

Intro:

Our theme for Christmas 2009 is found in John 1.14:

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The Word made Flesh

The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is God's last word to man. It is the Word that must be received if men will have a relationship with God at all – if they would have a hope of heaven, a hope of sins forgiven, a hope of newness of life – they must come to an abiding faith — reliance, trust, dependence upon — Jesus Christ as The Word made Flesh who came to take away men's sins.

I was listening to a series of messages on another passage when I was struck by the appropriateness of this theme for Christmas.

That other passage is Psalm 19. This morning we will read the whole Psalm, it is one of our favorites, rich in beautiful imagery and full of God's revelation of himself to man.

Read Ps 19

This morning we will look only at the first six verses. Our title is:

The Wordless Word

If we were to say, "Without revelation God could not be known," we would be saying something that in one sense is true, but in another sense is nonsense.

- It is true because God cannot be known apart from His self-revelation
- But it is nonsense because God cannot act without revealing Himself

When God uttered the first creative word, "let there be light", He revealed something of Himself and of His nature.

When God acts, He speaks – with or without words.

Our message today is going to consider the value of the revelation of God in His deeds, the limits of that revelation, and the accountability for that revelation.

Proposition: Everyone is accountable for the plain revelation of God given to all men.

I. The brilliant display of the wordless word

A. Displayed in the brilliance of the heavens (1)

1. I said ‘When God acts, he speaks’
 - a. All of creation speaks of the glory of God
 - b. Our whole world, teeming with life in all kinds of forms
 - c. All forms of life, from greatest to smallest, all highly complex
 - 1) You may have seen large animals in an aquarium or zoo – a giraffe, an elephant, or a whale — or an ostrich!
 - 2) I have seen tiny single-celled organisms under a microscope

All of these forms of life are highly complex, each one conforming to its particular nature according to the programming of its DNA.

Animal rights activists do have one thing right, in a way, when they place high values on the animals of this world – these animals speak of the glory of God.

- This doesn’t mean these people have the right ethical balance or understanding of man’s place in the world
- Saw an article this week where down in Australia some company is marketing kangaroo and emu flavored potato chips ... the activists are freaking out

- d. Our psalmist, however, speaks only of the heavens, the firmament (space), and the sun

“The wars and disturbances on earth often camouflage God’s glory, as they divert attention away from the created heavenly bodies, which show more clearly God’s majesty...”¹

The commentary goes on to say that this is because of the “regularity and orderliness”² of the heavenly bodies — I would say that the heavenly bodies are untouched by the hand of man.

¹ Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, pp. 179-180.

² *Ibid.*, p. 180.

2. Our attention on natural revelation is focused by the psalmist on the heavens
 - a. The psalmist uses a chiasmic form in the title verse (vs. 1) – not perceptible in the English
 - 1) The heavens
 - a) Declare
 - i) The glory of God
 - ii) His handiwork
 - b) Sheweth
 - 2) The firmament
 - b. The heavens
 - 1) “Heaven includes all that is above the earth, and any given passage may include all or merely a part of the whole.
 - 2) “Heaven and earth together constitute the universe (Gen 1:1).”³
 - c. The firmament
 - 1) Root idea is something that is flattened out and so expanded to cover a wider surface
 - 2) In this use, it refers to the ‘expanse’ of the heavens, the vast reaches of space

We understand more now about how the heavens and the firmament are made up.

The language of the psalmist speaks to the nature of inspiration – God did not mechanically dictate but moved men to speak words to describe things from the human perspective *at the time* they were written.

- d. Later, the psalmist will single out the most brilliant heavenly object – the Sun (4)

Thus it is especially these heavenly works of God through which David teaches us God speaks.

³ שָׁמַיִם (shāmayim) **heaven, heavens, sky**, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Bibleworks electronic edition, © 2003.

B. Constant communication in every land (2-4)

1. The words for ‘communication’ in v. 1 are participles, communicating continuous action
 - a. The heavens are constantly declaring the glory of God
 - b. The firmament is constantly showing God’s handiwork
2. The cycle of day and night repeatedly sends out the constant message (2)
 - a. Day to day “pours forth speech” NAU
 - 1) ‘yom l’yom’ – day to day
 - 2) ‘gushes forth a word’⁴
 - b. Night to night “reveals knowledge” NAU

The movement of planets against the backdrop of unchanging stars communicates the intricate mind of God, putting his glory on nightly display.

Modern technology has given us breathtaking insight into the glory and complexity of the night sky.

I regularly read NASA’s web-site and also the site of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory – constant sources of fascinating knowledge of the heavens.

- Recently an observer spacecraft made another fly-past of Mercury – sending back photographs of never before seen landscapes (or Mercury-scapes).
- Mercury travels around the sun in something like 90 earth-days
- Mercury’s rotation (one Mercury day) is longer than Mercury’s orbit – so the sunny side of Mercury is scaldingly hot, the night side is bitterly cold
- Going the other direction in the solar system, the Cassini spacecraft is traveling about the rings of Saturn and visiting its moons

⁴ NET Bible note, *in loc.*

- Recently it passed by one of Saturn's moons – one which has lakes of methane on its surface – methane is a gas on earth, but in liquid form on this moon
- Beyond our solar system, the Hubble telescope takes photographs of distant galaxies, glorious and beautiful nebulas in our own galaxy, and many other objects

Every day — and every night — gush forth knowledge

3. The wordless word is heard in every land under the sun (3-4)
 - a. No language where these glories are not seen and understood (3)
 - b. This voice is communicated in every corner of the earth (4)

There is not one person on earth who has not received the truths the heavens communicate.

- For many years, most of the world knew nothing of the koala and kangaroo...
- But the whole world knew the glories of the heavens and the daily utterance of the sun...

C. Glorious word of the shining sun (4-6)

1. Poetic language is used here
 - a. This is not a mark of David's ignorance
 - b. This is a mark of David's skill with words
2. The poetic imagery of the rising of the sun (4-5)
 - a. It is as if in every land, even unto the end of the world, a tent has been placed from which the sun rises every morning
 - b. The sun rises with the joy and glory of a bridegroom rising in the first day of his new marriage
 - c. The sun rises as strong young warrior rising and rushing out to do battle

All of these are word pictures, describing the observable phenomenon by common metaphors

3. The poetic imagery of the course of the sun (6)
 - a. The sun rises from one end of the heavens
 - b. It does not pause in its course until it reaches the other end of the heavens (where is that?)
 - c. Nothing is hid from the heat of the sun – everything under the sun is warmed by it

This poetic language describes the wordless word seen in the “day to day that gushes forth speech”...

But what does the wordless word say?

II. The clear but limited meaning of the wordless word (Rm 1.19-20)

A. Psalm 19 is summed by Romans 1.19

1. That which is known of God is manifest in them [all men]
2. God has made it manifest – clearly known, revealed

B. The heavens declare the glory of God in this way (Rm 1.20)

The invisible things are seen and understood

1. God’s eternal power
 - a. The incredible reaches of the universe and
 - b. The incredible makeup of the things in the universe
 - 1) The sun
 - 2) The planets, asteroids and comets
 - 3) The myriad of stars, the galaxies, the black holes

All of this speaks of *power!*

Someone sent me a little quip this week, it’s a definition of atheism:

- Atheism: The belief that there was nothing and nothing happened to nothing and then nothing magically exploded for no reason, creating everything and then a bunch of everything magically rearranged itself for no reason whatsoever into self-replicating bits which then turned into dinosaurs.
- Makes perfect sense.

No! That's not what the vast reaches of the glory of God on display in the universe are saying!

They are saying, 'A GREAT POWER IS BEHIND THIS.'

2. God's divine nature

a. 'Godhead' KJV

b. "'Divinity' in the sense that something is θεῖον, or has the quality of the divine; that which shows God to be God, and gives Him the right to worship."⁵

In other words, the heavens are saying this:

- 'A GREAT POWER IS BEHIND THIS – AND THAT POWER IS GOD – AND GOD DESERVES TO BE WORSHIPPED.'

The heavens say this without a word – the wordless word...

III. Human accountability to the wordless word (Rm 1.20b)

A. The apostle says the Wordless Word makes mankind without excuse

B. Why?

1. Instead of worship, wickedness

2. Instead of giving God glory, men give glory to other things

a. To beasts

b. To the sun and moon and stars – the objects in the heavens who declare the glory of God – but are not God in themselves

"The ancients were tempted to 'kiss their hand' to sun and moon and the host of heaven ...; the moderns to explain them away as fortuitous, in one mood, or to revert to astrology in another."⁶

c. Ultimately, men give honour and glory, not to God, but to self

⁵ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., 3:123 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976).

⁶ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 97.

Conclusion:

The Wordless Word of God's communication to man calls on men to worship God...

But it is not a word that can direct men beyond that – in fact, it is a word that can only condemn...

Man needs more in order to be rightly related to God.

Man needs another word from God.

But from this word, the Wordless Word, let us say this:

You, every one of you, are called into account before the God who made you.

Have you yielded your life to Him?