



WEEK 1

THE ETERNAL GOD LIVES



He that cometh to God must believe that he is.

Hebrews 11:6

Day 1: The Living God

Psalm 19:1-4, 7-9; Jeremiah 10:10-13

Psalm 19:1. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

4. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

7. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

8. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

Jeremiah 10:10. But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

11. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

12. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

13. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

Seeking a First Cause

It is natural to ask questions about the things around us. Small children especially are ever asking questions: “What is that?” “What is it for?” “Where did it come from?” “Who made it?” Unlike the dumb animals, people think about their surroundings, themselves, and the meaning of life. We naturally seek explanations and want to know the causes of things.

Suppose someone is eating a delicious red apple. If he happens to be in a mood for meditation, his thoughts may run somewhat in this line: *This apple grew on a tree. The tree produced the apple because someone planted and cultivated it, and because the ground beneath it contained exactly the elements needed to make up the apple. The apple could take on the form and flavor I enjoy because of the light of the sun.*

His thoughts may very naturally run on further to questions such as these: *Who made the soil and put into it the chemical elements that made possible such a delicious apple? Who created the elements and gave to them*

the properties that they could unite to form the apple? Why did this tree produce an apple instead of a pear or an acorn?

Questions such as these inevitably lead to a First Cause. Scientists may be able to carry back the line of secondary causes a few steps farther than you or I can. But finally the mind comes to the end of its chain of reasoning with the last link hanging loose, unless it finds a First Cause that is responsible for the existence of all things.

Thinking Through the Scripture

In Psalm 19, David wrote about some of the evidences he saw for believing in a living God. The natural world is full of things that proclaim an almighty Maker. People have always delighted in the beauties of nature. We enjoy the products of the earth; we marvel as we contemplate the nighttime sky. Everywhere we find order, symmetry, beauty, and mystery. The creation continually utters its unspoken message to those who listen. Men can use created things as materials for making articles of comfort and convenience. But while he can invent things of all kinds, someone else had to create the materials he works with.

The Heart of the Matter

The living God is not just an idea in our minds. He lives as truly as any person we know and love. The Scriptures assume that God's existence requires no proof. Men are fools when they deny that God is. Since God is Spirit, men can know Him only through spiritual means: faith. But God has revealed the truth about Himself through Jesus Christ and through His Word, the Bible. If we neglect or refuse to know God, we are numbered among the ungodly.

False Answers. Men give differing explanations of the origin and the cause of the marvels of nature. One says the world is an

unexplainable accident. Another says matter has always existed in some form, and some inherent power makes it evolve into the various forms we see. These explanations do not satisfy an honest, inquiring mind. If a man claimed that a watch just happened to be a watch, or that it always was a watch, or that the material made itself into a watch, we would consider him irrational. Likewise, the universe points to someone as its Maker or First Cause.

The Christian Answer. In whatever direction the mind turns, it invariably comes to a point beyond which reasoning and knowledge cannot reach. Man's unaided reason can sense a First Cause, but cannot discover it. Faith supplies the answer to man's questions about the cause and origin of all things. This answer is one word—*God*. We know the eternal God lives and that He made all things. We get that knowledge from the Scriptures, the Word of God. The passages in today's reading emphasize the truth that God lives. He supports and sustains the forces of nature. He made man a moral being with wonderful capacities as an immortal soul. He likewise directs the course of nations, of society, and of civilization according to moral principles. Besides Him there is and can be no other Creator or First Cause.

Man's Conscience. Man has a built-in moral compass. He has an inner nature, a soul, and a heart that can respond to God. Something inside tells him the difference between doing right and doing wrong; a feeling of happiness follows the one, and a sense of guilt follows upon the other. Where does man get this inward judge called *conscience*? Here, too, a First Cause is suggested.

Moral causes also operate in history. When nations follow one course of action, certain things happen as a result, while another course of action leads to different results. Historians can trace some of the immediate causes of why nations rise and fall; but again, the

ultimate cause behind all this is not evident to natural reason. We know right and wrong enter into the causes of history, but where do moral absolutes come from?

Related Ideas

The Training of Faith. For our faith to see the work and hear the voice of the living God, we must cultivate it through training and practice.

A trained musician listening to a musical masterpiece hears many delicate sounds and harmonies the unpracticed ear fails to catch. The trained naturalist walking in the woods sees and hears many things the ordinary person misses.

In the same way, to understand the things of God and to perceive spiritual impressions, we must cultivate and train our spiritual sense of faith. We can do that by diligence in prayer, Bible study, meditation, and obeying God's Word and Spirit.

The Folly of Naturalism. When people say they cannot believe in the existence of anything they cannot see, they speak foolishly. Our natural eyes are very limited in their range. Photography has revealed the existence of objects the human eye cannot see. Therefore, the natural eye is not a safe instrument by which to determine whether something exists. This helps us see the folly of saying spiritual beings do not exist because we have never seen them. It is just as foolish to deny the existence of God as to deny the existence of atoms and electrons.

Do We Know God? Faith in God is not a matter of words and outward profession. True faith in God places Him at the very center of all life and thinking. It makes us thankful to Him at all times. It leads us to cultivate fellowship with Him in prayer, confession, and meditation. We want to know His will, and we seek His guidance in every