

Science & The Scriptures

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Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0 : 00] If you'll open your Bibles this morning to the book of Psalms, we're in Psalm 19 this morning.

Psalm 19. C.S. Lewis considered this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics ever written in the world. Today we are going to spend some time thinking about a particular theme, and that is the Psalms and science.

The Psalms and science. Now you may have come here this morning with marriage burdens or health burdens or financial burdens, or you may have come here just needing a pep in your step and more faith in the Lord.

And so you might hear, we're talking about science today, Chris. Like, could we do something a little less esoteric? I'm just a guy who needs to be encouraged for another week at work.

Well, no, we can't. We're doing this, first of all. Back in Africa, I knew a missionary. You know, when you meet these longtime missionaries in Sub-Saharan Africa, they've all lost their minds just a little bit.

[1 : 05] You know, after a few decades of malaria, you know, various things eating away at your brain and parasites and so forth, they're all a little crazy. And so I knew a couple there that he, this is one of the ways that I thought he was crazy.

He would have his kids, he's from Texas, and he would have his kids mail him VHS tapes of the Cowboys games after, you know, after the season. So he could watch the Cowboys games sitting, you know, in Zambia, yelling at his TV, you know.

One of the things that this guy did that was pretty funny, he was probably, actually he was probably 70 by the time I met him. He would have to go, when you're in Sub-Saharan Africa, it's a lot of bureaucracy.

It's almost always corrupt and just massive delays and, you know, Byzantine processes and so forth. Anyway, so he got really sick of just all the corruption, all the bribe-taking and so forth.

And this half-crazy Christian missionary had this idea. He ordered a rubber stamp and the rubber stamp had a seal and the words in the stamp said, stampio officio.

[2 : 14] Just made up a phrase that sounded kind of Latin and kind of important. Stampio officio. And what he would do is he would stamp all of his documents before he would go into the Zambian DMV. Yes, there is a Zambian DMV.

Before he'd go into all these places, he would stamp them, stampio officio. So then when the corrupt bureaucrats saw the stamp, they assumed that he had paid someone above them to get things done.

And so he wound up using this stamp to basically cut through everything. And as soon as he would walk into his space, he's the stampio officio guy. And he just changed his whole paperwork life.

His visas got done faster and so on and so forth. So he, you know, the half-crazy malaria-ridden missionary was kind of lying, right? Fair enough. But I want to suggest to you that it's important to talk about science because the world currently, the culture currently, is essentially trying to pull one over on you every other day by stamping something science.

The most ludicrous and foolish ideas, the ideas most antithetical to human flourishing, ideas that don't even pass the basic smell test.

[3 : 24] If we just put a stamp on there that says science or studies show. So, this has become an epistemological shortcut.

To get a bunch of people to just do what we want, we'll just tell them it's because of the science. Truth is, we're in a moment where, very similar to the Catholic Church prior to the Reformation, people talk about the church needing to be reformed.

I would agree with that. But I think that actually science is in desperate need of a Reformation. What was true prior to Luther's day was that you had a high priesthood people who were exceptionally educated and spoke in a language no one understood, and they used their authority to bully and lord over others and essentially assert their dominance and make their money in a way that made everyone else feel stupid and incapable of responding to their assertions.

And so today, the high priestly class is not in the church. It's in science. And you need to be aware of this. This is not me painting all science with a broad anti-science fundamentalist brush or anything like that.

You just need to be understanding that for the last, you know, X number of years, a bunch of the worst things that have happened to our society have been imported under the stamp of science.

[4 : 43] So yeah, I think it's important we talk about this. There's another reason why I think it's important. We at Providence believe that the Bible teaches that parents are fundamentally responsible for the education of their children.

And whatever lane you take to accomplish that education, the buck stops with you. And you need, you are responsible for how your children are educated. And as such, you need to have an understanding of science as God would have you understand it so that when your kids learn to do the sciences, you have some clarity about what God is calling your kids to do.

So yeah, we're going to talk about science today. It's a natural extension of Psalm 19, as you'll see in a moment. But let me begin with our first point by saying this. Historically, theologians have thought that, thought of God writing two books.

God writing two books. One is creation. And one are the scriptures. One of the foremost scientists, also a Christian, Francis Bacon, wrote this.

God has, in fact, written two books, not just one. Of course, we are all familiar with the first book he wrote, namely scripture. But he has written a second book called Creation. So what we see in Psalm 19 is a breakdown of these two books.

[5 : 57] In verses one through six, we see the book of creation. The heavens declare the glory of God. Verse one. 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 voice goes out through all the earth. And their words to the end of the world.

Their words to the end of the world. So in them he has sent 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. So here David is saying that God has written a book called Creation, Nature, and it is pouring forth speech, declaring the glories of God.

The second book we see in the next verses, verses seven through eleven, is what is known in theological circles as special revelation or scripture. And here we see David writing, The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

[7 : 00] 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 of the honeycomb.

So you have two books that God has written, and we get to read both as believers, but we need to learn sort of the rules of engagement as we interact with these two books. One important thing to note right from the beginning is you'll never find a contradiction in anything God has done, and you certainly won't find any real contradictions in the two books.

That will always be a problem of interpretation, not a problem of communication. God has no contradictions, so we will not find contradictions between these two books.

If we do, there's an interpretive problem or a data problem or so forth. Spurgeon, who was on the early fronts of handling a post sort of Darwin rollout environment, he says it this way, God has written two books for us to read, the volume of the creation and the volume of the sacred scriptures, and these two are in complete harmony.

[8 : 18] Happy are they who can read both these books and see the same vein of teaching running through every page. David is telling us something that Bacon would affirm, that Spurgeon would affirm, that God has written two books, the scriptures and creation, and I want to talk initially about

some things that they have in common.

The first one being is that they're both spoken into existence by God. Genesis 1.3, the Lord spoke and the world emerged. 2 Timothy 3.16, all scripture is breathed out by God.

So the first thing these two books have in common is that they are both spoken into existence by God. The second thing is that they are both entirely complex systems and in their complexity you see essentially a demand for divine authorship.

Let me define a complex system. There's a meaning of that word. A complex system is a network of many interconnected parts that work together in ways that can't be fully predicted just by looking at each piece alone, producing emergent behaviors or patterns.

So scripture is a complex system. We have studied this before as a church. All of the prophecies issued thousands of years prior fulfilled. All of the unexpected twists and turns.

[9 : 41] There are interpretations in the New Testament, Old Testament passages we simply could not have anticipated. All of the cross-references in the New and Old Testament, thousands and thousands of them.

Scripture is a complex system. Creation, of course, is also an incredibly complex system. And one of the neat things you can ask if you're thinking about, well, how complex is creation or how complex is something, is you can use what I would call the microscope and the macroscope.

You can zoom all the way in on something, and do you still see complexity all the way in? And then you can zoom all the way out and look at the whole system. That would be like a macroscope. You know, how do I get all the way back?

And you're still seeing complexity. So the two things that these books have in common, at least, are they're written by God, and they are complex systems that by their very complexity suggest that a sophisticated being has put them into motion.

The third thing they have in common has to do with something called, that I've rephrased as, the instrumentation and interpretation issue. By the way, this will be, I know this is a little headier, this will be a little shorter than normal because I know I'm asking a lot in this environment in particular.

[10 : 58] These two books have this in common. You need instruments to see the data, and then you need to interpret the data that you see. So in natural revelation, God gave us five senses, and we're able to see some of the data that is in the book of creation with just our senses, with our ears and our eyes and our skin and so forth.

But there's data that exists in creation that is beyond our ability to perceive. It's beyond our senses' abilities to perceive. So we have instruments.

We have oscilloscopes and x-rays and spectrometers and so on and so forth. And we use these instruments to see things that our senses can't see. And we discover data that we didn't know was there when we use these instrumental helps.

Now, of course, when we find this data, we've got to interpret it, but we'll talk about that in a minute. Similarly, the Bible teaches that with Scripture, you have some rational capacity to understand the Bible, but you actually will not be able to detect the deepest data in the Scriptures without one particular instrument.

And that instrument is the Holy Spirit. What the microscope is to science, what the spectrometer is to science, I was in St. Louis when the human genome was mapped in St. Louis at Washington University.

[12 : 27] And using the technology that they had there to map the genome, these are tools that help you see things you can't see. The Bible says that when it comes to understanding the Scriptures, there's one tool, one instrument you need that you don't come equipped with, and that is the Holy Spirit.

This is why Paul, when he prays for the believers, he so often prays that they have insight, that they see things that aren't immediately visible, that they have knowledge that surpasses knowledge. I read one of those prayers in Colossians. There's another one, another two in Ephesians. This is what Jesus was getting at in John 16 when he said, when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

Just as we would need a telescope to see the outer reaches of the cosmos, so we need the Holy Spirit to see the deepest data of the Scripture, the real life-giving data of the Scripture.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2.14 that the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually

discerned.

[13 : 34] So, Holy Spirit is our instrument that God gives us upon salvation in order to read the data of his special revelation in the way that it's supposed to. And when we go back to Psalm 19, we can see that David indeed has the Holy Spirit and that he is indeed reading the data well.

He writes in Psalm 19, The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. 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. So he uses six different terms for the Bible there.

Law, testimony, precepts, commands, fears, and rules. He is seeing the Scriptures through the help of the Holy Spirit. And not only does he see what the Scriptures are, he sees what the Scriptures do.

He says they revive the soul. They make the mind wise. They make the heart rejoice. They enlighten the eyes. The main thing I want you to see is what he says in verse 10.

[14 : 44] More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Why did he use honey and gold specifically?

Well, a simple way to think about this is that honey and gold are sort of the first in their respective classes. What is the best material, you know, in terms of value, in terms of beauty?

You know, the argument, especially back then, and also for Trump, would be gold. His very Old Testament tastes when it comes to aesthetics. Anyway, they love gold. And why honey?

Well, honey is the top of the sort of pop-on-your-mouth food back then. It would be the tastiest thing you could eat back then. They didn't have all the cool chemicals that we have now.

So he's saying, essentially, in the first section, he's listing all the glories of creation. He's like, creation declares the glory of God. The second section, he's like, Scripture's also really great.

[15 : 45] And then in verse 10, he actually says this basic statement, Scripture's better. The special revelation is to be more desired than the general revelation.

Now, he isn't saying, let's all be monks, let's not want gold, let's not want honey, or their equivalents, and let's only read the Bible. He's not making a Gnostic argument here. He's simply saying that there is a hierarchy of the books, and that the Bible stands above creation.

In terms of what it can do for you and I, the Bible stands above creation. Why would he tell us this? Well, number one, none of us need to be told to go out into the natural world and work in the natural world to get benefits.

That's what we call jobs, and most of those have them. And most of us do a decent job showing up and doing what we need to do to gain sort of the products of the natural world, the fruit of the natural world, because we like that fruit, and we need some of that fruit, and so on and so forth. But you know, we often have pretty low opinion of Scripture functionally. We don't typically, this is I think a huge pivot point if you could manage this in your life.

[17 : 03] If you could wind up realizing that the Bible is a treasure box, and that if you'll just spend time working it and learning how to work it, you will be greatly rewarded.

I think one of the reasons why David is saying that the Scriptures are to be more desired than honey or gold is because we have a tendency to see the natural world as we get that there's rewards there.

We often forget that there is incredible reward in the Scriptures. And you've got to work in both places to get the rewards, by the way. So, you know, when you go into the Scriptures and you're learning how to read the Scriptures, you know, you're going to think, oh, there's nothing here.

I don't know what I'm doing and so on and so forth. It's like, well, you wouldn't know what you were doing if you started trying to work in a computer business tomorrow or something. Like, you just have to learn. If it's worthy of doing, it's worthy of learning how to do.

And so David really emphasizes this point. He says in verse 10 and 11 again, more to be desired than gold, fine gold, sweeter than honey, drippings of the honeycomb.

[18 : 03] Moreover, by them, your servant is warned, and in keeping them, in keeping your word, there is great reward. So he just wants you to know, hey, don't forget that there's this other book and it has tons of great rewards too.

But there's a second reason why I think he places scripture in a superior position. It has to do with what I said earlier where it said that in addition to instrumentation, detecting data, we have to

interpret what we find.

We have to interpret the data that we find. And it turns out that as you move around in this world, you need some guidebook to tell you what to do with the data you see in the world.

So let me give you an example of that. Genesis 3, 1 through 7. Genesis 3, 1 through 7. Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

And he said to the woman, did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it lest you die.

[19 : 16] But the serpent said to the woman, then you will surely not die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be open and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.

And she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloth.

Well, what we see here is Eve doing science. She is using her senses, which are her instruments, to evaluate a piece of the natural creation, a particular fruit.

And what she's doing is she's using her eyes to sort out like what's true about this fruit. She sees that it is good for food and that it's a delight for the eyes.

She would be in a position to know these two things, having already lived in the garden, having already eaten similar fruits and so forth. But there's also special revelation. That's general revelation.

[20 : 23] She's doing science. She's reading the data. But in verse three, you have the word of God. The word of God where God says, you shall not eat of this tree, neither shall you touch it.

So here we have a passage very early on in the Bible where we have general revelation, the fruit, and we have special revelation, the Bible, God's word.

Now Eve is in a situation where she is trying to interpret the reality on the ground. And she's using her sense data and she says, this is good fruit and it's good for eating.

She's not using the scripture in a superior position to interpret, to properly interpret her sense data. And so what's happening as a result of being unable to properly interpret her sense data is something else shows up.

And that is, there's another mention in verse six. It's not just her who is doing the analysis. Because she has three conclusions in verse six.

[21 : 25] It looks like it's good for food. It's a delight to the eyes. This third thing, the tree was desired to make one wise. That is not observational data.

That's not sense data. That's interpretation. That's hypothesis. Where did she get that from? Well, earlier in the passage, we see that the devil told her that.

And so what she's doing is, this would be an example, she thinks she's doing science. But what she's really doing is science plus theology. Now, this is very important.

I'm going to, I will always beat a baby in volume. So if you want to hear me, you can hear me. I'll make sure of it. What we need to have in mind as parents, as people who are leading our communities, is what's known as the myth of pure empiricism.

The myth of pure empiricism. You're like, well, Chris, can we not use fancy words? Here's what it is. The worst scientists in the world, the ones who should absolutely not be trusted, are the ones who say that they are capable of something no human being is capable and therefore are telling us that they are gods or superhumans.

[22 : 42] And that is that they alone have the ability to approach data objectively. That is philosophically false. They are entering their observation with presuppositions that are coloring, metaphysical presuppositions that are coloring their observation, let alone their interpretation of the data.

So here's what we have just to make it super simple. Eve decided not to listen to God's special revelation, but listening to special revelation was inescapable.

So whose special revelation did she listen to? The devils. That's the main thing you need to know when we talk about scripture and science is it is inevitable that you, when doing observation in the

world, will bring a story along with you into that observation, metaphysical claims.

And the only question is where are they coming from? And that is why a Christian scientist with a high view of God's word is just the most trustworthy kind because he's stipulating on the front end, here is my meta story that I am bringing in to the observation of this data.

And the people who are the least trustworthy are those who pretend that they are this unique breed of superhuman who can approach data with complete, cold, calm analysis.

[24 : 07] It's a complete lie and that's where all the Stampio Officio stuff really gets us in trouble. Now, I want to add one more thing before we move on from this point. There are some fields that are more capable, less incentivized to this kind of shenanigans than others.

Some fields in the sciences make it easier to be objective than others. And this is why I would say that of all the scientists and I know that sciences, and I know that some of you are interested in this science, that's why I'm saying it, the one most likely to be corrupted by these meta stories is psychiatry.

By far. It is absolutely possible to do this psychology as a science. There's a science there. But it is basically a constant temptation to weave in your own metaphysical explanations into the data itself. It's actually probably the most corrupt scientific field. It actually probably has the most posers of any scientific field and it probably also, well, I'd say, I think it has, by far the most specious studies and use of data in general.

So, is it a real science? It can be. It's also this giant sucking vacuum for people who want to pretend to be scientists who are really just witches and diviners, right?

[25 : 34] So, just understand if that's the science you're into, that's what you're getting into. In reality, Eve did the observational data.

She admitted somebody else's special revelation, somebody else's metaphysical take, and here we all are. We are basically just bad science. Our world is basically just the consequence of bad science.

Now, the third section of Psalm 19 we're wrapping up is that mankind mankind is a convergence point between creation and scripture.

We are creation, of course, but we hold the word. There's something very interesting about people. You know, mankind, human beings is a very interesting thing.

Think of it this way. When God created the world, who did he put in charge of it? Man. When God inspired the scriptures, who did he speak through? Man.

[26 : 32] How is creation managed? It's managed by people for people. How is the Bible managed? It's managed by people for people. It's really interesting that mankind winds up being sort of this place where these two kinds of revelation feed in together.

The one thing that's so important that David sees here about mankind is that unlike trees or rhinoceroses or black holes and certainly unlike the scriptures, we are the only piece of creation fallen and in sin and enmity with the creator.

So we have this very high and important position but we are uniquely broken in all of creation. So David says it this way. Who can discern, verse 12, who can discern his errors?

Declare me innocent from hidden faults but 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.

Who can discern his errors? Well this is interesting because this is suggesting that we can't even do science properly on ourselves. We can't even see what's going on inside of us and so we need instrumental help as well here.

[27 : 51] And again, this is the Holy Spirit and the Word and community and so on and so forth. David's big concern is that he reflect the glory of God in his being like the creation does and like the scriptures do.

David's great concern is that he knows he's important. He's a man. He's a person. But he is the most apt to error of all of the creational system.

In reality, if you want to understand sin, go back to Eve and understand all of your sins and all of my sins are just repeats of this basic deal. we observe with our own thinking X, Y, and Z.

We allow some metaphysical claims to enter that aren't God's and we act on those things rather than on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. If you want to understand any sin in your life, it's essentially just the repeat of Eve doing what she did.

Okay. Now, this beautiful thing that mankind is like the, is this weird repository. We're the king of creation. We're the queen of creation. And we're also, the Bible was written for us in a lesser way by us.

[29 : 01] It's marvelous to be a human. It's a glorious, it's a glorious thing. But as Aslan says, and I forget which book he says, you know, you are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, which is enough to boast your chest and be proud, but also enough to make you cringe and embarrassment.

You know, it's the dual ancestry that we all have. We are important. We're very important. We're also so uniquely prone to fallenness and sin.

Well, the story of the Bible ends with a person who is both the Word and became flesh. The story of the Bible ends with the two books being fused.

First, and a man, Jesus Christ. And ultimately, all of reality will be fused in this way. Where the creation and the scriptures will be completely and fully intermeshed even as they are in Jesus. Jesus is the perfect confluence between the two books. He is the best of us in every single way, but not only the best of us, he's the best of everything.

[30 : 14] The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

In some sense, Jesus Christ is evident in Psalm 19 simply because He winds up being all the things in His one person.

And that's why Colossians 1 matters so much. That's why Colossians 1 is going to be read three times. Not once, not twice, but three times today. Colossians 1 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

The Word became flesh. For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him and He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.

And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn of the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

[31 : 31] When Jesus went to the cross, He was buying the complete harmonization of all of God's revelation. He was getting it all put back together, including you and me.

For we can stand with creation, with the Scriptures, and rightly glorify the Lord. It's a glorious thing to be a follower of Jesus Christ. So when you come for communion today, I just want you to have a worshipful heart and understand that the man, Christ Jesus, that great giant, that ancient of days, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the eternal one, the Alpha and the Omega, took on flesh, lived a perfect life, and shed His perfect blood so that He could not only save you but could reconcile all things to Himself, things in heaven and things on earth.

Let me pray and then you come. Father God, we praise Your holy name for how faithful You are.

You are the best storyteller there is and we have seen quite a story. You've written two books and made those two books into one in Christ Jesus.

Praise Your holy name. You are wise, You are glorious, You are good. Now Lord, as we come and partake of the table, I pray God that You would give us faith to see what it is that we are celebrating. We are celebrating the man, Christ Jesus. Praise Your holy name for Jesus. Lord, I pray that You would guide us through Your Spirit this morning as we partake of these elements to help us, Lord, to see You clearly.

[32 : 57] In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.