

Psalms: Book Four (Part Four): God As Creator

God's Power and Majesty in Creation

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Many of you had the opportunity to watch 'God of Wonders' that was shown on Friday evening. It was an hour-long documentary. It showed the wonders that we can easily see in the night sky, in weather patterns, in our DNA, in plants and animals, in all human abilities, and that they all point to the mind, power, design, and creativity of God. It made it very clear that in no way could any of these things have originated by chance. There is just too much going on in the world. Everything works too well. There are just so many creatures that are so rare in their abilities just doing things that are so strange to us, but it all tends to work altogether. None of this could be a cosmic roll of the dice. There is just too much detail there for there to be any kind of an evolutionary beginning to life on earth. I want to mention a few of these things talked about in the 'God of Wonders' video.

The documentary mentioned the symbiosis of clownfish and sea anemone. The sea anemone excretes a poison to capture and consume its prey. Sea creatures that come in range of its wiggly tentacles flowing in the ocean with the currents can succumb to the poison if they touch those tentacles. But clownfish are different. They do not die. They are immune to the poison of the sea anemone and swim without harm amidst all those wiggling tentacles that the anemone has out there. Instead of the anemone's arms being a place of death, the sea anemone is a place of refuge to clownfish. If they are being chased by a bigger fish, all they have to do is dive into the tentacles of a sea anemone and it is safe. So there is a relationship between these two creatures.

Now if it were an evolutionary trait, as scientists would have us believe, the proto-clownfish would never have survived the poisoning of the proto-sea anemone, and it would never have lived to pass along its wonderful trait to its young. This is a trait that had to have been designed and created into the clownfish at the beginning and that, of course, points to a Designer and a Creator.

The documentary also pointed out the intricate and amazing design of birds. We take birds for granted. They are out there; they pop along the ground; they flit about; they chirp from the closest branch or whatever near us. But we do not think about how intricately designed they are. The design of birds is one of those things that could not have happened by chance because all the parts that make a bird a bird and make it fly, in particular, are so well integrated into the overall product that if just one of them was not there, no flight would be possible—birds would not be birds and would be just like

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other animals that hop along the ground. For instance, the producers of the 'God of Wonders' video mentioned five parts in particular.

First of all, they mentioned the lightweight bones. They are mostly filled with air. But they have got a design inside of them, with the way everything is structured there, that they are actually very strong. And they have to be strong enough not only to hold the bird up and all of its parts, but also enable the bird to fly against the wind and all the other forces that are working on it in flight.

It also talked about their multifaceted feathers. They are not just a part of the wings but they do all kinds of other things too. They have a design where they can be zipped and unzipped from the other feathers so that they can be maintained. They are kind of like a Velcro system almost where they can then shut down and keep the bird from getting wet; it is like a big raincoat—none of that water goes in and gets into the downy parts of the feather. Good especially for ducks because if they got wet underneath, they would get too heavy and get pulled under.

The feathers, when they are all zipped up, also keep out cold. And then, on the other hand, they could also fluff them up and keep themselves cool. There are just so many things in the feather. The feather itself is hollow too. The little insides of the feathers have space in them to keep them light. Did you know that if you took all the feathers from a bird, the feathers are heavier than the rest of the bird? But they are all distributed out on the body and so the bird is able to bear them. It is just an amazing design there.

Also they have lungs unlike any other creature in the world. You and I breathe; through a pair of lungs we breathe in, we breathe out. If a bird had lungs like ours, it would die up there because it would actually expend too much energy breathing. The bird's lungs are like bellows. They can basically fly through the air and collect oxygen when they are going in and when they are going out. And so they have to use half the energy of what we have to use to pull air in and to blow carbon dioxide out. It is an amazing design for a creature that has to fly through the air.

Did you ever notice this mentioned in the 'God of Wonders' video, that when a bird has been migrating for days (from wherever it was to your front yard) and suddenly comes out of the sky, it is not panting from its long flight, like you would actually see on the cartoon or something. It does not have to because all along through its flight it has been getting sufficient oxygen to do all the things that it needs.

There is another part of the bird that is amazing and that is their beaks. If their beaks were made of bone, their heads would fall to the ground because they could not hold

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them up, and having fallen to the ground they could not fly; if they did, they would be flying with their beaks pointed to the ground all the time because they would be too heavy. Instead, the beak is made of basically horn, like your fingernails. It is much more lightweight than bone, yet God made it strong so that even a bird like a woodpecker can use it to peck out insects from a tree. It has got that much strength.

And then, of course, they mentioned the bird brain. We all call people who are dumb 'bird brains'. You find out that even though the bird's brain may be only about as big as a dime (not all that big), it is a highly developed and intelligent brain. If you look into the cockpit of a 747 or something like that, there are all kinds of gadgets and gizmos and switches to flip, and all these things that they have to do to keep that big bird in the air. All of that aerodynamic and aeronautical skill is in that little bit of bird brain.

Not only is it able to fly—to use its feathers, to use its wings, to use everything to make it fly—from here to there, it can actually fly, like some of the Terns do, nearly from pole to pole. It is just an incredible machine, all down into this little bit of organ—the bird's brain. It is an amazing feature. But you take any one of those factors away, and birds cannot fly.

Can you imagine the protobird with its beak of bone? It never gets off the ground. It never passes that trade along to its young because it is maldeveloped. But God created all of these design features at once so that the bird could be what we know as a bird.

The 'God of Wonders' DVD also took time to explain some amazing qualities of our DNA. Actually it is just a teeny-tiny molecular strand. You cannot even see it unless you have a microscope. But it just contains oodles of information. It has much more information than any kind of man-made data storage system could hold. The film said, that if all the data that were written on DNA could be put into hardback books and stacked one on top of the other, the amount of information would fill enough books that it would reach five times the distance to the moon. Now I do not know how big the writing would be in these books, but it is a hard thing to fathom that there is so much information written on these tiny little strands of molecules to make you and me, and to have all the information for the way that we are physically.

That is just mindboggling. How did God get all that information down into this little itty-bitty series of molecules?

Not only that, you find out that unlike our computers where if you want to copy one file into another, you have to go through this process and it does it, and you get another copy. Your DNA does this all the time. It is constantly making duplicates of itself time

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after time. All of your cells have this coding on them so that they know what to do and how to function with everything else that is in your body.

But it is better that. Not only does it do all this duplication of itself, but it has an enzyme that travels up and down your DNA strand, and when it comes across an error, it corrects it so that this error is not duplicated the next time the DNA strand is replicated. It is self-correcting. Try doing that with the copy of a file you make. You have to be the self corrector and go in there. But the coding in computers is so complex that you would have to have some pretty good education to go out there and actually work with the code. However, all of this is happening inside your body constantly. It is just an amazing system.

These are just a few of the amazing facts of creation. But they are widely accessible to anybody who wishes to study them. We have got the Internet with so much information on it that you could call up any feature like this and find just amazing facts that men have found out in studying them. They are mind-blowing.

We have people out there who are supposedly the most intelligent among us. They want us to think that these things all came about on their own by chance. It is absolutely stupid. They are not the most intelligent people. They are among the dumbest people because they are rejecting God Himself, and that is absolute foolishness.

Evolution is mankind's very feeble-brained and vain attempt to get rid of God, to get rid of His power, to get rid of His vast intelligence, and to get rid of His sovereignty in order to remove itself from under the obligations that all of those things demand. In effect, it is like the little kid who does something bad and covers his eyes thinking that if he covers his eyes people cannot see him.

That is exactly what men have done. If they can somehow fool themselves into thinking that God does not exist and that He did not create, then He did not, and they are just kidding themselves. But we know the truth. The truth has been revealed to us that God is Creator.

Please open your Bibles to Job 12. I am going to go through several chapters throughout the Bible—some in the Old Testament, one in the New Testament. And I just want you to see this fact brought out time and time again. Job says:

Job 12:7-10 But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not

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know that the hand of the Lord has done this, in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?

It was very clear to Job who had made all these things. God had made the earth and the beasts and the fish of the sea, and everything had come by the hand of God.

Job 26:7-10 He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing. He binds up the water in His thick clouds, yet the clouds are not broken under it. He covers the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud over it. He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness.

These are scientific facts that were not known by science until the last several hundred years. Some primitive people thought the earth was carried by a giant turtle. The Greeks and the Romans had their belief that Atlas supported the earth; I do not know how many of them believed it, but it was part of the mythology. People were using their imaginations wrongly to come up with stupid ideas. “The earth is flat” when one could see, as Job says here, that the horizon is circular which demands a circular earth, which means that the earth is not resting on anything—that it is actually suspended on nothing.

How could that have happened unless God had done it? It is a great sphere up there in the blackness of heaven (as it says, ‘empty space’). How many people other than the Hebrews (because God had revealed it to them) knew that space was empty? It is pretty much a total vacuum. There is matter out there in space, but we did not really know until we sent out satellites and probes that that is exactly what it is. It is empty space. But Job was talking about it 3500 years ago. Job is full of stuff like this. One of the great themes of the book of Job is the revelation of God and what He is really like.

Job 36:26-30 Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; nor can the number of His years be discovered. [He is eternal obviously.] For He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man. Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thunder from His canopy? Look, He scatters His light upon it, and covers the depths of the sea.

You understand that Elihu is exactly right when he says “Who can understand how this

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works?” Meteorologists do not understand how this works, even now. They are still trying to figure out how clouds form, why they form certain ways, and how all this works. And if they were honest, the only thing that they could do is say what Elihu does: “God did it. He put all this in motion. He is making it happen.”

They understand that the sun does certain things and the wind does certain things and the humidity does certain things. They understand the generalities of this. But why do not all clouds form the same way? Why are they not all be big and fluffy and pretty and just float across the sky? Why do some of them form into thunderheads, and why do some of them form into fluffy little cirrus things? Why? Well, God did it.

They would say, to me, probably, “Well, that’s just an easy way out.” (‘God did it.’) But that is the answer: God did it. We do not know yet. He has not revealed those things to us yet, and He will, in time.

But, as of now, we have to use the smarts that God gave us to try to investigate those things, and who knows if people will come up with an answer to it. But, even so, for all intents and purposes, all we really need to know is that God put these forces in action to do it.

This is a verse that we probably all know. We sing it every once in a while.

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.

So we can look up in the night sky and see God’s glory in the stars, in the planets, in the moon, and all these things tell us that God did it. It was His handiwork, it was His artistry, it was His scientific knowledge that made all these things possible. These things could not have happened with a minute bit of matter exploding billions of years ago, and suddenly making all of these great things. They are on the right track in terms of these things came from nothing. No matter was at the beginning—God said and they existed, God spoke and they popped into being. They understand that, but they do not give Him the credit for it.

Psalm 139:13-14 For You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.

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We go from the great expanses of space, the firmament of God that He made in His handiwork, and we can go down into an egg and a sperm, and suddenly there is a life there, a mysterious process that these two cells come together and create a new person in the womb. How does that happen?

We can get all scientific and talk about this and that happening. But take it out of a lab setting and think about the fact that when these two cells come together, they form an entirely new and different life with the same potential the two lives that contributed to it have. It is just an amazing thing. David could just say that he marveled at it.

Let us finish this little section in Hebrews 1.

Hebrews 1:1-3 God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

So God reveals to us here that He and the Son worked together on this, and He appointed the Son not only to be heir of all things but the agent of creation, and that by His hands all things were created. He goes on to say that that same Son, who also purged our sins, is now sitting at the right hand of the power on high and He is sustaining life, sustaining the creation. All things are being continued through His power.

These are mindboggling ideas. We have a hard time understanding them, but do you know we got them all out of a Book that was finished less than 2000 years ago. They had been there all this time for us to understand.

God has given us a great deal of information about how He works, how He made these things, and how He continues to uphold all these things. And what we understand, then, once we read these things and do our best to understand them, is that we come to the conclusion that God is indeed the Creator of all things and He is a Being of tremendous intelligence, a Being of tremendous artistry and beauty, a Being of high skill and perfection and engineering, and a Being of purpose. He does nothing without a purpose. He has an end in sight and everything He does feeds into the purpose. He does not make things to be throwaways. He does not make things to be useless. He makes things to work and to work together.

Such passages as we have just seen should humble us and generate a profound sense of awe of our God that we can deal personally with this Being, who has made all things and upholds all things, and is driving to bring all things to an end—to a purpose. I use the word ‘driving’ purposely because He is not taking His good old time. He is moving things forward as He wants them to go. Nothing is going to stop Him. Nothing is going to slow Him down. Is there anything that can? What have we just seen in these scriptures?

God made a snail. Think of that. We think they are disgusting creatures. Can you make anything even remotely like a snail? You could get some goo and a bit of dirt and make something that might look a little bit like a snail. But it is certainly not going to act like a snail. It is not going to act like anything. It is not going to act because all it is made of is goo and dirt. But God made a snail to live, and He made a snail to have other snails, and to carry out a purpose. God made something as disgusting as a snail for a good reason.

And I know a lot of people who say “Why did God make these mosquitoes?” God made them for a purpose. There is a reason for mosquitoes. You may not like it all the time when you go out on a humid Saturday evening, let us say, on your back porch and you want to have a nice time, and all the mosquitoes find you. That is just not an exciting evening, unless you like prancing about trying to slap them all up as exciting.

But what I am trying to say is this is the God that is working with us. And if He works in such a detailed manner to make something as disgusting as a snail for a purpose, what in the world is He doing with you? He is doing a good thing. He is doing something far greater than He did in making a snail. He is making a son or a daughter in which He is well pleased. That is His goal. He would take out of existence every snail He ever made in order to make sure that you became His son or daughter because He loves us.

That is the purpose He is driving toward—that we all become sons and daughters of God. That is what He wants. And this whole creation that He has made is designed for that end.

So all of this that we have learned should lead us to the proper fear of God, and thus to a worship and praise that is beyond what we think we can do, because it is so marvelous what He is doing.

Until a century ago, we did not have video—we did not have DVDs even a century ago. It was just a few decades ago that DVDs came out. We did not have the ability to see a lot of creation, in the color and the vitality and the movement that we can see on video, and understand how all these things work. It was even a century before that that we

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finally had still photography, where people could go out and take pictures of a butterfly or take pictures of the lions going across the savannah in Africa.

Before that, during the time when the Bible was being written, any kind of picture like that had to be painted with pigments of some sort. Or maybe, even better yet, it had to be painted with words so that a picture could be formed in the mind, so the imagination can work on understanding an idea in a very personal way of these types of things. That is what the Bible is all about and, especially, that is what the book of Psalms is all about.

David and the other authors are painting word pictures so that we can understand concepts like God as our Creator so that we can then funnel these ideas and concepts, not into a tome of science but into a proper fear of God, and beyond that—proper conduct in response to God. That is what God wants us to understand when we go through some of these passages like we have just gone through. It makes us form these mental images of a God who is so powerful that He demands respect, He demands reverence, He demands our awe, He demands that we glorify Him; and because of all of these demands upon us, that we then obey Him and get with the program of what He is trying to produce.

So today we are going to conclude our survey of Book Four, and focus on one particular psalm—Psalm 104—because it shows God as Creator and it gives hints that He is creating more than just what we see in the world. Now, in my earlier sermons on Book Four of the Psalms, we covered all but five of the psalms in Book Four. By the time we are finished today, we are only going to cover two more, especially Psalm 104. And I am going to leave the rest for you. Psalm 97, Psalm 99, and Psalm 100 are the ones that we will not cover.

Some have said that Psalm 104 is one of the greatest of the psalms. And after studying it so deeply, as I have, over the last couple of weeks, I am thinking that it is one of the greats, the way it brings out certain ideas that we need to keep on the top of our minds at all time.

Psalm 103 and Psalm 104 form a pair.

Psalm 103:1 Bless the Lord, O my soul. . .

Then if you go down to verse 22, it ends with “Bless the Lord, O my soul!” Verse 1 of Psalm 104, says:

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Psalm 104:1 Bless the Lord, O my soul!

And in verse 35, it says: Bless the Lord, O my soul! Praise the Lord!

This gives us a pretty good indication that because they both begin and end with ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul!’ they are designed together to be a pair, to be read together, to be considered together because they are on similar themes.

By the way, just so you know, at the very end of Psalm 105 where it says “Praise the Lord!” most commentators (and I agree with them) believe that the “Praise the Lord!” at the end should be the very beginning of Psalm 105. Because if you look at Psalm 105:45 you see a “Praise the Lord!” Then in Psalm 106:1 you see “Praise the Lord!” And when you go to the end of chapter 106, which is verse 48, it says “Praise the Lord!” So Psalm 103 and Psalm 104 go together. Psalm 105 and Psalm 106 also go together. There are two pairs right there at the end of Book Four that need to be considered together. So I think that is how it all works out.

We covered Psalm 103 on the Day of Atonement. Remember, God gives us all of these benefits, as it says there in verse 2 of Psalm 103: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” Those we went over on the Day of Atonement because we were without some of those benefits. And we needed to understand what God gives us, to properly humble us, because we then understand that God provides all of these wonderful benefits for us daily. He gives us so many good things.

That is in Psalm 103. It tells all the benefits of God and it gets to the point where we come to understand that one of His greatest benefits is that He also provides salvation. That is what He is working toward. All of these things that He gives us—all the benefits, all the gifts—are all designed to move us toward salvation so that we are like Him. We come to understand properly our relationship with Him and our relationship with one another, and that we move along in building our character with Him so that we can be with Him in His Kingdom.

Now Psalm 104, once we get to it, focuses on the creative works of God (not His gifts necessarily but His creative works)—primarily things that He has already done. But it points toward things that He is still doing and that culminates in glory—glory to God and glory for us.

So Psalm 103 and Psalm 104 tell us that He is both the Giver of good things and the Maker of good things. He not only gives us all these good things, He made them in the

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first place and gives them to us, and it is all designed to bring us to salvation and to glory. That is the goal where He is leading all of us.

Psalm 104 then is about creation. The psalm belongs in Book Four due to the fact that the Israelites believe that creation occurred in the fall of the year (Remember, Book Four is about the fall of the year). That is the season that it fits with. Creation, being in the fall of the year, is one reason why the civil year began with Tishri 1, the Day of Trumpets. We begin to see the Day of Trumpets going into this idea, not only of the fall of the year but as creation. Of course, we just talked about Psalm 103 which is about the Day of Atonement. So we are starting to see these fall festivals come into the picture here.

When you talk about creation, you think of Genesis 1 obviously. But what does 'Genesis' mean? It is the book of beginnings. And so we see then that the idea of the fall of the year and creation bring about a theme also of new beginnings or renewed beginnings. We will see that come out a time or two as we go through chapter 104. Once you start looking through all of these things, we will find out that this idea of new beginnings, or renewed beginnings, fits very well with the fulfillments of all four of the fall holidays.

Think of it this way. The Day of Trumpets—what is new about that? That is when Christ comes down and He inaugurates His government. He renews His rulership over the earth.

How about the Day of Atonement? What is so new about that? The big thing about the Day of Atonement is the binding of Satan. Suddenly we have a renewed earth, a renewed people who do not have to mess with Him. It is like God's original idea of life without Satan, without evil, is renewed. You had this 6000-year period where Satan was able to mess things up. But then he is pulled out of the way and the original idea of God in the Garden of Eden is renewed.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a new beginning for mankind when they can live in this new government. And then, of course, what is the Last Great Day all about but the new heavens and the new earth?

Ideas of newness and renewal go through all of these things. There are many parallels that we can find in that. When we say 'creation' we think of physical creation, but also, if we are on the ball, we think about God's ongoing spiritual creation. There are many parallels that are there.

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Psalm 104 generally follows the creation account in Genesis 1, although it is not slavish to it at all. We have to remember that this is a poetic meditation on creation. So it is metaphorical. There are things that David does, he has even flights of fancy every once in a while. If you would look in verse 26, he talks about God creating the oceans so that Leviathan could play there. That is a flight of fancy to think that God would do that. But is it really fancy? Does it actually tell us something about God, that He would make an ocean as a place for Leviathan—probably a whale or something on that scale—to play? So we have to remember that it is a poetic reflection or meditation on Genesis 1 primarily.

But we should never forget where the psalm begins and ends. It begins and ends with “Bless the Lord, O my soul!” That is the main thought that is going through this psalm. David wants us to reflect on what he is saying here so that it brings out our blessings upon God, that it turns us to praise Him and to worship Him, and to give Him our all as a living sacrifice. So, like Psalm 103, in which he shows us the benefits that God gives us, David is giving reasons why we should be thankful to God and praise Him for His creation, for the things that He has provided us in creation.

Now while it is never said outright, never in exact words that come across like this, there is a thread of ‘all things work together for good’ principle here. Romans 8 verse 28: “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” Paul puts that in a spiritual way in Romans 8.

David is putting that same principle into effect in a more physical way, in the creation, showing that all of these things work intricately together, kind of like the sea anemone and the clownfish. They work together. But David expands it far beyond this so that everything that God made works together. He designed it purposely to work together because He is trying to give us what we need and He is trying to teach us a lesson. God is all about working together. First, He is all about working; and He is all about us being together, united, in one project.

So David shows us that each thing has a purpose, or many purposes, and it functions in cooperation with the rest of creation. That is the mind of God. What do you think love is all about? Working in cooperation with Him and with others. That is what he is trying to teach. We can look out into creation and see that principle just about anywhere. We also find out, as we think these things through, that because of this fact about everything working together—because of the other principles that come out—we can see that God has made all these things for our good. They are all designed to bring Him glory and to bring us to glory.

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Let us go to Psalm 104. We are going to take it in sections. The New King James and probably some of the other Bibles do it the same way: They break this up into paragraphs. We are going to essentially do that—go paragraph by paragraph. Here is the first one:

Psalm 104:1-4 Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, who makes the clouds His chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind, who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.

Once “Bless the Lord, O my soul!” is done, giving us the idea of what we are supposed to get out of all this, he opens up with “O Lord my God, You are very great.” That is what he is trying to prove with the rest of the psalm. He is just trying to let us know how very great our God is.

It may be what Paul had in mind when he wrote Romans 1:20. We have recently read this, but let us read it again.

Romans 1:20 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 [divine nature], so that they are without excuse.

Paul is putting this in a way that we can understand, that everything out there in creation is designed for us to understand God as much as possible and to glorify Him. To understand His mind and His purpose and His power, all of those things can be seen in creation. And God says even man, without His Spirit, should be able to see these things, and so, he says, because they ignore them, push them to the side, “they are without excuse.” It is so clear, so plain to see.

All you have to do is pick up a blade of grass, watch leaves fall from a tree, look at the night sky, think about wind as it blows through your fingers, watch the squirrels take the nuts from the ground in to wherever they take them and forget them. All of these things point to the wonder of God and His power and His nature. We should be able to see that.

And so David says “God, You are very great. This is what I did the last few days when I

Psalms: Book Four (Part Four): God as Creator by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>) was watching and thinking.” He gives us a psalm where all of these contemplations about God in nature have been written down.

It is designed in this way, as we look at the creation, to understand that if the creation is like this, then the Creator must be even greater. The Creator is bigger than His creation. The Creator is more powerful than His creation. The Creator is more intricate than His creation. Everything that we can see in creation that reflects upon God, and which is just about everything, is multiplied exponentially in God.

So if we see something that is powerful—think about an explosion of a volcano. Wow! All the energy, just millions of tons of TNT equivalent, in the explosion of a volcano and devastation for miles around; ash up in the air, blowing all across the world knocking temperatures down for maybe a year or two. God is so much more powerful than that.

Whenever we see something in nature, David is saying, look beyond it to God and how great He must be if He made this. If creation is astounding, if creation is powerful, if creation is glorious in one way or another, then the Creator must be that in spades and more so—substantially more so. He is so much greater that we cannot get our feeble minds around it.

David, in this first paragraph, uses the metaphor of God using His creation like clothing or as a window covering. He is trying to give you the equivalence here. If God made the light, He is so much greater than the light. Why? Because God clothes Himself in light. It is like light, the greatest thing that ever was, is worth only to be His clothing, or as it says here, the heavens themselves. How many pajillion miles of the heavens are there? Light years and light years and light years filled with billions and trillions and quadrillions of stars, and they are compared to Him like a curtain.

Do you see the comparison that he is trying to make? If you understand that these things are wonderful, then when you think of God in terms of wonderful, you better jack it up high—put it all the way to 11 as it were—because God is that much greater than what He has made.

It says He makes the beams of the earth like His chamber—beams for His own chamber. Clouds are His chariots. He rides the winds. He makes them do His will. Could you imagine making the winds of a hurricane or a tornado do your will? That is what he is trying to get us to understand. God is so awesome, He commands all these giant forces.

Even the angels are so inferior to Him that they are just like fires. They are glorious on

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their own and they are wonderful, but compared to God, they are just flames.

So God is great, *very great*. That is how David has put it: “God, You are just very great.” He could not really explain it in words, except to show feebly in a way, the comparison between the created things and the Creator Himself.

Now there is another little tidbit found within this paragraph and it really goes throughout the whole psalm in that it is the idea that God inhabits His creation. He uses His creation. He participates in His creation. He is there within His creation. It really knocks and thoroughly confounds the belief of deists that God created and then left to do something else—let it go its own way. This psalm, by itself, shows us that God is intimately involved in every little detail.

So God did not go away. He remains involved because He wants to insure that the purpose of creation is fulfilled, and that is primarily our salvation and glorification as His sons and daughters. He is trying to create a family and He needs these things to do it.

Psalm 104:5-9 You who laid the foundations of the earth, so that it should not be moved forever, You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They went up over the mountains; they went down into the valleys, to the place which You founded for them. You have set a boundary that they may not pass over, that they may not return to cover the earth.

Obviously, David had in mind the Creation, the original creation, where it says “the waters covered the face of the deep.” But he is also probably thinking of the Flood as well where God allowed the waters to come out of their places, and look at the destruction it caused, look at the power of the waters of the world. And God simply rebuked them and said, “You go there” and they went; “You stay there” and they stayed. That is the power of our God.

The Israelites feared great oceans. They were a people of the desert. They had gone forty years in the wilderness. They had lived in Egypt, which is a desert with a river going through it. They were people who, for generations, had lived in the sun on the sand. The deeps of the oceans were an enigma to them. It was powerful and mysterious. They put their head in the ocean, they got a mouthful of salt. They could only see down so far. They did not know what was going on there. But they knew that those waves were powerful, and they knew that storms coming off the sea could kill.

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They knew the power of water running through their gullies, their wadis, and sweeping things away in a flashflood. They understood the power of water.

Then David said, “God made the water, and He made the water to go in this place and He told it to stay in this place. How great and powerful must God be if He could command the waters to do these things.” So looking at the water only magnifies the power and mystery of the God who made it. He made the bones of the earth strong enough to contain those restless waters, and He still keeps them in their place. It is not that He has gone away. It is not that the waters are any less strong. But God has told them to stay and they stayed.

Here we see in this picture that this psalm is less about the creation than it is about the Creator. We always have to look through his description of these created things and see the Creator and His power and His mind behind them and what He can do.

In this next series of verses, he is still talking about water here, but he has shifted from the great seas and oceans. Now he is talking about springs.

Psalm 104:10-13 He sends the springs into the valleys, which flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them the birds of the heavens have their habitation; they sing among the branches. He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works.

He just described the great power that is found in water in the great oceans, but he switches to a benign attribute of water—freshwater. It sustains us. It sustains everything that lives on the earth. And he describes what it sustains: Every beast of the field. Even the stupid wild donkeys can quench their thirst in the water that God made. The birds find their habitation by the streams in the branches of the trees. This leads us to think “Well, the trees themselves suck the water out of the ground, or get it out of the air” from rain or such. Their thirst is quenched as it were. They grow by the water that God has given.

And then, when you get down to verse 13, he is talking about the circulatory system of the water falling upon the hills, going down into the rivers and then out to the sea, and then it gets evaporated up into the clouds again; and it drops on the hills and down the rivers and into the sea and then it evaporates. You get that God made this circulatory system of freshwater even out of the ocean. It goes into the salty ocean, comes up, and is fresh again. Is that not wonderful that God made it available to us that way, and He

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desalinated it for us through His own natural processes? God does all that.

Psalm 104:14-18 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted, where the birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. The high hills are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers.

The key phrase here is 'He causes.' Notice that it is in the present tense. A lot of what we have seen so far has been in the past tense, but suddenly it is 'He causes.' He is doing it *now*. It is not just something that happened six thousand years ago, but He is causing this to happen right now. All of these things are happening because He says they should happen, and He maintains them.

We see here what it says in Hebrews 1:3, that He upholds or sustains all things by the word of His power. He is continuing His creation as He wants it to go. So He *causes* the grass to grow. He *causes* the trees to flourish. He *causes* these things to bear fruit. He *causes* the birds to make their nests. He *causes* the animals to live in the hills and in the cliffs. He causes all of these things because He is God. He is the Creator. He cares. He sustains.

Jesus confirms this in Matthew 6:26 and 30 where He says God clothes the grass of the field. He arrays them like Solomon in his glory. He also says that He knows (this is Matthew 10:29-31) when every sparrow falls. He knows every hair on your head. He is still actively involved in all of these things. So Jesus says: "Are you not worth far more than these?"

If He is concerned about the silly rock badgers, or the goats, or the stork, He is far more worried, concerned, helpful towards you because you are worth far more than they. So if He does these kinds of things for them, He is even more intimately involved in providing these things for us. We need to keep this in mind because this is a present and ongoing factor. God causes these things. He is working these things.

Notice that David mentions man for the first time in this section, squarely right smack-dab in the middle of the psalm. This is to highlight that man is the intended recipient of all of God's creative energies.

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Both Genesis 1:26-31 and Genesis 2 illustrate man is the focus of God's creation. He made man in His image. He made man to have dominion. He made man to marry and procreate. Why? Because He wants children. He wants sons and daughters. He wants a whole family of God beings, and so He is concentrating on mankind, and He provides for us abundantly—even profusely—because He is a loving Father. He wants to give.

So verse 15 describes that abundance in the images of wine, oil, and bread (or grain) showing that He provides far more than just a subsistence level to mankind; He goes the extra mile, as He does in everything. So He provides wine—it says “which makes glad.” God does not only provide the grape for us to drink, He provides wine because He wants to provide for our enjoyment, for our cheer, for our joy.

He provides olives to make oil, so that our face will shine, it says here. God is providing for our health and our vitality. He also says that He provides the bread which makes strong. He is providing for our strength and power and endurance so that we can do all the things that we need to do through the staple of bread.

All of these images are exceptional and positive. He goes far beyond just the barest minimum. He says, in this metaphorical way, that He has provided the abundant life for us. That is what the Good Shepherd does. He provides to bring abundant life for His sheep. So God thought of everything and He made ample provision for us through His creation, if we would only use it wisely.

Psalm 104:19-23 He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knows its going down. You make darkness, and it is night, in which all the beasts of the forest creep about. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God. When the sun arises, they gather together and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.

This is a section about cycles or routines brought out by the appointed times that God created through His placement of the sun and the moon. These things function, not only to bring us months and seasons, and days and nights, but all the animals then use these cycles and routines to live. And he shows here that normally wild beasts—both predator and prey—go out and eat at night when man is sleeping. Then man gets up and has to go out to work but the animals go into their dens, caves, burrows and men can work without worrying about interference of all these wild animals, mostly.

So he is saying that God made all of these cycles work together for man's benefit. Is that not amazing? He put the earth in this place and the moon in this place and the sun

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in this place, and He made them all do what they do, and we are getting the benefit for them all, in all these cycles that come about as a result of their movements. All things work together for good.

Psalm 104:24-26 O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—this great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; and there is that Leviathan which You have made to play there.

This section is about abundance; again, how much there is of everything. God did not make one fish and put it in the ocean and said “Be fruitful and multiply” so we throw a hook into the sea and all we pull up is one kind of fish. He made thousands of varieties of fish. And then He made all of these varieties spawn like crazy—millions of them—and they fill the seas with fish.

God does not think small. He thinks big and abundant (he said ‘teeming’ here). So He made not only that, but He made everything both small and great. He made plankton, He made blue whales too. And the difference between them is enormous but the same mind made both.

Now we should not pass over the idea, in verse 24, that in *wisdom* He made them all. Remember, in Hebrew, wisdom has the sense of skill, particularly skill in living. When we feed this idea back into the fact that God is creating in wisdom, we can only conclude that David wants to understand that God made these things as He did to enhance life—and to enhance life along the way He wants us to live. He wants this, in particular, to be thought of by us, that He made all these things in the way that He did in order to give us skill in living. So all of these things He has done for our benefit.

Psalm 104:27-30 These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.

Here David makes creation’s dependence on God explicit. He is the Sustainer of nature. God’s creatures live because He feeds them. And we do get the sense that creation is far more attuned to God than man is. They know when He turns His face away, because

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they are troubled, and they know that if He takes their breath they die. But man—God turns away His face, and what do we do? We blithely and ignorantly go about to our own destruction, the way we have lived.

I was going to go through Romans 8:18-22 where Paul says that creation has been frustrated by the sins of mankind, and it eagerly awaits the time when the sons of God will be revealed. Creation knows there is wrong out there. How it knows, I do not know, but it is struggling under the weight of man's sin, and it cannot wait to be unburdened from it and do what it is supposed to do.

Herbert Armstrong used to use verse 30 to support what is called the Gap theory—that God made the heavens and the earth, and then Satan rebelled, and so the heavens and the earth turned into tohu and bohu (without form and void); and then when God decided to create, in Creation week, He renewed the face of the earth.

Now that may be what David meant, but he could have also been referring to the time of the Flood when God indeed renewed the face of the earth. I am not going to say that Mr. Armstrong was wrong—I do not want you to get that idea at all. But it does not have to mean what he said it meant. It could also mean this.

In any case, he is certainly showing that God uses His Spirit as His means of creation. God speaks, and His Spirit does the works. This then tells us, if this is how God creates and this is what God creates, God's Spirit must be awesome, powerful, able, quick to do God's bidding. And that is the Spirit that lives in us that God has given us by the laying on of hands.

If it can renew the face of the earth, what can it do to you who need to be renewed in the image of God? Jesus told the disciples, "I am going to send you power to be my witnesses." Paul told Timothy "We have not been given a spirit of fear. We have been given a Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Do you realize what you have got by the tail? This is the same Spirit that created *all* things. How will it work in you to create the image of God, the new man, from glory to glory (as Paul says in II Corinthians 3:18)—from the glory of man to the glory of God? The Spirit works in you to bring you glory.

Let us finish this up.

Psalm 104:31-35 May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in His works. He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the

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hills, and they smoke. I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the Lord. May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul! Praise the Lord!

Up to this point, this psalm has been ultra-positive, listing work after wonderful work of God. But in this last section, he brings out two points of a negative sort (kind of negative) that make us pause and reflect.

The first is in verse 32, that God can look on the earth and make it tremble—that if God touches the earth, it begins to smoke. He is letting us know that God's creative power can also be used to destroy, to make us fear. There is not just great wonder in His power, but there is also a great amount of destructive ability there too. We need to remember we cannot take His justice for granted—that He is a God of judgment and we should fear that power.

His might is a two-edged sword: It can make and it can destroy. So we need to be aware of that and make sure we are on the right side of that power by fearing God in the right way. That is why David then continues to say that he would promise to sing and praise God throughout his life and please Him because he understood that behind that great and awesome wonderful creative power is also a power to destroy.

The second point to ponder appears in verse 35. David requests that sinners and the wicked be consumed. Now God's creation is very good by His own estimation (He said there in Genesis 1:31). But it is marred now by sin. Everything would be great, David says, if just the sinners among mankind were gone. And so his request is less a bloodthirsty wish for justice as it is a desire for the fullness of God's Kingdom when mankind will be in harmony with the rest of creation.

What he does here, in asking God to remove the sinful of the world, is that he gives us a glimpse of the time when the new heaven and the new earth will be around and all creation, including mankind, will live in harmony. I was going to read Psalm 98 to close, but I will let you do that.

I hope you have gotten something good out of this exposition of Psalm 104.