

IS NATURE GOD?

As you read this study, I encourage you to study the corresponding scriptures for yourself to develop a personal, confident understanding of biblical truth. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Study like the Bereans, who listened to Paul but did not take his word for it. They studied the scriptures for themselves so they would know for sure.

Acts 17:11 “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” I ask that you do the same with this study. Please pray before you begin.

What the Bible says

The Laws of Nature

In dwelling upon the laws of matter and the laws of nature, many lose sight of, if they do not deny, the continual and direct agency of God. They convey the idea that nature acts independently of God, having in and of itself its own limits and its own powers wherewith to work. In their minds there is a marked distinction between the natural and the supernatural. The natural is ascribed to ordinary causes, unconnected with the power of God. Vital power is attributed to matter, and nature is made a deity. It is supposed that matter is placed in certain relations and left to act from fixed laws with which God Himself cannot interfere; that nature is endowed with certain properties and placed subject to laws, and is then left to itself to obey these laws and perform the work originally commanded.

This is false science; nothing in the word of God sustains it. God does not annul His laws, but He is continually working through them, using them as His instruments. They are not self-working. God is perpetually at work in nature. She is His servant, directed as He pleases. Nature, in her work, testifies to the intelligent presence and active agency of a Being who moves in all His works according to His will. It is not by an original power inherent in nature that year by year the earth yields its bounties and continues its march around the sun. The hand of infinite power is perpetually at work guiding this planet. It is God's power momentarily exercised that keeps it in position in its rotation.

The God of heaven is constantly at work. It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. Every drop of rain or flake of snow,

every spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing is too small for His attention.

The mechanism of the human body cannot be fully understood; it presents mysteries that baffle the most intelligent. It is not as the Laws of Nature result of a mechanism, which, once set in motion, continues its work, that the pulse beats and breath follows breath. In God we live, move, and have our being. Every breath, every throb of the heart, is a continual evidence of the power of an ever-present God.

It is God that causes the sun to rise in the heavens. He opens the windows of heaven and gives rain. He makes the grass grow on the mountains. "He gives snow like wool: He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes." "When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; ... He makes lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures." Psalm 147:16; Jeremiah 10:13.

The Lord is constantly employed in upholding and using as His servants the things that He has made. Said Christ: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." John 5:17. Mysteries of Divine Power. Men of the greatest intellect cannot understand the mysteries of Jehovah as revealed in nature. Divine inspiration asks many questions which the most profound scholar cannot answer. These questions were not asked that we might answer them, but to call our attention to the deep mysteries of God and to teach us that our wisdom is limited; that in the surroundings of our daily life there are many things beyond the comprehension of finite minds; that the judgment and purposes of God are past finding out. His wisdom is unsearchable.

Skeptics refuse to believe in God because with their finite minds they cannot comprehend the infinite power by which He reveals Himself to men. But God is to be acknowledged more from what He does not reveal of Himself than from that which is open to our limited comprehension. In both divine revelation and nature, God has given men mysteries to command their faith. This must be so. We may be ever searching, ever inquiring, ever learning, and yet there is an infinity beyond.

The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will go on throughout eternity, ever progressing, never completed. Day by day the wonderful works of God, the evidences of His miraculous power in creating and sustaining the universe, will open before the mind in new beauty. In the light that shines from the throne, mysteries will disappear, and the soul will be filled with astonishment at the simplicity of the things that were never before comprehended.

A Personal God

The mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things is not, as some men of science represent, merely an all-pervading principle, an actuating energy. God is a spirit; yet He is a personal being, for man was made in His image.

Nature Is Not God

God's handiwork in nature is not God Himself in nature. The things of nature are an expression of God's character; by them we may understand His love, His power, and His glory; but we are not to regard nature as God. The artistic skill of human beings produces very beautiful artistry, things that delight the eye, and these things give us something of the idea of the designer; but the thing made is not the man. It is not the work, but the workman, that is counted worthy of honor. So, while nature is an expression of God's thought, it is not nature but the God of nature that is to be exalted. ...

A Personal God Created Man

In the creation of man, the agency of a personal God was manifest. When God made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, breathing, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were put in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the perceptions of the mind—all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Jesus Christ, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power.

Our substance was not hid from Him when He made us in secret. His eyes saw our substance, yet being imperfect; and in His book all our members were written, when as yet there were none of them. Above all lower orders of being, God designed that man, the crowning work of His creation, should express His thought and reveal His glory. But man is not to exalt himself as God. ...

God Revealed in Christ

As a personal being, God has revealed Himself in His Son. Jesus, the outshining of the Father's glory, "and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3), was on earth found in fashion as a man. As a personal Savior He came to the world. As a personal Savior He ascended on high. As a personal Savior He intercedes in the heavenly courts. Before the throne of God, on our behalf, ministers "One like unto the Son of Man." Revelation 1:13.

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. No man has seen God at any time except as He is revealed through Christ. "My Father and I are one," Christ declared. "No man knows the Son, but the Father; neither does any man know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." John 10:30; Matthew 11:27. Christ came to teach people what God wants them to know. In the heavens above, in the earth, in the broad waters of the ocean, we see the handiwork of God. All created things testify to His power, His wisdom, His love. But from the stars, the ocean, or the cataract, we cannot learn of the personality of God as revealed in Christ.

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. Had God desired to be represented as dwelling personally in the things of nature,—in the flower, the tree, the spire of grass,—would not Christ have spoken of this to His disciples when He was on the earth? But never in the teaching of Christ is God thus spoken of.

Christ and the apostles taught clearly the truth of the existence of a personal God. Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener. Had God thought us in need of revelations other than those made through Christ and in His written word, He would have given them—Christ's Revelation of God to the Disciples. Let us study the words that Christ spoke in the upper chamber on the night before His crucifixion. He was nearing His hour of trial, and He sought to comfort His disciples, who were to be so severely tempted and tried.

“Let not your heart be troubled,” He said; “ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ...” “Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. ...” “Lord, show us the Father,” said Philip, “and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.” John 14:1-10.

The disciples did not yet understand Christ's words concerning His relation to God. Much of His teaching was still dark to them. They had asked many questions that revealed their ignorance of God's relation to them and to their present and future interests. Christ desired them to have a clearer, more distinct knowledge of God. “These things have I spoken unto you in parables,” He said; “but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.” (John 16:25), margin.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, they understood the truths Christ had spoken in parables. The teachings that had been mysteries to them were made clear. The understanding that came to them with the outpouring of the Spirit made them ashamed of their fanciful theories. Their suppositions and interpretations were foolishness when compared with the knowledge of heavenly things which they now received. The Spirit led them, and light shone into their once-darkened understanding.

But the disciples had not yet received the complete fulfillment of Christ's promise. They received all the knowledge of God that they could bear, but the complete fulfillment of the promise that Christ would show them plainly of the Father was yet to come. Thus it is today. Our knowledge of God is partial and imperfect. When the conflict is ended, and the Man Christ Jesus acknowledges before the Father His faithful workers, who, in a world of sin, have borne true witness for Him, they will understand clearly what now are mysteries to them.

Christ took His glorified humanity with Him to the heavenly courts. To those who receive Him, He gives power to become the sons of God, that at last God may receive them as His, to dwell with Him throughout eternity. If, during this life, they are loyal to God, they will at last "see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." Revelation 22:4. And what is the happiness of heaven but to see God? What greater joy could come to the sinner saved by the grace of Christ than to look upon the face of God and know Him as Father?

Testimony of Scripture

The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?

And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?" Hebrews 1:1-5. God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son. Jesus said to the Jews: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. ... The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." John 5:17-20.

Here again is brought to view the personality of the Father and the Son, showing the unity that exists between them. This unity is expressed also in the seventeenth chapter of John, in the prayer of Christ for His disciples: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." John 17:20-23.

Wonderful statement! The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one. ...

His Providential Care

Our God has heaven and earth at His command, and He knows just what we need. We can see only a little way before us; “but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Hebrews 4:13. Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best.

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father’s notice. Satan’s hatred against God leads him to delight in destroying even the dumb creatures. Only through God’s protective care are the birds preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Matthew 10:31