for Discussion

- 1) How does redemption affect the image of God in us?
- 2) In what ways should the believer reflect his Redeemer?
- 3) Does the church perfectly project the image of Christ? Why or why not?
- 4) What happens to the body at death? What happens our soul / spirit when we die?
- 5) What has God done to restore the relationship that was lost due to man's sin?
- 6) Do we share any responsibility for sin with Adam? Explain your answer.

Lesson 7

The Role and Place of Angels

A. The Reality of Angels

To say, “I don’t believe in angels,” one has to overlook 289 references to them in the Scripture; 107 in the Old Testament and 182 in the New Testament. Jesus Himself affirmed their existence by mentioning them over 20 times in the Gospels. Read the following examples and note in each case who is interacting with angels:

Gen. 19:1 _____
Ex. 3:1-2 _____
Job 1:6 _____
Ps. 34:7 _____
Matt. 4:11 _____
Matt. 13:41 _____
Matt. 25:31 _____
Luke 2:13-14 _____

The Bible doesn’t tell us all we would like to know about angels, their origins, and their place in God’s creation. Angels are, however, part of the biblical witness and must be taken into account when considering God’s creation and providence. *The Westminster Larger Catechism* includes angels when answering questions about the decrees of God: “God’s decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained: Whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men” (LC, Q 12). *The Westminster Confession of Faith* further states that from angels, men, and all other creatures God is due worship, service, and obedience (WCF-II, 2). God, it contends, has elected some men and some angels, unto everlasting life; those remaining are elected to everlasting death (WCF-III, 3,4). The confession also contains clear warnings against the worship of angels.

Angels, like men, will submit to the righteous judgment of Christ. (READ Matt. 13:40-43; Jude 1:6) For whom was hell created? (See Matt 25:41) _____

B. The General Character and Nature of Angels

Angels are spirit beings

The writer of Hebrews refers to angels as “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14). To say that angels are spirits is to describe their essential being as non-corporeal. Calvin wrote: “they are real beings possessed of spiritual essence” (*Institutes*, I-14, 9). Angels exist apart from physical bodies. The biblical record makes it clear, however, that angels have the ability to assume physical form. They often take the form of men. It is common, however, for the presence of angels to strike fear into the hearts of those who see them. The most common greeting of angels is, “fear not!”

Angels are moral beings

Angels have moral character and may be either obedient or disobedient. The Scripture refers to “holy angels” and to “fallen angels.”

Read the following passages that deal with fallen angels and comment on each:

Matt. 25:41 _____
Rev. 12:7-9 _____
2 Pet. 2:4 _____

The fact that some angels have sinned against God tells us that angels were created with the capacity for disobedience and, therefore, for obedient service as well. The holy angels serve God because it is both their nature and desire to do so. (See Mk. 8:38 and 1 Tim. 5:21).

Angels are created beings

In Psalm 148 the psalmist calls for praise from those things that the Lord created at His command. Included in the list of things are angels. The role of Christ in creation is described in Col. 1:16. This verse includes that which is visible and that which is invisible, which is probably meant to include the earthly realm and the angelic or spiritual realm. As to when, in the order of creation, angels come; the Scripture is not clear. We know that Satan was present to tempt man in the garden so it would follow that angels were not only in existence then, but a portion of them had already rebelled against God. It would seem that the creation of angels preceded the creation of man. Read Gen. 2:1 in several versions. The phrase “and all the host of them” (KJV and others) is understood by many to refer to the angelic host.

Angels are powerful beings

How are angels described in Ps. 130:20 and 2 Thess. 1:7? _____
(See also 2 Kings 19:35, Joel 2:11, 1 Chron. 21:16).

C. Specific Types of Angels

In Matt. 26:53 Jesus refers to “legions” of angels. This could be a numerical reference or it could refer to order or a hierarchy of authority as was seen in the Roman military structure. It is fairly clear from other Scripture that there are several orders of angels and that some are of higher authority than others.

Consider the following terms and names:

- Archangel – (See 1 Thess. 4:16 and Jude 9). The word archangel actually means “chief angel” or “ruling angel”. This category would certainly include Gabriel and Michael and, perhaps, Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-15).
- Cherubim – A cherub is a powerful winged creature, nothing like the chubby baby-like creatures depicted in Renaissance art! The Cherubim guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). It is the likeness of the cherubim that adorns the Ark of the Covenant. The psalmist writes of God flying upon the cherubim
- Seraphim – the seraphim are multi-winged beings who constantly worship in the presence of God (See Isa. 6:1-3).
- Powers, Thrones (Principalities), Dominions, Rulers, and Authorities – These terms may or may not refer to orders of angels. If they do, they are used for both holy and fallen angels. Consider the following passages: Col. 1:16, 2:10, 15; Eph. 1:20-21, 3:10; 1 Pet. 3:22; 1 Cor. 15:24.

D. The Purpose and Activity of Angels

Worship

In those portions of Scripture where we are given a glimpse of heaven we consistently see angels worshipping God. See Isa. 6:1-3; Rev. 4:8, 5:11-14, 7:11-12

Ministry

Angels minister at God’s direction to God’s people. Read each of the passages below and note in each how angels minister

Rev. 19:10	_____
1 Kings 19:5-8	_____
Matt. 4:11	_____
Luke 22:42-43	_____
Dan. 6:22	_____
Acts 5:19	_____
Ps. 34:7	_____
Matt. 18:10	_____

Communication

Both the Hebrew word for angel (*mal’ak*) in the Old Testament and the Greek word for angel (*anglos*) in the New Testament can also mean “messenger.” God often sends messages to His servants by way of angels. For example, He sent an angel to interpret Daniel’s dream (Dan. 8:19). He sent a message to the prophet Zechariah through an angel (Zech. 1-6). Both Mary and Joseph were instructed by angels concerning the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:20; Lk. 1:28-38). An angel told the

women that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matt. 28:6). An angel also announced his ascension to the disciples (Acts 1:11).

E. The Angel of the Lord

Read the following passages and note to whom the angel of the Lord appears, why he comes and the response of the person(s) visited:

Gen 16:11-13	_____

Gen. 22:10-18	_____

Ex. 3:1-6	_____

Josh. 5:13, 15	_____

Judges 2:1-2	_____

Zech. 3:1	_____

It is by no means certain because neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament states it explicitly, but many hold to the view that the “angel of the Lord” is, in fact, God the Son prior to the incarnation. The evidence is that this being speaks with the authority of God and that He allows Himself to be worshipped. Note that the OT uses “the” angel of the Lord. When the phrase appears in the NT it is “an” angel of the Lord.

Significant Terms

Theophany
Seraphim
Cherubim
Demon
Archangel
“Living Creatures”

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Read 2 Cor. 11:14. How do we tell holy angels from fallen angels?
- 2) Do you think that God still uses angels to minister to believers. Why or why not?
- 3) What do you think angels look like?
- 4) Do you believe in “guardian angels”? Why or why not?

Lesson 8

The Fall and its Consequences

A. The Nature and Origin of Sin

The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines sin as: “any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.” In other words, one can sin either by doing what God has said not to do or by failing to do what God has said he should do. Certainly, when the Bible talks about sin, this definition applies. Sin is also seen, however, as “a state of alienation from God” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Elwell, ed.). The problem, then, is more fundamental than just doing bad things. People sin because they are sinners and will continue to act out their sinfulness until something (i.e., the Holy Spirit) changes their natures.

Read Gen. 3:1-19. Who is at fault here? Adam said: “*The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.*” He blames first God and then his wife. Eve said: “*The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*” The truth of the matter is that Adam trusted what Eve said instead of what God said. Eve trusted what the serpent said instead of what God said. Sin, therefore, has its roots in prideful unbelief. (Read and discuss 1 Tim. 2:14).

Consider the answers to WSC questions #18 and 19: “The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. . . All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.”

In what ways, according to the WSC does Adam’s sin affect you and me? _____

Read Rev. 12:7-9 and Luke 10:18. Who is the serpent who deceived the woman? _____ What was his motive in doing this? _____

B. Characteristics of the Unspiritual Man

The unspiritual man relates to God in three primary ways: pride, lack of faith, and disobedience. Let's see what the Bible teaches us about each of these characteristics.

Pride

Ezk. 28:17 _____
Isa. 12:17 _____
Isa. 14:13-14 _____
Prov. 16:5 _____
Prov. 16:18 _____
Rom. 12:3 _____

Lack of Faith

1 Cor. 2:14 _____
Jer. 2:13 _____
Mk. 9:24 _____
Mk. 16:16 _____
Jn. 3:18 _____
Titus 1:15 _____
Heb. 11:6 _____

Disobedience

1 Jn. 3:4 _____
Rom. 3:10-12 _____
Rom. 5:19 _____
Matt. 7:21 _____
Lk. 11:28 _____
1 Jn. 2:17 _____
James 4:17 _____

C. Separation from God

The immediate result of the sin of our original parents was separation from God. The close personal relationship that they had enjoyed with their Creator had come to an end. This is the fundamental result of all sin. Read Eph. 2:1, 4:18; 1 Jn. 3:14. This spiritual deadness creates an insurmountable barrier that man is incapable of conquering. Left to his own ways, man cannot come into right relationship with the true and living God. It is to this point that Jesus spoke when He said: *"No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again"* (Jn. 3:3).

D. Spiritual Bondage

Much is said about man's "free will." The truth of the matter is that the natural man is free only to choose his manner of disobedience. This is what the Bible calls "bondage to sin." Read and consider the following passages:

Jn. 8:34

Rom. 6:16-18

Rom. 7:18

Titus 3:3

E. Judgment and Punishment

Read Matt. 12:36, 2 Cor. 5:10, Heb. 9:27, and Rev. 20:11-12. It is clear that a time is coming when God will hold men accountable for their actions. On that day those who are found acceptable will receive blessing and those found unacceptable will be forever separated from the love and presence of God. It is about this Day of Judgment that Jesus taught in the parables of the sheep and goats, the good fish and bad fish, and the wheat and the tares. It is very very important that Christians understand the basis of this judgment. Read Jn. 6:28-29. What is the "work" which God requires? _____

Significant Terms

Legalism –

Original sin –

Regeneration –

Righteousness –

Sin -

Questions for Discussion

- 1) How is the devil involved in human pride, unbelief, and disobedience? Is Satan to blame or is man to blame? Explain your answer.
- 2) God clearly expressed His will for man through the Ten Commandments. Does keeping them produce salvation? Why or why not?
- 3) Some have equated the sin of unbelief with idolatry. Do you think this is an accurate assessment?
- 4) Do you think that the world sees ungodliness as a form of freedom or a form of bondage? Explain your answer.

Lesson 9

The Provision of God

A. What is God's Providence?

We have established in earlier lessons that God created everything (and everyone) that exists for His own purpose and pleasure. The doctrine of *providence* begins at the point of creation and deals with God's sovereignty over all He has made.

The origination of the universe is "creation;" God's superintendence and maintenance of the universe is "providence." (WSC, Q7-8: "*What are the decrees of God?* The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass; *How doth God execute his decrees?* God executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence.") It is interesting that the American founding fathers were clearly aware of this and used the terms "Creator" and "Providence" properly in our founding documents.

God created all things by His commanding Word. Read Ps. 103:19; Col. 1:17; and Heb. 1:3. How is God's creation sustained _____

"Whatever exists by God's creative act would break apart, dissolve, go back to nothing if God did not sustain and preserve" (Williams, *Renewal Theology*, vol 1, pg. 119).

It should be understood that the ultimate purpose of both creation and providence is the glory of God Himself (1 Chr. 29:11; Rev. 4:11).

B. God's Tender Care

We can understand "caring" in two ways. First, to care for something is to be concerned about its condition and to take an interest in its future well being. Second, care can refer to the actual tending to that thing. One might have a caring attitude toward a neighbor. Additionally one might take care of the neighbor by mowing her lawn or taking her meals. God both cares about His creation and

cares for His creation. Furthermore, God’s care involves oversight of both natural and personal events.

Consider the following passages:

- Ps. 104:14 _____
- Ps. 145:13-21 _____
- Matt. 5:45b _____
- Acts 14:17 _____
- Acts 17:25 _____

We should remember that God looked upon His creation and pronounced it “good.” The Scripture is clear; God loves the world and cares for it with tender mercy and grace. He knows the needs of every creature. What is the lesson of Matt. 6:25-33?

C. God’s Loving Presence

Read Gen 26:24, 28:15; Joshua 1:5; Isa. 41:10; Matt. 28:20. What is the common element in all of these passages? _____

_____ These passages deal with God’s abiding presence with His people – the elect persons who know and serve God. We would be in error, however, to think that others are excluded from God’s presence. Acts 17:28, “*in him we live and move and have our being,*” is certainly true for all people. Job reminds us: “*In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind*” (Job 12:10). The incarnation – the coming of God the Son in human form – is the clearest example of God’s presence with man for Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, God with us! In addition to that, however, we should remember that God the Spirit is always and everywhere present. This is why the psalmist wrote: “*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast*” (Ps. 139:7-10).

Though God transcends His creation and must never be considered to be part of it, He is willingly, purposefully, and personally involved in its events.

D. God’s Wise Direction

Although we tend to think of God’s direction in grand and universal terms, the fact is that God oversees “whatsoever comes to pass.” Read Matt. 10:29. What can we learn from this verse?

This is not to say, however, that God is not involved in the larger issues of life. Consider what each of the following passages has to say about God's role and purpose in history

Acts 17:26 _____
Job 14:15 _____
Dan. 11:36 _____
Ps. 2:1-4 _____
Ps. 22:27-28 _____

The exercise of God's wise direction in the affairs of men is not always readily apparent in human experience. Even though God rules and cannot be overruled men make real choices and are accountable for their results. There is election, but it is accompanied by the response of faith. Men do evil and yet God's will and purpose prevail. Consider these Proverbs:

Prov. 16:9 _____
Prov. 19:21 _____
Prov. 21:30 _____

*"I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come. I say:
My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please"*

(Isa. 46:10).

Significant Terms

Chance / Indetermination –
Deism –
Fatalism –
God's Decrees –
Pantheism –
Providence –
Sovereignty –

Questions for Discussion

- 1) If God provides for the birds of the air why do we have to work for a living?
- 2) Does suffering disprove God's good purpose? How can Rom. 8:28 be true when Christians suffer?
- 3) Do you think history is "His story"? Why or why not?
- 4) How do you feel about luck?

Lesson 10

The Plan of God

A. God's Over-arching Purpose

If we were to try to sum up God's purpose in a single word that word might be "restoration." What God desires to do is to undo the results of the fall, to restore His creation to its original state – a state of holiness, righteousness, and purity. We observed the role of Satan in man's fall into sin. Read 1 Jn. 3:8. What, according to this passage, is the reason for Christ's appearing?

List at least 5 things that have been changed by the fall that you think God desires to restore:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

We often use the word "redemption" when we talk about what God's purpose. What does it mean to redeem something? _____

B. God's Covenant

The word "covenant" can be defined as "a formal, solemn, and binding contract between two parties" (Williams), or more simply "an agreement between two or more parties outlining mutual rights and responsibilities" (Eerdman's Bible Dictionary). There are many kinds of covenants found in the Bible, covenants of friendship, covenants of cooperation between kings and nations, and the marriage commitment just to name a few. Of particular interest here, however, is the divine covenant. Like the others it specifies *parties* (i.e. who is included in the covenant), a *promise or provisions* (what will the initiator do or provide), and *obligations or a sign* (the means by which the parties demonstrate that the covenant is in effect).

Read the suggested texts and fill out the chart below:

TEXT	PARTIES	INITIATOR	PROMISE	OBLIGATIONS
Gen. 1:28-30, 2:16-17				
Gen. 6:17-18, 9:1-17				
Gen. 15:4-21, 17:1-21				
Ex. 19:5-6a, 20:1-17				
2 Sam. 7:11b- 16; Ps. 89:1-4, 19-37				
Ex. 34:1-16, 23-30, 37:24-28; Jer. 31:31-34, 32:37-41; Lk. 22:20				

Take special note in each case whether God declares the covenant to be an “everlasting covenant.”

C. The People of God

There is a familiar passage in 2 Chron. 7:14 which says: *“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”* What does it mean when God says, “my people.” Of course, all who dwell on the earth are part of God’s creation. Still, it would seem, God has set apart a *certain* people for Himself, to be His own people. God made covenants with certain people regarding certain things and He made promises to them that cannot be universally applied.

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10. How are certain people described in this passage?

The idea that God has chosen (or elected) certain people to know Him and to serve Him is not a particularly popular idea. It is, however, undeniably part of the Biblical revelation. The gospels record Jesus Himself using the term “elect” at least three times (See Matt. 24: 22, 24, 31; cf. Mk. 13:20, 22, 27). It must also be considered that it was God, not man, who initiated the covenant relationship and who made and committed Himself to redemption. How do you understand the doctrine of election and how does it affect your relationship with God? _____

D. A New Heaven and a New Earth

Read Isa. 65:17, 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1-5. While God is concerned and involved with everything that takes place in our lives and while He carefully oversees and maintains this universe and everything in it, God’s purpose is fixed upon that which is to come. We are encouraged to look forward as well to a restored creation where righteousness dwells (See Php. 3:18-21; Heb. 11:8-10; 13:14; Rev. 21:27).

“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.”

Gen. 17:7

Significant Terms

Covenant –

Election –

Redemption –

Restoration -

Salvation –

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Do you think that God's newer covenants replace, and therefore nullify the previous covenants? Why or why not?
- 2) Who is responsible to keep covenants?
- 3) Did you choose to follow God or did God choose you to serve Him? Can both possibilities be true?
- 4) Why do you think that the doctrine of election is so divisive?
- 5) What do you think life will be like in the age to come?

Lesson 11

A God of Order and Miracles

A. God and Nature – the Basis of Miracles

We really can't consider nature apart from creation. When God created the universe He created the system for its operation as well. The universe isn't just "stuff," it is stuff that interacts in certain and predictable ways with the other stuff. The universe operates according to set laws and principles that can be observed and recorded. These are the "laws of nature." Would you describe these laws as "descriptive" or as "prescriptive?" Explain your answer. _____

It is not really practical to think of God as being either part of nature or of being restricted by nature. Nature is God's creation. You can build a house and then live in it or rent it out or use it however you choose. If you choose to remodel it you can because it is *your* house. God's creation is like that. He can do with it as He pleases because He built it and it belongs to Him.

Here is another illustration: Imagine a box that contains everything. Can anything exist outside of the box? No, our definition prevents it. Can anything exist without the box if the box is the container of all things? Again, we must say, no. Now answer this question, when you imagined your box-universe, did you imagine yourself inside or outside the box? It is clear that a closed naturalistic universe has no place for a supernatural creator, and yet, can it exist without one?

The greatest difference between naturalists and theists lies in their respective understanding of nature. For the naturalist, nature is a *cause*; for the theist, nature is a *result*, God is the cause. God is the ruler of nature. This simple truth is the basis of miracles. The believer must understand that the miracles of God are not events that work *against* nature, for both nature and the miracle flow from the *same* source. C.S. Lewis put it this way: "The great complex event called nature, and the new particular event introduced into it by the miracle are related by their common origin in God" (*Miracles*).

**God is the ruler of nature.
This simple truth provides
the basis for miracles.**

B. The Nature and Character of Miracles

Miracles are grounded upon God's *freedom, authority, love, and power*. Consider the implications of each of the following passages:

Ps. 115:3	_____
Ps. 135:6	_____
Isa. 46:10	_____
Dan. 4:35	_____
Neh. 9:19-23	_____
Ps. 106:44-45	_____
Jer. 32:17	_____
Lk. 1:37	_____

It is clear that miracles are actions of a sovereign God and that these actions serve His purposes. This is true, however, of *every* act of God. It is interesting that what we do or do not consider miraculous is, to a degree, a product of our own expectations. Miracles are sometimes referred to in Scripture as "wonders." The word really describes people's response to God's action, however. When men realize that God has done something that they considered impossible they are filled with wonder. Such events are eloquent statements of God's presence and power. Make note of the words used to describe people's reactions to Jesus' ministry in Mk. 5:42, and 7:37, and of the work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:12 and 3:10. _____

C. The Purpose for Miracles

John Stewart Lawton, in *Miracles and Revelation*, wrote:

"A miracle is an event or situation which is so designed by God as to be recognized as a special revelation of His personal activity in the world, and which contributes in some recognizable way to the fulfillment of His purpose for mankind."

It is for this reason that, in Scripture, miracles are also called "signs." We must remember that signs point to something else; in this case to presence and power of God. Consider the following:

Ex. 4:8-9	_____
Matt. 16:4	_____
Jn. 2:11	_____
Jn. 3:12	_____
Jn. 4:54	_____

There are many passages in which the words "signs" and "wonders" are used together to convey the idea of God's miraculous works. Examples include: Deut. 4:34, 26:8; Neh. 9:10; Jer. 32:20; Dan. 4:3; Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4.

In your own words, explain the purpose of God's miracles. _____

D. Miracles Today?

For the Christian to deny the possibility of miracles is to deny everything that requires faith. If God cannot step into the realm of human experience and perform His will then the Gospel is a lie, there is no purpose in prayer – there is no purpose in anything!

Significant Terms

Cessationism (Read and consider 1 Cor. 15:14-19)

Naturalism

Nature

Signs

Supernatural

Theism

Wonders

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Do you believe in miracles? Why or why not?
- 2) How do YOU define the miraculous?
- 3) Do you think people believe or disbelieve miracles because of their experience or because of what the Bible says?
- 4) Why did Jesus rebuke those who came seeking a sign?

Lesson 12

A God of Holiness and Mercy

A. The Meaning and Significance of Holiness

In Isa. 46:9 God says: “. . . I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.” When God speaks this way about Himself, He is talking about His holiness.

Read and summarize each of the following passages:

- Ex. 15:11 _____
Deut. 4:39 _____
Isa. 44:8 _____
Isa. 45:5-6 _____
Isa. 45:18 _____

The primary sense of the word is separateness, otherness, and uniqueness. There are not “gods” there is one true and living God. He alone is the creator of all things. There are none to whom He may be compared. He is majestic and transcendent. It is from this position of distinction that God’s moral perfection, purity, and righteous flow. John uses the imagery of light and darkness to describe God’s holiness: *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”* Notice that John doesn’t say “God is in the light;” rather he declares: *“God is light.”* How do you understand John’s light and darkness analogy? _____

While God sets Himself apart from His creation in a general way in Scripture, this becomes much more explicit when it comes to man. Read the following passages and briefly summarize each:

Num. 23:19 _____
Isa. 55:8-9 _____
Rom. 11:33-36 _____

B. The Meaning and Necessity of Mercy

Read Ps. 103:3, 9-14. One of the deepest and most difficult of theological questions is this: how can a man make himself righteous enough to appear before God? What works can he do to appease God, or to please God, or to earn God's favor? Job spoke his thoughts plainly when he asked, "*How can a mortal be righteous before God?*" (Job 9:2). Can we undo sins already committed? Can we convince God that He is wrong in His judgments? Clearly nothing can be done by the sinner to remove his guilt or to cleanse himself from the stain of his own iniquity. Apart from God's mercy and grace all would be lost and without hope. But God's purpose includes the redemption of a people – a people that He has chosen and set apart for His own divine purpose. And, because He is merciful and gracious, He has seen fit to provide a means for the expiation of their guilt and cleansing of their sinful stain.

Read the following passages and comment on each:

Isa. 1:18 _____
1 Jn. 1:7 _____
1 Pet. 1:18-19 _____

C. Derived Holiness

In Revelation 15:4 we see the redeemed standing before God and singing: "*Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy.*" Here we see once again that holiness is a term which, by definition, can only perfectly apply to God Himself. Holiness is God's character. It is His nature. Still, the Scripture also says: "*I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.*" Now that we understand the nature of holiness, the question must be answered; how can a man be holy? How can a nation of men be holy? The answer lies in the concept of *derived holiness*.

The root of the Hebrew word *qadash* (holy) means, "to draw a line." The implication is that what is on one side of the line is holy and what is on the other side is profane. But we must understand that it is God alone who can draw the line. Only what He has set apart for His use and for His purpose can be holy. A thing or a person or a place can only be holy if God makes it so by setting it apart for His use. Nothing, then, is holy unless God declares it to be so.

Read the following passages and note in each case what is described as holy:

Eph 5:3 _____
1 Pet. 2:5 _____
1 Pet. 2:9 _____
Ps. 43:3 _____
Ps. 11:4 _____

How does a person, or a building, or a mountain become holy? _____

The New Testament word, "saint," (Gk., *hagios*) literally means "holy one." Note to whom this term is applied in the following passages:

Rom. 1:7 _____
Rom. 15:25 _____
Eph. 1:1 _____
Php. 1:1 _____

Do you think of yourself as a saint? _____ Why do you think Paul refers to the church in this way? _____

Read Eph. 1:4, and Heb. 12:14. How does the concept of holiness apply to Christians? _____

_____ Read 1 Thess. 4:7, 2 Cor. 7:1, and 1 Pet. 1:15-16. If God's moral perfection, purity, and righteous are a product of His holiness; how should our derived holiness relate to purity in our lives? _____

Significant Terms

Righteous

Mercy

Grace

Holiness

Saint

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Why must man's holiness be derived?
- 2) Are holiness and perfection the same thing? Explain your answer.
- 3) Some of the Reformers wrote about the believer being righteous and sinful at the same time (*simul iustus et peccator*). Do you think this is possible? Why or why not. (Consider Rom. 4:5).
- 4) How do separateness and moral purity relate in God? In us?