

# The Laws of Nature and Nature's God

By Rev. Phillip D. Mosher © 2011

**Psalm 19** (NASB)<sup>a</sup> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.  
<sup>2</sup> Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words;  
Their voice is not heard.  
<sup>4</sup> Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their utterances to the end of the world.  
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,  
<sup>5</sup> Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;  
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.  
<sup>6</sup> Its rising is from one end of the heavens,  
And its circuit to the other end of them;  
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.  
  
<sup>7</sup> The law<sup>b</sup> of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;  
The testimony<sup>c</sup> of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.  
<sup>8</sup> The precepts<sup>d</sup> of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment<sup>e</sup> of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.  
  
<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments<sup>f</sup> of the LORD are true;  
they are righteous altogether.  
<sup>10</sup> They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.  
<sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;  
In keeping them there is great reward.  
  
<sup>12</sup> Who can discern *his* errors?  
Acquit me of hidden *faults*.  
<sup>13</sup> Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*;  
Let them not rule over me;  
Then I will be blameless,  
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.  
<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
Be acceptable in Your sight,  
O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

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<sup>a</sup> The New American Standard Bible, 1995 ed. This translation is used unless otherwise noted.

<sup>b</sup> תּוֹרָה (*tōrah*), instruction, direction, law, **Torah**, the five books of Moses

<sup>c</sup> עֵדוּת (*'ēdūt*), testimony, witness

<sup>d</sup> פְּקוּדִים (*piqqûdîm*), the exercise oversight over a subordinate

<sup>e</sup> מִצְוָה (*mišwâ*), commandment

<sup>f</sup> מִשְׁפָּט (*mišpāt*), justice, ordinance (speaks of God's rule over us, thus "rulings" in CJB-v10)

**Psalm 19 (CJB)**<sup>g</sup> In this translation “*ADONAI*” is the Hebrew for Lord, used for Jehovah.

<sup>1</sup> For the leader. A psalm of David:

<sup>2</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God,  
the dome of the sky speaks the work of his hands.

<sup>3</sup> Every day it utters speech, every night it reveals knowledge.

<sup>4</sup> Without speech, without a word, without their voices being heard,

<sup>5</sup> their line goes out through all the earth  
and their words to the end of the world.

In them he places a tent for the sun,

<sup>6</sup> which comes out like a bridegroom from the bridal chamber,  
with delight like an athlete to run his race.

<sup>7</sup> It rises at one side of the sky,  
circles around to the other side,  
and nothing escapes its heat.

<sup>8</sup> The *Torah* of *ADONAI* is perfect, restoring the inner person.

The instruction of *ADONAI* is sure, making wise the thoughtless.

<sup>9</sup> The precepts of *ADONAI* are right, rejoicing the heart.

The *mitzvah* of *ADONAI* is pure, enlightening the eyes.

<sup>10</sup> The fear of *ADONAI* is clean, enduring forever.

The rulings of *ADONAI* are true,  
they are righteous altogether,

<sup>11</sup> more desirable than gold, than much fine gold,  
also sweeter than honey or drippings from the honeycomb.

<sup>12</sup> Through them your servant is warned;  
in obeying them there is great reward.

<sup>13</sup> Who can discern unintentional sins?

Cleanse me from hidden faults.

<sup>14</sup> Also keep your servant from presumptuous sins,  
so that they won't control me.

Then I will be blameless and free of great offense.

<sup>15</sup> May the words of my mouth  
and the thoughts of my heart  
be acceptable in your presence,  
*ADONAI*, my Rock and Redeemer.

This Psalm clearly speaks from the fact that there are two revelations from God: *Creation* and *Scriptures* (see below). For our purposes, I will refer to these as *God's Book of Works*<sup>h</sup> and *God's Book of Words*<sup>i</sup>. Through both God reveals Himself and His standards.

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<sup>g</sup> The *Complete Jewish Bible* © 1998 by David Stern (chosen because of its accuracy in translation)

<sup>h</sup> Often referred to as *God's General Revelation*, in my view a weak definition.

<sup>i</sup> Often referred to as *God's Special Revelation*, meaning the Bible.

God Speaks Through His Works	God Speaks Through His Written Word
The heavens declare the glory of God, the dome of the sky speaks the work of his hands. <sup>3</sup> Every day it utters speech, every night it reveals knowledge. <sup>4</sup> Without speech, without a word, without their voices being heard, <sup>5a</sup> their line goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. (CJB)	<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. (NASB)

**Note:** The CJB gives a better rendering of Verse 4 (3 in NASB). The verse is saying that the creation does not speak with an audible voice;<sup>j</sup> but as verses 2 and 4 state, creation does speak. The word translated “line” (יֶקֶב *qaw*) in verse 4 (5 in CJB) is a measuring line for judgment, a measuring line used to verify and authenticate the boundary markers and the size of a person’s real estate. In verse 4 the writer is telling us that like the measuring line, creation proclaims standards that are just and reliable. The Laws of Nature must be followed, must be obeyed. God’s Book of Works reveals laws to be obeyed.

In Romans, the Apostle Paul declares that all persons will stand accountable before their Creator for properly interpreting and applying the truths revealed in *God’s Book of Works*:  
 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:18–20)

To show how significant *God’s Book of Works* is, let’s look at Romans 10:18 where Paul quotes from Psalm 19:4:

But I say, surely they [Israel] have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.” (Romans 10:18, quoted from Greek Septuagint)

The book of Romans is Paul’s treatise on the Gospel — redemption is solely a work of God that can only be obtained through individual faith. Paul in chapters 9 through 11 is answering the Jewish question: “Paul, how can your Gospel be true? We are Jews, God’s chosen people. Abraham is our father, and God’s eternal promises guarantee us blessing.” After expressing his concern for the Jews at the opening of chapter 9, in verses 4 and 5 Paul presents the position of privilege that Israel had received from God:

Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ

<sup>j</sup> ASV-1901 reads: “There is no actual speech or word, nor is its voice literally heard.”

[Messiah] according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.  
(Romans 9:4-5)

In verse 4, “Israelites” speaks of their covenant status. They are sons of the patriarch Jacob to whom God gave the name “Israel”; and as such, the Jewish nation is heir of the eternal, unconditional covenants God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God chose this nation to be His representative on earth, to be a kingdom of priests to the nations (EX 19:6 and 1<sup>st</sup> KG 8:59-60), promising them (1) a piece of real estate, (b) the privilege of being the bearer of the Messiah, (3) the source of blessing to all mankind, and (4) blessings for Israel.

Because of the Lord’s call and purpose for the sons of Jacob, who multiplied in Egypt to become a nation as God had promised Abraham, God gave through them His *Book of Words*. We have the Holy Scripture because of God’s covenant relationship with Israel.

In this, God had a central goal. After man’s fall in the Garden, God promised that the “seed” of the woman would crush the head of Satan (GN 3:15). That promised Savior, Who was given to save us from our sin and its consequences, came through a virgin named Mary who was an Israelite of the family line of David.

Israel was truly blessed with divine privileges; but blessings and privileges carry with them responsibilities. In the place of honoring God as humble servants, Israel got a big head, neglected its calling (God ordained purpose was that they be priests to the nations), and failed the God who had set them apart.

In Romans 10 Paul speaks of the importance of personal faith, which Israel had missed. Salvation is a personal matter, always has been; and it is obtained through faith alone, not through a family or a life of good deeds.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him. For “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” (Romans 10:12-13)

Though preachers of God’s Word had been sent, Israel failed to listen and obey God’s Word given through the prophets:

However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?” So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ [Messiah]. (Romans 10:16–17)

Up to this point, Paul is referring to spoken and written words delivered to Israel through spokespersons sent to that nation by God. This privileged people received a written revelation, *God’s Book of Words*. Nature speaks, but not with an audible voice. This written revelation—the *Scriptures*—is words that were spoken, written down, and preserved. Israel refused to listen, would not believe, and did not obey God’s Word.

Then in verse 18, the Apostle poses a question:

But I say, surely they [Israel] have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.” (Romans 10:18)

In this passage Paul quotes from the Greek translation of Psalm 19 (the Septuagint). He cites a passage that refers to *God’s Book of Works*. That book is speaking to all, though without an audible voice. His answer to that question is: “Indeed Israel has heard.” Not only had they turned a deaf ear to God’s message in words delivered through the preachers (prophets) commissioned by God—an audible message that had been written down,

preserved, and entrusted to Israel by those ambassadors—Paul boldly declares that Israel had failed to heed what *God's Book of Works* is continually proclaiming.

What are we doing? Remember verses 18-20 of the first chapter? “They are without excuse.” Why? We are all to be listening to and obeying what God is saying through the things He has created. Failure to properly listen, interpret, and obey the *Laws of Nature* and *Nature's God*, revealed through what God “has made,” carries eternal consequences. The Creator will not be mocked. Judgment Day is coming!

In Romans 1:18 and 19 Paul, empowered by the Spirit of God, wrote:

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.”

*God's Book of Works* not only reveals the all powerful God, it reveals righteous standards and the wrath of God against ungodly and unrighteous behavior (Romans 2:14-16). Paul goes on to say that God is actively revealing, through the things He has created, Himself, His standards, the fact of man's personal responsibility and accountability, and His coming judgment. The revelation from God through the things that He has created is so strong that failure to obey it is inexcusable and carries eternally damaging consequences.

The Founding Fathers of America often referred to *Nature's God* and the *Laws of Nature*. A student of pre-Christianity philosophy knows that those early philosophers, through human reasoning, had concluded that there is a God and that there are righteous standards. They needed no special, written revelation from a spokesperson of God to arrive at their conclusions.

One day a lawyer questioned Jesus:

One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:35–40)

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) was a Roman writer. The American Founders were well acquainted with Cicero's writings, who through the powers of reasoning wrote about *Natures' God* and the *Laws of Nature*.<sup>k</sup> Cicero said that Nature teaches us that there is a God and that we need to honor Him and fear Him because one day we will stand before Him. He also concluded that Nature teaches us to love one another. Close to a century later Jesus told the questioning lawyer the same truths. Though Jesus may have been referring to statements written down in the book of Leviticus, what He proclaimed were truths that Nature teaches without words, truths that Cicero had discovered and proclaimed that he had learned from Nature not the written *Word of God*.

Both books, *God's Book of Works* and His *Book of Words*, are reliable revelations of God. We are responsible for the truths they proclaim. To ignore them is inexcusable behavior.

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<sup>k</sup> They were also acquainted with the work of Emerich de Vattel who wrote in 1758, *Law of Nature: or, Principles of the Natural Law Applicable to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns*.