

(Hebrews - Part 7): Inspiration and Revelation

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer explores the concepts of inspiration and revelation in scripture, emphasizing the significance of humanity and the redemptive work of Christ.

Duration: 29:13

Scripture: Psalm 8:4-6, Psalm 19:1-2, Psalm 19:5, Luke 13:3, John 3:3, John 3:16, Hebrews 2:5-10

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the question posed by King David in Psalm 8:4, 'What is man that you are mindful of him?' He acknowledges that when we look at the vastness of the universe, we may feel insignificant and small. However, he emphasizes that despite our frailty, humans possess the unique ability to think and reason. The preacher highlights the paradoxical nature of humanity, being both capable of great wisdom and yet prone to uncertainty and error. He concludes by affirming that while some truths can be discovered through scientific means, there are also truths that can only be revealed by God.

Transcript

...the second chapter, we're going through the book, and we're now to chapter 5, and I like to hear the rustling of the leaves. These are not maple leaves, it's your rustling, but they are the leaves of the scriptures. Next best after the maple leaf.

Beginning with verse 5, chapter 2, and going to verse 10. "...for unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownest him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands.

Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet, wherein that he put all in subjection under him. He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." That verse in its English construction is likely to be misunderstood. "...we see Jesus, who for the suffering of death was made for a little while lower than the angels, we see him now crowned with glory and honor." Now, we have here revelation. And in the Christian testimony, which has come down the centuries, there are two words which occur very frequently and should occur very frequently.

One is inspiration, and the other is revelation. I thought I might explain those two words for those of you who may be not too familiar with them, or at least with the distinction between them. Inspiration and revelation.

When we say inspiration, meaning that the scripture is inspired or given by inspiration, we mean that in its original signature, that is, as originally given, the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible to be written. What is here was put down at the order of the Holy Spirit. That's what we mean by inspiration.

Now, God wrote the Bible as originally given, and it is a trustworthy source book of authentic truth. And what is here is true, but not everything that is true is here. You can learn everything from the Bible that the Bible teaches, but you can't learn everything from the Bible.

For the reason that the Bible doesn't teach everything, it doesn't pretend to. The Bible has to do with that which deals with redemption. It is a book interested in our rescue from sin and death, our moral rehabilitation, and our spiritual regeneration.

It is interested in keeping us right and making us useful and causing us to grow up into the maturity of a Christian, and then at last having us prepared for the journey across. It is interested in all that, but it isn't interested in geometry. You can't go to the Bible and learn geometry, but you can go to the Bible and learn that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

You can't learn from the Bible how to bake a pie or send up a rocket, but you can learn from the Bible that except a man repent, he shall surely perish, and unless he be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The Bible reveals the truth that we need to know to save us from sin, regenerate us, rehabilitate us morally and spiritually, and prepare us for the day of the Lord. And it's all here, and that's what we mean when we say the Bible is the only source book for our rule and practice.

That's a good Baptist expression, but it's one that we also agree with and teach, that the Bible is the only source book, the only final authentic source book, of information concerning those things that have to do with our salvation. In the scriptures we are told that God created the heaven and the earth, and we are told many other things that do not seem to bear directly upon our salvation, but that does nevertheless bear upon it. Revelation is the uncovering of truths which had not been before known and that are undiscoverable.

There are some things that you can discover, you know. They discovered that there was an atom. Old Lucretius wrote a book before Christ's time on the nature of things, and in it he told us that there were atoms.

That was way back there, but he thought that atoms were little, tiny, hard bits of matter out of which everything was made, just as a concrete building is made out of tiny bits of matter, sand and concrete. You can break it down and find its tiny particles. But he came, I think, wonderfully close to it, even though he did not have the benefit of modern scientific techniques and information.

Now, those things are discoverable. You can discover them. But there are truths which can never be discovered.

Let me show you how, while God inspires the Bible to be written and inspires men to say things, often those things could be discovered. They are not undiscoverable. Look at that 8th Psalm.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor, and hast madest him to have dominion over the work of thy hands, and hast put all things under his feet, sheep and oxen and beasts of the field, and fowls of the air and fish of the sea. Now, that was an inspired utterance in that the Spirit of God moved David to write this psalm. And it has a spiritual benefit for us.

But this is not revelation in that it is a reaction anybody could have, even if he were an atheist or a communist. He could still look up into the heavens and say, when I look at all the vast spaces, what is man? What is man? Now, you'll notice that the 8th Psalm is a night scene. When I consider thy heavens, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained.

But the psalm we read this morning, the 19th, is a day scene. The heavens declare thy glory, and the firmament shows thy handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

And then in verse 5 it talks about the sun and says, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. Seen from the earth up, that's exactly what the sun looks like. A great shining bridegroom of the world, shining in his splendor.

That's the day scene. And the 8th Psalm is the night scene. And they're both inspired, but there's no particular revelation there in that anybody could say the same thing.

Anybody could say that the heavens declare God's glory and the firmament show his handiwork. That's a discoverable truth. You see the distinction between revealed truth, which is undiscoverable, and truth which is discoverable, but which is inspired nevertheless, in that it's brought into the scriptures and becomes part of the inspired canon of divine truth.

Now, nobody could have discovered, for instance, John 3.16, for God so loved the world. But in the 104th Psalm, which happens to be one of my favorite psalms, the 104th, look how much here could be discovered. Anybody could see this.

The birds make their nests in the trees, and the stork makes hers in the fir tree. And the hills are the refuge for the wild goats, and rocks for the conies. And the sun nose is going down, and the moon is for seasons.

And the young lions roar after their prey, and the sun rises, and they go back into their dens, and man goes forth to work into his labor until the evening. Anybody, just an observer, could see that. And yet the Holy Spirit caused the man of God to write this into the 104th Psalm, weaving in truths that could be discovered with truths that were undiscoverable.

He wrote perhaps the greatest nature poem, divinely inspired nature poem in all the literature of mankind, the 104th Psalm. Now, I hope I haven't confused the issue too much. I have a habit never of reading question and answer.

Somebody writes into the magazine and asks a question, and then the fellow starts in to answer the question. And before he's through, he's confused the issue so much that I know less about it than I did before. So I don't listen much to questions and answers.

And I am afraid that when we preachers say, now I'm going to make this clear, that we succeed only in making it unclear. We simply stir the pool and the mud in the bottom is shaken up a bit, and the result is

we know less than we did before. I hope it won't be so now, because here is truth that is partly seen and partly undiscoverable.

The man of God says as he gazes up at the stars and the moon at night and says, What is man that thou art mindful of him? Now, this is a question from the man David, and it's an inspired utterance and written into the inspired proof. But it's not revelation as anybody could see when he looks up at the heavens and says, Man, when you see the size of the heavens, what am I? I am nobody. Well, it's a reaction anyone could experience.

But when you come to John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. There is not only inspiration, there is revelation of truth that could never be discovered by the mind of man. Now, what is man and the Son of Man? David here sees when he says, Man and the Son of Man.

David first saw mankind, and then by prophetic vision he saw the great Son of Man. By a kind of double exposure he gets them both in the picture. Mankind as mankind and then Jesus Christ as the great man who was born a woman that he might be man.

And here we see the religious value of the sky, but we're going to skip that this morning. Sometime maybe I'll preach on the religious value of the sky, but we certainly won't this morning. But it says that he made mankind a little lower than the angels.

Now the translators are kicking that around and they don't know whether that expression, a little lower, means a little lower or for a little while lower. But I claim it doesn't make any difference anyhow because he did make him lower than the angels. You and I were made lower than angels, and it's obvious we were made that way for a little while.

So we were made for a little while lower, and we were made a little lower. Sometimes it isn't a choice between one or the other, it's both. You can have both here, and you'll still be right.

Man is the unknown. The pitiful, the wonderful, the mysterious creature, the weakest creature in all the world. I just noticed what Pascal, the great French mathematician and philosopher, said about man.

It isn't very complimentary to us, but it's here, so I thought I'd let you hear it this morning. He says, Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature, but he's a thinking reed. The entire universe need not conspire to crush him, for a vapor, a drop of water, suffices to kill him.

But if the universe were to crush him, man would still be nobler than that which killed him because he knows that he dies, and he knows the advantage the universe has over him, and the universe knows nothing at all. And he says this, What a chimera is man! What a nonsuch! What a monster! What a chaos! What a contradiction! What a prodigy! Judge of all things, and yet an imbecile maggot. Depository of truth, and yet sewer of uncertainty and error.

He is the glory and the rubbish of the universe. There you are, my brother and sister. You don't have to like it, but it's there, and we might as well face up to it.

We are the glory and the rubbish of the universe, but we never would have been the rubbish of the universe if we hadn't chosen the gutter. If sin had not entered and we hadn't fallen, we'd never have been the rubbish of the universe. We would have been the glory of the universe.

And when our Lord is finished with his redemptive work, he will have made his people again the glory of the universe when he comes to be admired in his saints and glorified in all them that see him. I say that man is the weakest creature there is, but he's the only creature that knows how weak he is. And that's where his glory is and his weakness.

He's able to know how weak he is and no other creature knows. I don't suppose that if you were to ask a mosquito, which I consider a very weak creature, touch him and he's dead, but I don't suppose if you would ask him, are you weak, that he would say yes, for he doesn't know he's weak. He couldn't answer you.

He wouldn't know what you said. I suppose mosquitoes don't particularly like human beings. I suppose if mosquitoes talk, they call us the animal that swats, because that's the only way, the only thing they know about us.

We are the creatures that swat. When a mosquito lands on you, you swat him. Man is the unknown, the pitiful, the wonderful, the weak, the mysterious, and yet he's the only creature that knows that he is this.

Man is the only creature that sins, and yet he's the only creature that could know that he sins. And man is the only creature that laughs, but he's the only creature that knows how foolish he is and how inconsistent and laughs at himself. He's the only creature that aspires, because there's no other creature dissatisfied with himself.

Man alone is dissatisfied with himself. Do you remember when Keats wrote Ode to a Nightingale? He said in it, I won't give it word by word, but he said in effect, among other very wonderful things, he said, "You were here way back yonder long ago when Grecian days, when the Grecians heard thee sing among the isles of Greece. Yes, the Nightingale was there then, but the Nightingale was there before there was any Greece.

The Nightingale was there before there was any Egypt. The Nightingale was there before there was any caveman, if there ever was a caveman. I'm doubtless about that.

But the Nightingale was there. Why has the Nightingale remained the Nightingale from the time God made her and said, "Let the birds inhabit the air"? Because the Nightingale, although she's a beautiful singer, she doesn't aspire. But the man who used to come out of his cave, if he came out of his cave and listened to a Nightingale, is now dressed in Hart Shaffner and Marx clothing and looking at television.

Why? Well, he's aspired, you see. He's come up. I don't know how far you come up to look at television.

Sometimes I think you have to go down. But anyhow, he's invented that one-eyed monster, and he sits there and looks at it. And he can go up and around the earth now and look down on us.

He's aspired, but only man does. The other creatures are exactly what they were. And the only creature that ever improves is the one that a man gets ahold of and cross-breeds.

I suppose you know that those Guernsey and Jersey and Holstein and Hereford cattle that you see standing around in little clusters under the trees these hot days, I suppose you know that they are cross-breeds. That is, they have been bred up to that by careful breeding. Man got ahold of a poor swayback heifer out yonder and he bred her to something better and then got ahold of that and bred that to something better and on until he's got these fine cattle.

If man can get ahold of a thing, he'll breed it up because man alone aspires. Nothing else does. What does it indicate? It indicates that God made man in his own image and the image and likeness of God made him and that of nothing else can it be said.

And so man aspires. Man is the only creature that prays and the only creature that worships. God made man to worship, but he's the only creature that God made to worship.

He's the only creature down here. The lion roars for his prey and the birds build in the thicket, as the psalm says, and the stormy wind fulfills his will and he gives his hail like wool and snow like wool. But the snow doesn't pray and neither does the bird pray and neither does the lion pray and neither does the stormy wind pray.

We can read prayer into it, but it's not there until we read it in. We who can pray read into nature prayers and we say the wind is moaning her prayers to heaven, but she's only moaning in our imagination. The wind is just blowing.

But you and I are the ones that are doing the moaning. So we read it into nature. We say the little bird dips his bill in the water and then looks up and thanks God for it.

But the bird is merely putting his chin up so that the water will run down. The birds have chins so that the water will run down, that's all. It's a purely mechanical thing.

No bird prays. I think it's perfectly terrible to get a dog down on his knees beside the bed and have him pray as some people do. I don't believe in it.

If God had made a dog to pray, he'd be praying without your getting him down alongside of your bed, so stop it if you've been doing it. It isn't good, it isn't reverent. But no dog ever prayed and no bird ever prayed.

Man alone prays. What is man that thou art mindful of him? Seen as a small creature in the vastness of the universe, man is very small indeed. But seen as a spiritual creature in the bosom of God, he is greater than all the winds that blow and all the mountains that rise and all the seas that flow and all the rivers that run down to the seas.

He is greater because God made him in his own image. And that's why the Son could come, the Son of Man he sees now, too. He sees him.

Why did the Eternal Son become the Son of Man? He was the Son of God. Why did he become the Son of Man? Because man had sinned and had become, as the man said, the glory and the rubbish of the universe. He came down into human flesh in order that he may get down as far as we were.

If he had come down and been, come into the world a child of ten, it would have been nine years unaccounted for. If he had started out as a child of five, there would have been five years unaccounted for. If he had started out a year old, it would have been a year unaccounted for.

If he had been born by some miracle apart from childbirth, there would have been nine months unaccounted for. But that holy thing which is conceived in you shall be called the Son of God. And Jesus went clear, back not only to the embryo, but clear back to the original germ, that he might know everything that man knows and develop all through man's development right up to full, blooming manhood.

He came clear down to where we are. If he had been born in a palace, there might have been those who were born in huts and grass, cottages that he would not have understood, but he was born in a manger, in order that he might know the poorest that there are. And he is now the corporeal head of the human race, and under him the human race is going to regain sovereignty.

We've lost sovereignty. He came down in order that he might taste death for every man. And that word taste there doesn't mean taste, as a child might taste food and then reject it.

It means experience. He experienced death for every man. And now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see only that which has been done.

We see that he was born. We see that he grew to manhood. We see that he died.

We see that he rose again from the dead. We see that he is saving his church, and that there is a church in the church, a church in the church, that is, redeemed people, regenerated people, blood-washed people, forgiven people, people that compose the true church. That isn't all that's called itself church, but that's the church inside the church, the true church inside the false church, the church that God acknowledges and approves within the vast Christendom which God rejects.

We don't see yet all things put under him, but we do see what was done, and by faith we see all things put under him. You see, faith is a kind of sight, because faith sees what yet hasn't happened. And if we have actual faith, we act as if we saw what we believe.

And if we claim we believe and do not have faith, to act as if we believe that we don't believe it at all. There was a Jim Hunter up at Glenrocks last week, told about that fellow whose name I don't remember, Rondine or some such name, who wheeled a fellow across Niagara Falls in a barrel, on a wheelbarrow, on a barrel, and on a rope stretched across from the Canadian to the American side, and he went across there. And he saw him do it.

He wanted to take somebody else across. He called up a man and he said, Do you think that I could wheel you across? Oh, sure, he said, I think you could. He said, Do you believe it? He said, I certainly do, I saw you do it.

Well, he said, Come on. He said, Not me. Not me! And he refused absolutely to go.

He didn't believe enough. He didn't believe enough to act as if he believed it. What he was trying to say was, You made it once, and there's a slim chance you'll make it again, but there's a bigger chance you won't, and I don't want to be on that bigger chance.

See, that wasn't faith. We say we believe in revelation, we believe in inspiration, we believe in man made in the image of God, we believe in God made in the image of man again, in the incarnation of the Holy Son. We say that.

We say that we believe he tasted death for every man that we might cease to be the disgrace of the universe and become the glory of the universe again. We say that. And if we truly believe it, we begin to act as if we believed it.

For remember, you don't believe a thing rightly until you act in accordance with it. When you bring your life into line with your faith, you're a believer. But when your life isn't in line with your faith, you're no true

believer at all.

We believe that he tasted death for every man, and we believe that he will soon triumph over all things, and God will put all things under his feet. I believe that. I believe there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

I've believed and taught for a long time that God is going to clean up his universe, but I didn't know there was going to be so much to clean up. Now that we've sent a lot of truck up there and still floating around the sun and around the moon and around the earth, the Lord is going to have to send an angel to clean up the truck he'll save, one of his angels, get your dustpan and broom and clean up that stuff that in the United States and Russia is sent up there to mess up the heavens. Get it out of there.

When he comes, who's right it is to reign, and he becomes Lord over all of his creation, and there is a new heaven and a new earth. Or yet I wonder if he'll sweep it up. I think I know the better way, and I think I know the Bible way.

The heavens and the earth which are now are reserved unto fire against the great day. There's nothing that can withstand fire, and God's going to let the heat of his mighty presence burn up all that's evil in order that he might replace it with all that's good. Now we see not, says the Holy Spirit, we see not all things under him, but we see Jesus.

God has put all things in subjection under his feet, for in that he put all in subjection under him. He left nothing that is not put under him. Now we don't see it all done yet, but we have faith, and we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than angels in order that he might suffer death.

We see him crowned with glory and honor at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. And when he comes back again, he'll put all things under his feet. For myself, by God's help, I want to live for that time.

I want my money to live for that time. I want my talents, whatever they may be, to live for that time. I want my time to be given for that hour when he comes back again.

I don't want to divide my life and live for the earth while this is approaching. I want to live for that while it's approaching. For I believe with all my heart that God has put all things under his feet, and one of these days he's coming back to take his power and reign.

May God grant that you and I be ready. Amen.

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