

The Created World

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One of the most well known and important verses of the Bible is set forth in the very first Book of the Old Testament:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1, NIV).

Though this verse is often thought to be out of date by today's modern secular world, in actuality it sets forth the foundation for understanding life and for understanding mankind's relationship to his creator, God. In short, the central and foundational truth for both understanding the Bible and for living life successfully is to know that there is a personal and sovereign God who created the heavens and earth, along with all its inhabitants, with a godly and loving purpose in mind.

To ignore this central truth of life is to doom oneself and one's society to a meaningless existence with all the consequences that inevitably result from such a point of view. In fact, the Books of Psalms and Proverbs are clear in their characterization of those who reject this central truth set forth in Genesis 1:1:

The fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God.' (Psalms 14:1)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Prov. 1:7)

According to the Bible, all true life is built on belief in the one true God of the Bible and all meaning in life is derived from a reverence for that God. In short, apart from a knowledge and reverence for the one God of the Bible a person is destined for a life of confusion, discontentment, and ultimate destruction. It would, therefore, be the height of foolishness to choose any other path than to live one's life in a proper faith relationship with God.

Since the created world itself testifies to God's "eternal power and divine nature" (Rom. 1:19-20), the most "rational" of all thinking is to build and frame one's life on faith in God and to seek to know

and live for him. The apostle Paul set forth this plain and simple truth in his testimony to the "very religious" - yet skeptical - citizens of ancient Athens in Acts 17.

"Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'To an Unknown God.' Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone - an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

There are several interesting points in Paul's argument to the ancient Athenians that are still very relevant for us today. As Christian believers we live in the midst of a world dominated by pagan religious belief on the one hand, or by evolutionary and scientific naturalistic philosophy - i.e., modernism - on the other. Anyone who has had to deal with the politically and religiously "correct" idea that "all religions of the world are good and equal"; or on the other hand, the so-called rationalistic idea that "there is no God, and the world evolved out of nothing,"

should take note of what Paul had to say on these subjects.

First, from Paul's perspective all religions of the world not built on the knowledge and reverence for the one true God are perversions of the truth and lead to a downward spiral of idolatry, spiritual blindness, sin, and finally, destruction. These truths are not only plainly evident in the history of the world they all stare us the face at the beginning of the 21st century. This understanding of the spiritual roots of the problems of the world – beginning with a refusal to acknowledge and live for the one true God – are repeated over and over in the Bible and are crystal clear from Paul's teaching as set forth in Romans chapter one:

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

“Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.” (Rom. 1:18-25).

Second, even apart from having a knowledge of the Scriptures a truly rational person should realize from God's created order that there *must* be a God and then, logically, he would *seek* to know that God in a personal way. Paul says that God has made this knowledge “plain” to mankind and failure to acknowledge this is willful “ignorance.” Those who go down any other path are simply “fools” – self-deluded and deceived - and are on the road to idolatry of self, of nature, of possessions, or, of other gods.

It is almost startling to see the simplicity with which Paul views this subject. He cuts right to the heart of the matter and allows for “no excuse” on the part of mankind. The knowledge of God is available for those who choose to acknowledge the “plain” truth that all of God's creation testifies to. God's creation demands that we “seek him” and, as Christ himself stated, “those who seek will find.” The Book of Ecclesiastes sums up these truths:

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” (Eccl. 12:13-14)