



Does Nature Speak?

Psalm 19:1-6

The Psalms in General

- ❑ The psalms¹ are poetry,² apparently written over a period of more than 800 years.³
- ❑ Various people wrote the psalms, with 73 of the 150 psalms attributed to David.
- ❑ In the Old Testament period, the psalms were used for public and private worship. They are sometimes called “the Hymnbook of the Old Testament.”
- ❑ While the psalms are Old Testament poetry, they effectively communicate truths about God and humanity; and point to the good news of Jesus Christ revealed in the New Testament.

The Heavens Speak

- ❑ Psalm 19 is attributed to David, Israel’s great king. Read Psalm 19:1-6.⁴
 1. The heavens “declare,” “proclaim,” and “pour forth speech.” According to this psalm, what do the heavens say?⁵

📖 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (*Genesis 1:1*).

2. In what ways do the heavens speak?⁶

3. To whom do the heavens speak? Who can hear them? (*19:4a*)



📖 “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (*Romans 1:20, NIV*).

¹ The term ‘psalm’ is derived from the Greek *psalmos*, which is the word used by the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *mizmor*, which means ‘a composition/song performed to musical accompaniment.’ In the Hebrew Bible, the common designation was *Tehillim* (praises). Actually, the psalms are more varied than these descriptions.

² Hebrew poetry does not fit the conventions of western poetry (esp. meter), but is often characterized by parallelism (e.g. affirming, opposing, or advancing parallelism). Like other poetry, images are used to grab the attention and stimulate the imagination; and language is carefully chosen and arranged to arouse the emotions and touch the soul.

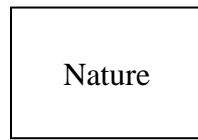
³ Apparently spanning from Moses (Psalm 90) to the days of Judah’s exile in Babylon (Psalm 137).

⁴ ‘heavens’ (*shamayim*) denotes all that is above the earth, including the realm in which the sun, moon and stars are located. ‘Skies’ (*raqia*) is a parallel term. Though these terms exclude the earth, they represent the universe of which earth is a part. It is fair to say that the whole universe (including the earth) declares the glory of God.

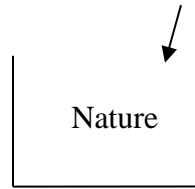
⁵ They tell us about the greatness of God, because God made the universe. The universe is so vast, complex and beautiful; its creator must be infinitely great. Cosmic nature proclaims God’s ‘glory’ (*kabod*) – the awesome and innate essence of God. (In fact, God’s glory is also revealed through the smallest components of nature.) If we are teachable, we will see that the heavens inform us (v. 2b), giving us an awareness and knowledge of God as creator.

⁶ Not by audible words. (The NIV and ESV translations are preferred over the NIV84.) However, nature still reveals something about God – not only the greatness of God, but the existence of God. The more we study nature, the more we see the complexity, design and intelligence in nature, which provides powerful evidence for the existence of an intelligent Designer/Creator.

4. If nature clearly “speaks” about God, why do many people *not* “hear” it?⁷



Naturalism/Materialism
Nature in a closed box



Supernaturalism
Nature in an open system, open to God

The Scientists Speak

- ❑ Many people will listen more to a scientist than a theologian. However, many scientists agree that nature provides strong evidence for the existence of God.⁸

The Sun Runs

- ❑ In verses 4b-6, one part of the heavens (the sun) is personified for poetic effect. The sun is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, and a champion rejoicing to run his course across the skies. In any case, the one true God is the sun’s creator and ruler.⁹

Our Response

- ❑ Read Psalm 95:3-7.¹⁰ The creation belongs to the Creator, and he is its ruler. Our response should be to “bow down in worship before the LORD our Maker.”

5. Do you “hear” nature (God’s natural creation) speak to you? If so, in what ways? Share from your personal experience.

Reflection/Application

- What does nature say to you? Do you disagree that it declares the glory of God? Why? If you do not believe in a Creator, seek to know why many intelligent people *do* believe in God.
- Christians, do the heavens make *you* want to praise God? Do you appreciate the wonder and beauty of God’s creation? Develop habits of reflecting on God’s creation and praising him.

⁷ Some people accept the existence of God but do not ‘hear’ or see clearly due to a broken relationship with God. For many, the fundamental issue is ‘worldview’ – ‘the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world.’ While the evidence of God’s existence is clear to the theist, a person with a naturalistic worldview does not see it, because the supernatural is ruled out beforehand. Worldview is largely shaped by one’s culture, subculture and upbringing, and may be formed with little critical thought. It is good to critically examine our worldviews.

⁸ There is a great amount of books, articles, and presentations on this subject. For example, consider the videos *The Privileged Planet* and *Unlocking the Mystery of Life* in the ICF library. Jay has numerous books, resources, and links concerning the relationship between science and faith. See “Can a Scientist Believe in God?” on the ICF website.

⁹ Note that the sun is personified, not deified. The surrounding pagan cultures viewed the sun and other heavenly bodies as gods. However, the Bible makes it clear that the heavenly bodies are objects made by the one true God.

¹⁰ This psalm speaks to those who are ‘the people of [God’s] pasture’ (95:7) – that is, those who have a relationship with him. However, the proper response for *all* people is to bow down and worship the Creator (Philippians 3:9-11). And to truly worship the Creator is to ‘worship in spirit and truth’ – that is, in Jesus Christ (John 4:24; 1:1-5).