



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 19

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The title tells us both the author and the audience of the psalm; To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David
- Some believe that the Chief Musician is the Lord God Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1 Chronicles 6:33,16:5-7,25:6)
- There is nothing in the Psalm itself lead us to know when and where it was written
- Some scholars think that this Psalm consists of two distinct parts



Introduction

- The first part celebrates the revelation of the Power and Majesty of God in Nature, the universal and unceasing testimony of the heavens to their Creator (Psalm 19:1-6)
- The second part praises the Lord Jehovah and celebrates the moral beauty and power of His Law in its various elements and aspects (Psalm 19:7-14)
- Others, though, think the psalm is one inclusive unit
- This Psalm is included in the prayers of the First Hour (Prime) in the Agpeya to help us contemplate in God's creation at the beginning of the day



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6
- The Effect of the Word of God 19:7-11
- David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- God's amazing creation bears a testimony of Him as the Creator
- St. Paul says *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,"* (Romans 1:20)
- David is gazing at the sky, not meditating on a natural phenomenon, nor is he merely enjoying beauty
- But he has an immediate apprehension, an intuition of God and he sees that is revealing of God, bringing God before him

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- All creation is a revelation of God especially these visible heavens, so vast and spacious, splendor, order, mystery and richly adorned with stars
- They are the most impressive reflection of His greatness and majesty
- The *heavens* are plural for their variety according to what the Bible tells us, *"Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belongs to the Lord your God,"* Deuteronomy 10:14; *"To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which were of old!"* Psalm 68:33; *"When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep."* (Proverbs 8:27)

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- When we pray the Lord's prayer in Arabic, we say "Our Father who art in heavens"
- St. Paul revealed in 2 Corinthians 12:2 that he "was caught up to the third heaven"
- It is not just any glory that the heavens declare, but the *"glory of God,"*
- The testimony given by the heavens is a plain, unmistakable declaration
- It declares every moment of God's existence, power, wisdom and goodness

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- *The firmament* - The whole visible area
- It does not contain only to the heavenly bodies, but also light, rains, dews, etc.
- They plainly speak to be *His handiwork*, for they could not exist from eternity
- All succession and motion must have had a beginning; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction
- They could not be produced by a casual hit of atoms, therefore; they must have a Creator, who can be no other than an eternal mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- The witness of these heavenly is not conveyed by ordinary speech or words or voices
- It is without sound, without language; no articulate voice is to be heard
- Each day teaches us some new wisdom that is revealed in these various works of God
- The nights also are represented as giving information to each other
- They convey a kind of wonder that is impossible to express in mere words

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- The glory of God in the visible heavens is for all to see; it is communicated to all mankind, no matter what their *language*
- St. John Chrysostom says, "If you doubt God's care; ask earth and heaven; ask the sun and the moon; ask the senseless creatures and the plants; ask the rocks, the mountains, the hilltops and the sand dunes; ask the night and the day; for God's care is clearer than the sun and its sunbeams. Everywhere you go, ask the wilderness and the inhabited places, on earth and in the seas. Wherever you go, you can hear a verbal testimony of this tremendous care."

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- *Their line has gone out through all the earth*, Their significant actions or operations, are everywhere present
- And thereby they preach to all the nations the power and wisdom, the mercy and lovingkindness, of the Lord
- *their words to the end of the world*, A wider application is given to these words by St Paul in Romans 10:18 where he applies this as a prophecy relative to the universal spread of the Gospel of Christ
- All the inhabitants of the earth shall benefit by the Gospel of Christ, as they all benefit by the solar, lunar, and all-stars light

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- “The apostles’ voice reached the entire world, and their words to the farthest end.” St. Jerome
- St. Paul is saying, this testimony had gone out through all creation, all men are *without excuse* for rejecting the God who gave us such clear and beautiful evidence of His power and wisdom
- *He has set a tabernacle for the sun*, It may mean that David describes the natural sun as being placed in heavens
- The nighttime sky is like a dwelling place – a tent, a *tabernacle* – for *the sun*

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- The sun seems to be concealed as in a tent or tabernacle; to be as it were gone to bed, and at rest and in the morning, it rises happy and cheerful, and comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber, as is said in Psalm 19:5
- However, this is also to be understood, spiritually and mystically, of Christ the sun of righteousness, who has His tabernacle among His people, His church
- *Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*, This is a reference to the rising of the sun
- The sun is compared to a bridegroom in his ornaments, because of the glory and splendor of his rays

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- And to a giant or strong man running a race, because of the power of his light and heat
- *Its rising is from one end of heaven*, His course is constant from east to west, and thence to the east again
- The light of the sun spreads on every side from its source to the ends of heaven
- *And its circuit to the other end*; Penetrating even to the inmost substances of everything
- There is no part of the earth which does not, at one time or other, feel the comfort and benefit of its light and heat; and there is no creature which does not partake of its influence

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- St. Augustine referred this verse to Christ coming forth out of the Virgin's womb, where God was united to man's nature as a bridegroom to a bride
- The Lord Jesus, the heavenly Groom, is the Sun of Righteousness who shines, and the healing is in His wings (Malachi 4:2)
- The sun shines with its rays and sends its heat to grant life
- In this same way the Sun of Righteousness came to shine on His believers' souls, in the east and west, to grant them enlightenment and spiritual warmth, and an everlastingly renewed life

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- “Though the sun appeared in such a way, yet the believers appear even more gloriously. The sun shines to light the world with natural light; whereas they light the world in a different way, I mean they light it spiritually.” St. John Chrysostom
- *And rejoices like a strong man to run its race*, The joy and the strength point out to two aspects of the salvation work of the Lord Jesus
- He is glad as a bridegroom is, who offers His life shed for the sake of the entire world
- This tremendous intense joy is only the victory over the adversary and iniquity

The Creation Declares God's Glory 19:1-6



- He pursues the fight so that He leads His believers to a victorious life
- And He also equip us with the Spirit that give us authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and every hostile power of the enemy
- *And its circuit to the other end*, May also mean that to the west, where it sets which is expressive of the large scope the Gospel took in the times of the apostles
- Whereby the grace of God appeared to all men, shone out in a very glorious manner, and Christ became, what the sun is to the earth, the light of the world

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- Here David suddenly shifted from praising the God who reveals Himself in creation to praising the same God for revealing Himself in His word
- It is as if David said, “Creation tells us much about God, but His word tells us much more”
- The Word of God is greater revelation than nature because it tells us more about God and His love
- His Word declares our position as His children
- There are several titles of the word of God in verses 7-9, to understand the whole of divine revelation, teachings and promises

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- *The law of the LORD is perfect*, Whatsoever proceeds from God is perfect in its nature and free from all corruption and nothing is to be added to it nor taken from it
- *The Law*, The doctrine delivered to His church, whether by Moses, or by other prophets and holy men of God because the word *law* is not only given to the ten commandments, or the moral law, as Romans 2:23-29; but also to the whole word of God, as Psalm 1:2; Psalm 119:70; Jeremiah 8:8
- *The Law " itself is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good"* (Romans 7:12)

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- His Word reveals the nature and will of God, and the whole duty of man, what he is to believe and practice, and whatsoever is necessary to his present and eternal joy
- Whereas the creation, although it did declare so much of God as left all men without excuse, yet did not fully manifest the will of God, nor bring men to eternal salvation
- *converting the soul*, Making the man to be returned or restored to the place from which sin had cast him
- Meaning restoring from disorder and decay (Psalm 80:19), from sorrow and affliction (Ruth 4:15), and from death (1 Kings 17:21,22)

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- *The Law*, by instructing men, restores them from moral blindness to the light and as a further consequence restores them from sin to righteousness
- There is power in the reading and hearing and studying of the word of God that goes beyond intellectual benefit; it actually changes for the better
- By studying the law, we all know that we are guilty of sin and deserve to die; we must repent of our sin and cry out for a Savior
- We would not realize we needed a Savior, if we were not made aware that we are sinners

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- *The testimony of the LORD*, The law regarded as bearing witness to God's will, and man's duty (Exodus 25:16,25:21)
- It is sure, not variable or uncertain, (Psalm 93:5,111:7)
- We are confident on what we rely upon, will not deceive us
- It is a sure discovery of the divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty
- Because it is so sure and certain, it does the work of *making wise the simple*
- Many people of simple education or upbringing have tremendous wisdom unto life and godliness because they study and trust the *sure* word of the Lord

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- *the simple*, It is also a character mentioned in Proverbs 1:4
- God's Word enlightens men moral judgment
- He needs to be made wise, Psalm 119:130; 2 Timothy 3:15
- The Scriptures makes men wise in the knowledge of Gospel doctrines
- St. Augustine believes that this verse is about Christ; he says, "The law of the Lord, therefore, is Himself who came to fulfil the law, not to destroy it; an undefiled law, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," not oppressing souls with the yoke of bondage, but converting them to imitate Him in liberty."

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- God's word and the commands contained within are *right*
- They are *right* because it is the revelation of a God who is holy, true, and always *right*
- *The statutes of the LORD*, Are equal, just, proper
- They are not merely appointed, or are forced by authority, but they are in themselves equitable and just
- The one who knows the word of God and the God of the word *rejoices* in this that they are equitable and just
- He finds joy, actual pleasure in the truth of God and relationship with God revealed in His word

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- His commandments are not felt as stern, but as gracious counsels of what God desires man to do for his own good
- Because God's Word comes from a God who is Himself *pure* and holy, the word itself is *pure*
- It is itself purified from all contaminant or impurity, and is purifying to those that receive and accept it
- *enlightening the eyes*, The reference here is undoubtedly to the mind or soul as being enlightened by the truth of God; enlightening the sight of the inner man

The Effect of the Word of God 19:7-11



- *The fear of the Lord*, True religion and godliness prescribed in the Word, reigning in the heart, and practiced in the life *is clean*, and will make us clean (John 15:3)
- It will cleanse our way, Psalm 119:9
- And *enduring forever*, Constant and unchangeable and can never be abolished
- Here David called the word of God *The fear of the LORD*
- St. Clement the Alexandrian thinks fear keeps us from committing sin

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- As for love, it motivates us to practice righteousness spontaneously, as children who love their holy and righteous Father
- One who reads and hears and studies the word of God, meeting Him in His word, will have an appropriate appreciation of God's awe and majesty – *The fear of the LORD*

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- His laws, frequently called His *judgments*, because they are the declarations of His righteous will
- And, as it were, His judicial sentence, by which He expects that men should govern themselves, and by which He will judge them at the last day
- *righteous altogether*, They are, without exception, just
- In verse 9 David summarized this beautiful chain of six jewels, each describing some aspect of the word of God
- He declared that there is nothing false or unrighteous in His word

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- Lest fear is misunderstood, and someone might think God's Word provokes fear in the soul that destroys any joy, or any commitment that makes the soul lose the feeling of human freedom, the psalmist thus pointed out the believer's eagerness for the Word
- He appreciates the Word highly treasured the commandments of God, for he says, *More to be desired are they than gold*
- King David was a very wealthy man, yet he is rarely known for his riches
- He is much more known for his great heart toward God

The Effect of the Word of God 19:7-11



- God's Law is a far greater good to man, and therefore far more to be desired, than any amount of riches
- If it weren't enough to say that God's word should be more desirable than *gold*, David elaborated by saying, *Yea, than much fine gold*
- For King David, God's word was not only to be held in greater honor and value than material wealth, but also greater than experiences of the senses
- *Honey* is sweet and pleasant to eat, but God's word is *sweeter* still

The Effect of the Word of God

19:7-11



- *the honeycomb*, Honey is sweet; but honey just out of the comb has a sweetness, richness and flavor, far beyond what the honey has
- The word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns us of the responsibility we are to do and the dangers we are to avoid
- God's word gives instruction that wealth or pleasures do not give
- It warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way

The Effect of the Word of God 19:7-11



- *And in keeping them there is great reward*, Either as the result of keeping them, or in the act of keeping them
- Obedience becomes its own reward, because we live the way God wants us and designed us to live
- Every man that observes them is wise, holy, and happy
- All Christian' experience confirms this truth



David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

- In the previous verse David reflected on the warnings found in the word of God, and in the great reward found in obeying God's word
- This made him reflect on the times and ways he had ignored the warnings and not kept the word
- A consideration of the Law cannot but raise the thought of transgression
- Man "*had not known sin but by the Law*" (Romans 7:7), and he cannot contemplate the Law without being reminded of possible disobedience to it



David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

- David's thoughts are led in this direction, and he ends with an earnest prayer against *secret faults*
- St. Augustine comments on verse 12 by saying, “But what sort of sweetness can there be in sins, where there is no understanding? For who can understand sins, which close the very eye, to which truth is pleasant, to which the judgments of God are desirable and sweet? yea, as darkness closes the eye, so do sins the mind, and suffer it not to see either the light, or itself.”
- David is also praying for divine grace when it comes to his willful, intentional, deliberate sins



David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

- *from presumptuous sins*, Some understand these words as representation of people
- The Septuagint interpret it "from strangers"
- Those who are strangers to God and godliness
- Meaning to keep him from all conversation with them in things sinful, or from others' sins
- From having a fellowship with them and being a partaker of them, lest their punishments should be shared in
- Others, as the Targum, interpret it "from proud men", who are boastful and proud of themselves



David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

- Lest he should be so corrupted and drawn aside by them
- But rather the words are to be understood of sins willfully, rebellious, and intentionally committed
- And the petition is that these may be committed by good men, if left to themselves
- And that they would rush into them, were they not protected and kept back and restrained by the powerful grace of God
- And it also supposes that the saints cannot keep themselves; that God only can keep them from evil



David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

- *Let them not have dominion over me*, David is praying that if he be at any time tempted to any such sins, let them not prevail over him
- And if he does fall into them, he is asking God to let him speedily rise again, and not willingly give up himself to the habitual and normal practice of them
- His prayer was rightly placed; his love of God's word and his dependence upon God in prayer would help him stay free from the dominion of enslaving sin



David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

- David knew that when sin was addressed in his life – dealing both with inward, secret sin *and* outward, *presumptuous*, enslaving sin – then he could be *blameless* and *innocent of great transgression*
- *great transgression*, Some, like St. Augustine, believe it is the sin of pride, others of apostasy
- Others think it is the sin against the Holy Spirit
- And the sense is, that he should be cleared and freed of a multitude of transgressions he had been guilty of
- Or be preserved from much sin, which otherwise he should have fallen into



David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

- David closed this glorious psalm with a humble surrender of his mouth and heart to God
- Having prayed that God would keep him from sinful actions, he now prays that God would govern and sanctify his words and thoughts
- He knew that real godliness was not only a matter of what a man did, but also of what he said and thought in his heart
- King David looked to the Lord God to be his strength and redemption
- He knew that he needed a *Redeemer*, and that the faithful God would rescue him



David Prays for Grace 19:12-14

- *my Redeemer*, This expression refers to Christ, to whom alone this word belongs
- Through His blood and Spirit alone did, could David expect the pardon and grace for which he here prays
- No prayer can be acceptable before God which is not offered up in His strength; through Him who took our nature upon Him, that He might redeem us unto God



Discussion

- Why would the fact that so many stars exist, make us reverence God?
- Why are all nations without excuse when they deny the existence of God?
- How is God revealed through Scripture? What has He told man about Himself through the written word? Why is nature alone not enough to help man fully understand God?



Discussion

- How are the scriptures described in verse 7-11?
- David says that the Word of God can lead to blessing in our life when we follow it. What two things does he specifically say the Word of God will do for man? Psalm 19:11.
- The psalmist describes how encounter with God through nature and the Scriptures has affected him in verse 12-14. How has encountering God changed him? To which of these can you most relate?



Discussion

- Why does David refer to God as his Rock in 19:14?
- Compare Psalm 19:14 with Romans 12:1-2. Both use the language of making a sacrifice (“acceptable”) to describe the life we live. How is your life a “sacrifice” to God? What makes it acceptable or unacceptable