

***“Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy —
The Great Transition, The Glorious Sweep of God’s Abundant Grace — Part 15
The Second Missionary Journey: Paul in Athens, Pagan Capitol of the Gentiles —
Part 3”***

Review:

- ***When Paul spoke before the Athenian High Court after the philosophers had compelled him there, the time had come to speak to the hearts of these idolaters. After acclaiming that he had seen a statue to “the unknown god”, he announced that he would now reveal to them the true God, the one that could indeed be known. As you will recall, he continued in this fashion:***

Acts 17:24-31

***24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;
25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;
26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; [And they all knew that Athens had had her day!]
27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:
28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. [“Aratus, who wrote about 200 years before. Also Cleanthes, in his ‘Hymn to Jupiter.’”]
29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.
30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:
31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.***

- ***Therefore, he concluded, the true God shares nothing in common with an idol made by human hands. So the question remains: Whether to honor or***

not the risen judge, the one who created all things and who sustains the creation by his mighty hand so evidently seen in all that is made.

- ***So the Lord God had appointed a day of judgment and that fact remained. But at this Paul's witness ended that day on Mar's Hill. Grace through Christ's finished sacrifice was never mentioned and from the record here Paul did not preach therefore the full gospel of grace though the resurrection of our Lord was preached as we have seen. Later he would say more to those that followed after him and some would be saved, two whose names are mentioned there. Paul hoped of course that this audience of philosophers would hear enough to draw them to follow him for more, if they would.***

Our Outline Today: "The Second Missionary Journey: Paul in Athens, Pagan Capitol of the Gentiles – Part 3"

- ***God's Witness Dispensationally Considered – In the Creation Itself***
- ***God's Witness Dispensationally Considered – Through His Servants***
- ***God's Witness Dispensationally Considered – Its Essence and Sufficiency***

I. God's Witness Dispensationally Considered – In the Creation Itself:

- ***This emphasis on the testimony of creation is common to Paul's other witnesses to the Gentiles. We could spend some time looking at all these Biblical references. But instead let's just select a few. We begin where we were several studies back in chapter 14 of the Acts, where Paul preached in Lystra beginning with his reminder of what everyone there already knew (if they were honest, that is), that all were accountable before Almighty God, the Creator: :***

Acts 14:11-12, 15-18

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

...

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. *[Remember Rom. 2:4: "Rom 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"]*

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

- *That was our main point in our last study. Paul's speech before the Areopagus that day as recorded in the book of Acts was based predominantly on the testimony of God in the creation. He had just announced that our Lord Jesus Christ was gloriously raised from the dead and that he was therefore proven to be the expected coming Judge of all mankind. But unfortunately he was shut down here as he just had been previously in Lystra before he could transition to the gospel itself that he so loved to share with all.*
- *Now we proceed to see much further Biblical proof as to how the Lord God the Creator of all things had revealed himself to his creation. For this we consider the best for all witnesses, the man Job, who lived probably in parallel with the sons of Jacob and who may in fact be the son of Issachar as Gen. 46:13 indicates:*

Job 9:2-10

2 I know *it is* so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?

3 If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.

4 *He is* wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened *himself* against him, and hath prospered?

5 Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger.

6 Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble.

7 Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars.

8 Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.

9 Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.

10 Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number. *[This presumes that Job already knew all of this!]*

Job 38:31-33 [Again, this presumes that Job already knew this well!]

31 Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?

32 Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?

33 Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?

- ***Here we see something of the so-called Zodiac [the Mazzaroth in verse 32], although the understanding of that from both ancient and modern history is clouded by the satanically inspired religious system called astrology. Of course satan took every opportunity to pervert the witness of God in the heavens of his creative, sustaining, and redemptive powers and plan.***
- ***Job takes us by necessity back further in God's word to the very beginning, back to Genesis 1. For if Job knew all about God through his creation with its clear testimony concerning its creator, what did Adam and his descendants know? Even more perhaps?***

[READ] Gen. 1:14-19

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

- ***Four purposes in this creation are seen here:***
 - ***Signs — So there was meaning and truth there!***
 - ***Seasons (and more, for there are longer cycles)***
 - ***Days***
 - ***Nights***
 - ***Years***

- *So the Lord God, the Creator, had revealed himself in his creation! And there may be much more to this than we see at first glance. We shall see!*

II. God's Witness Dispensationally Considered — Through His Servants:

- *Through his servants ... Now who were his servants? That is easy to answer when we think of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets, for much is written in God's word considering this great question of "what did they know ... ?" But what about pre-flood, the antediluvian patriarchs, so-called? What did they know? Little is written of them except in Genesis (see though concerning Enoch in Jude 14-15 for another reference and Hebrews 11:5!!)*
- *But, beginning with Adam and continuing with his son Seth, who took the place in the line of patriarchs of his murdered brother Abel, and going on down generation by generation of the anti-diluvian patriarchs like Enoch and others, and then even further to Noah then to Job and beyond, what did these men of great wisdom and knowledge know? They lived before the flood in some cases nearly a thousand years, so many generations were concurrently alive and sharing in their accumulated knowledge.*
- *Looking forward now in God's word, after the flood, we can ask the questions again, what did those patriarchs know of God? What about those that followed Job, like David? What did David know? Well, he knew a lot and so did the Jews as well as David himself wrote in the Psalms.*

[READ] Ps. 8:1-4

1 To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

This is clearly a Messianic Psalm and points forward to Messiah's coming and reign. But we see here that there is much in the

creation itself that has meaning. For we read here that they are signs, not just found somewhere or other by all or some or perhaps only scientists with their advanced tools of observation.

- ***This surely is for all mankind for this revelation of God's handiwork is there in his creation to be known by all, not only to the Jews to whom David is writing here in the Psalms. He is writing about it to the Jews but the presence of this truth in the creation itself is clearly there for all to know, even to those that have no knowledge of this Psalm. Really, we may ask, how can this be?***
- ***And now we come to the greatest section of God's word that addresses this in Ps. 19 where these questions are answered:***

[READ] Ps. 19:1-6 [The gospel in the stars]

1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. 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. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

- ***This passage has captured the attention of many commentators down thought the years ...***
 - ***Verse 1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork": This is so wonderful indeed, isn't it? There is so much more here than we might have thought. There are many interpretations but what David is doing is opening a little the curtain that our fallen natures have placed between us and that great truth God has provided — that some light may come into this heart of darkness all share from father Adam. The very glory of God is "declared" or "announced" in his creation itself!***
 - ***Verse 2: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge": These are special words here, "speech",***

knowledge". But he is writing of what we see in the heavens here!

- ***Verse 3: "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard": Again, the words here continue — "speech", "language", "voice" ... There is no place on earth when those truths are not revealed. That is the meaning here.***
- ***Verse 4: "Their line" = "Their writing" (Is. 28:13); "their words to the end of the world":***

Is. 28:13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

- ***Much more could be said about the witness in Creation still valid today, though the revelation there is greatly diminished today.***
- ***In the next verses the author refers specifically to the Law given to Moses. This is the revelation of God that was written on stone and given specifically to his people Israel. That Law was "added" as Paul mentions in Gal. 3, added to what though is a good question. Well, it was added to the previous dispensational plan of God already revealed which was added to that given before.***

We could go back to Abraham therefore or even to Noah or before that as well, for they were the administrators of the dispensations of conscience (the pre-flood patriarchs), human government (Noah), and promise (Abraham). But we will look at Paul now, the administrator of the dispensation of the grace of God for Paul makes it so clear as to the main point of our study here, that each dispensational plan adds (or subtracts) from the revelation of God to man that is in effect for that specific time. All dispensations need to be respected, but not all programs obeyed. Paul makes that clear in Galatians 3:

[READ] Gal. 3:19-20

19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

- *We do not have the time today to look back to the times of Noah or Abraham or Jacob to see if there is Biblical evidence that God's witness in the creation was supplemented by additional revelation. But we know that it was and the example of Moses and the Law is clear thorough Paul's teaching. We also know that what was added may be removed (also known through Paul's teaching) as God raises up his spokesmen to deliver his message including the changing of the "guard", as it were, and also the message of salvation.*
- *But one thing remains constant no matter what the dispensational program may be:*

III. God's Witness Dispensationally Considered – Its Essence and Sufficiency::

- *So Psalm 19 portion of God's word is a critical section for our understanding as it gives the basis for holding all accountable before a holy and sovereign creator, God Almighty. The apostle Paul makes a significant reference to it in Romans for that reason and draws an "application" :*

[READ] Rom. 10:17-18

***17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.***

- *Again, Paul is our teacher, he is our interpreter of scripture. Here he quotes from Ps. 19:4 appropriately, since his point is that Israel had no excuse before the Creator, before Almighty God. So it is even more difficult to comprehend that they still refuse the truth of the gospel even though Christ is risen indeed. It is just as Christ himself said:*

[READ] Luke 16:29-31

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

- *Rejecting the truth presented is the response of so many. But in every dispensational context faith is always essential, although its*

object may change with something added or something removed as the dispensational plan of God advances. Paul illustrates that here in Romans 10 by referring back to that essential Psalm #19. He reasserts there the accountability of all sinners to their creator as the witness in the creation clearly reveals. But he adds the necessity to believe the gospel of God's grace.

[READ Again] Rom. 1:16-20

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Conclusions:

- ***Paul reminds us of the bottom line — that we take God at his word believing what he has revealed through whatever means he has used, beginning with his handiwork, the creation itself and then, his glorious gospel or good news of his grace through the Lord Jesus. Amen.***
- ***For the gospel is the power of God and it is sufficient for our salvation. So all are “Without excuse!” But the ones believing God regarding his son and his full payment for our sins shall be saved. Again, amen.***