

“A Look at Moses’ Revelation”

Sermon for 27 January 2019

Texts: Genesis 1:1-13; 1 John 1:5-7 and John 3:16-21

1 John 1:5-7: **5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

I want to suggest some things about Moses, the author of the first five books, the Pentateuch, of the bible. These things were “revealed” to him! He “saw” in his mind’s eye, the beginning of it all, the breathtaking cosmogenic moments. And the imagery of this disclosure has come down to us in words, the verbal expression of a highly educated and erudite individual. Here is the biblical evidence for such a claim.

Acts 7:22-29: **Moses was educated in all the [wisdom] learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. 23 But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his [heart] mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. 24 And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. 9 (This act of murder made Moses a fugitive from justice! A freedom fighter? A revolutionary?) 25 And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them [salvation] deliverance [through his hand] through him, *but they did not understand*. 26 On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?’ 27 But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and judge over us? 28 You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?’ 29 At this remark, Moses fled and became an alien in the land of [Gk: *Madiam*] Midian, where he became the father of two sons.**

All this *biographical* material is taken from the sermon by Stephen—whose Gentile name may mean that he was a convert to Judaism before becoming a Christian. What it does demonstrate is that he had an in-depth and thorough knowledge of the life of Moses! More than that, Stephen’s description is at odds with the self-portrait found in Exodus 4:10-13 I prefer, in this passage, the reading of wisdom to **learning** and that of heart to **mind** because the latter reveals Moses’ passionate side (it would trouble him later at Merida—meaning, his anger issues would exclude him from entering the promised land!). And I prefer “wisdom” because it suggests a deeper level of appreciation for the pagan culture and gods that God would overthrow, plague by plague, in the deliverance of His people from their oppressors. It is not an accident that when the people of God departed from Egypt, that disaster ensued (beginning with the loss of

Pharaoh's first born, the drowning of the Egyptians' army and Pharaoh's own demise in the Red Sea). The chairman of China's Communist Party might want to review a few pages from Pharaoh's journal before he persists in the persecution of the church in China. God opposes those who oppress his people. The Egyptian armed forces suffered another remarkable defeat at the hands of the Israeli's just last century.

So, as I have purposed to explore the first thirteen verses of Moses' revelation (Genesis 1:1-13) this morning, let's attend to the message that the apostles heard from our Lord—from our reading: **This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.** And let's import that insight, **God is light . . . and in Him there is no darkness at all** into the Genesis passage. We have God who is light, **creating the heavens and the earth!** And what is more, we have from John 8:12 Jesus adding **I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life**. Of course, this joins Jesus to the godhead in terms of **Light—the Light of the World and the Light of Life**. In keeping with this last, perhaps, we can reach deeper into the meaning of the exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, John 4:13-15:

Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Now the woman does better in the succeeding actions of their time together—becoming a **well of (his) water** to all to whom she said, **Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?** v.29. Still this was early in their exchange:

15 The woman *said to Him, "[Lord] Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw. "

Now, given where this conversation goes, *Lord* might be the preferred reading of what is rendered here as "Sir." I am alluding to her quest for true worship, and her sense of the Messiah's nearness. Their meeting at the well has all the markings of a divine appointment (it's intentional, purposeful, way out of the way etc.) instead of a chance meeting. She is a seeker on her way to becoming an evangelist—that is why **Jesus had to pass through Samaria** (v.4).

We are not restricted to the New Testament when we speak of these things. Two passages, Psalm 36:9 and Jeremiah 2:13 are as follows:

Psalm 36:9:
**For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.**

Everlasting life (John 4:14) accords well with **fountain of life**. And the alignment of life and light is sustained by **In Your light we see light**. Of course

the referent here is our Father God, and not the Son! Suggesting, I think, that we are covering *divine attributes* here that are shared and not exclusive to any one person of the godhead!

Jeremiah 2:13:

**“For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me,
The fountain of living waters,
To hew for themselves cisterns,
Broken cisterns
That can hold no water.**

This citation from Jeremiah is heart rending—the first of the two evils is ***abandonment!*** God self-describes himself as **the fountain of living waters**—very like the well of Jesus, **springing up to eternal life.** God is life, God is light . . . and God is love. He did not evolve, or develop into these qualities—these are part of whom He has been forever:

1John 4:8 **The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

And again:

1 John 4:16 **We have come to know and have believed the love which God has [in] for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**

So, when we read, **In the beginning God**, it behooves us to import: life, light and love as three attributes in God *from the beginning . . . or, from before the beginning because God, in His eternal being, pre-existed the beginning.* Before the beginning, God. And then, this God who is, was and ever shall be **created the heavens and the earth.** There was light in Him before He spoke it into existence, just as there was life in Him before He breathed it into the modeled dust that became Adam—yes, and before He spoke life into vegetation: **Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth. And it was so.**

Without the assistance of the Hubble telescope, or even the use of the naked eye, Moses was shown the unfolding drama of Creation. We might liken it to going to the movies—only the screen shots were much more vivid, mind-glowingly beautiful and, yes, in significant ways indescribable. That is how revelation works, whether we are talking about John, Paul or Moses. Remember, the book ends of the bible are revelations! **The earth was without form and void** until it went through a change of state, powered by the glory of God, no doubt. And the **darkness that covered the face of the earth** rippled in the invisible folds of **the deep.** Only the ears of God could hear it, only his eyes could “see” it. In the bringing forth of it, there was **a hovering over the face of the waters.** Like a mighty, mother eagle, brooding over her nest was the Spirit of God! Stunningly beautiful. Suspended in the pre-atmospheric dimensions of the timeless—and that is because time had not yet been instituted. There were no stars, planets or moons as yet from whose rotation and orbits we calibrate our

existence. As hard as that is to visualize, it was revealed to be so to Moses and so he wrote down the vision. And that vision of **in the beginning God** is the original and shaping vision of everything—specifically of the book; it is a prophetic work in that it was seen by, and reported by a seer. There would be interpreted later, to make the vision clear, better known—but these are the field notes of what Moses saw of the beginning of all things.

Then, out of the darkness, and activity and hovering, and whatever ears might hear of all that movement came a divine voice: **And God said, ‘Let there be light.’** Before that generative word, if vision be dependent on light, there was no sight as we know it—nothing was visible before. So we know that the “showing” and the “revealing” that was going on went through a qualitative change and Moses’ sight became more natural, physical, recognizably like our own. Yes, Moses, was a man as we are, but God disclosing as he will, what he will, revealed to Moses, bypassing mere human eyes at first, opened his understanding to witness the acts of the beginning, the order of things, the unfolding of things. Once God began speaking things into existence (**Let there be light**) and God, seeing all this time, saw that the light was, and it was “good” and he divided the light from the darkness. Can you imagine what it means to “see” that something is good?! That’s amazing.

Without the aid of turning earth, or radiating sun, God spoke into existence both **Night and Day.**

This alone should give our naturalistic turn of mind pause. The first day, first night were God created entities, thereby distinguishable from our natural experience of day and night. God spoke again, **Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.** Now there was something that wasn’t there before: Heaven. And it functioned to divide the waters above from the waters below and all around to the borders, or edges. And this creative activity defined the second day—with their **evening** and their **morning.**

Now we know evening and morning by extrapolation from our human existence on earth. These were different because our world *as we know it* had not yet come into existence. Moses put that down because he saw it. He saw the days and he saw the activities of creation that defined them. That is what we read. On the third day, God engaged with the things he had made: the waters, the heavens and said, **Let the dry land appear, and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth and the gathering of the waters He called the Sea.** These two physical realities were divinely instituted, created by God **And God saw that it was good**—morally good and not just physically excellent, or suitable/fitting.

This moral property is important because the whole of creation is infused with divine goodness.

And it is at this point in the creation process that we begin to recognize elements of our world as we actually engage with it—physical geography emerges, as it were, on the third day. And vegetation comes forth at the command of God: **Let the earth bring forth**—and the green and growing things that were in the mind

of God came into being, **yielding seed and fruit, each according to its kind, on the earth.** So were species established, and ecological order appeared and again, **God saw that it was good.**

Acts 17:24-28: The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and [are] exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

The breathtaking picture, that Moses depicts for us continues to emerge with increasing beauty, unfolding its complexity and original order—growing in specificity and in detail as the broad strokes of the first things seem to be painted over with finer brush strokes, and additions of color, texture, contrast, line, order and pattern. Creation really is a work of art and the viewing of it, with understanding, lends itself to worship. The joy of God in creating, his delight in it is visible, palpable even experienceable as it was to Moses in his life, and in his revelations.

Amen