

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God

An Evening with Jeff Williams

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Preached on: Tuesday, June 29, 2021

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Astronaut Jeff Williams. Well, thank you for the warm introduction, Don, and thank you for the warm welcome to everybody. I'm going to try to mix it a little bit tonight. I know that a lot of you anyway are anticipating hearing some things about space, you know, as I mentioned earlier, it seems everybody has a curiosity and a fascination and rightfully so, but I also want to weave into the discussion perhaps biblical reasoning for why we have that curiosity, and I also want to expand it to take you vicariously to the vantage point of orbit, that you may share in the perspective in a way that perhaps will broaden your perspective of God's creative work and the works of God in general, his works of creation, how he has so amazingly and uniquely provisioned his creation, why we respond to it at all, bearing his image, his works of God that we find in his providential out-workings that we talked a little bit about in our discussion, all of that in the context of his work of redemption, his work of redemption in Christ. Sometimes we think about creation and what we call the common graces of life, the world providing to us what we need to live separate from redemption, but as a believer, as one that has been born again from above by the power of the Holy Spirit according to the word of God, we see all of those works of God in a different way and we have a duty and a calling to see those works and acknowledge those.

So before I get into the substance of what I would use as an illustration for this, that is the space experience, I want to read to you Psalm 111. So if you want to turn to Psalm 111, we're going to reference it a little bit later in the hour as well. Psalm 111 has become one of my favorite passages of Scripture along this theme, specifically the works of the Lord, and if you're not familiar with Psalm 111 or it's been a while since you've read it, I'll refresh you a little bit on kind of the background, the setting of the Psalm. The setting of the Psalm, of course, it's a Psalm of praise. The author of the Psalm is one who believes in Yahweh, believes in the Lord, trusts in the Lord. It's a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving. You see in the early verses of the Psalm that the psalmist is in the congregation so it's in the context of worship. It's in the context, if we follow it to the New Testament times to the body of Christ, it's in the context of the body of Christ that we would view this Psalm and rehearse in our minds and give praise and thanksgiving to the works of God as the psalmist does. The purpose of the Psalm is just that, to praise God for his works, and I think as we read through it, you'll see God's works of creation here, his works of provision, the provisioning of his creation for our habitation, the works of providential outworking of the details of life of those who are recipients of his grace

and his work of redemption as well. This is a Psalm that articulates a biblical worldview, how we believers in Christ are to grow in our understanding and in our view of the world of all of reality of life's circumstances, of life's environment that we find ourselves in, and even beyond that as Don read Psalm 19:1 of seeing all of the things out there as far as we can see in the expanse of the universe.

Psalm 111.

1 Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. 2 Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. 3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. 4 He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. 5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. 6 He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations. 7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; 8 they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. 9 He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name! 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Like I said, a great Psalm to kind of cage our minds, if you will, our perspective as we go through the illustration of space flight through photography, vicariously taking you to the vantage point of orbit around this planet that we call earth that is our home, uniquely provisioned, and that's what you see from our vantage point.

Our vantage point is the International Space Station. To give you a little background on it, as I said earlier, I've had the opportunity in my space flights to basically expand the scope of the assembly and the building, the development, the operation of the International Space Station. We began the assembly in 1998. We first sent an expeditionary crew, a crew that was going to stay there for a period of time in the fall of 2000, about six or seven months after my first visit to the fledgling Space Station after we had life support capability on board. So that's the fall of 2000. It was when Expedition 1 launched and docked at the station. They stayed there for a few months and then since then we've had Expedition 2, 3, 4 and just simply in sequence, each unique crew. I flew in Expedition 13, 21, 22, 47 and 48, to give you kind of a sense of that. We've had continuous human presence in space since that time. So 20 1/2 years of continuous human presence and it's in the context, as I mentioned, of the international partnership. So I've been on board with many Russians, many Americans, some Europeans, German, Belgians, for example, a Canadian and a Japanese crewmate. So they've all been my crewmates and that represents the partnership.

We finished the assembly in 2010-ish or so. There was a little bit of an addition, unplanned addition in 2011 but essentially finished it in 2010. Each Space Shuttle

mission or most of the missions, some of them just supplied spare parts and other supplies to the station, but most of the Space Shuttle missions of which there were 37 of them dedicated to the Space Station took up a component that was 40 feet long, 12 feet in diameter, a module or a piece of truss or whatever, and added it to the assembly. And we assembled it with the aid of a robotic arm provided by Canada, and also with the aid of crew members who were outside on space walks to help bolt it together, to connect power, to connect the cooling systems, to connect the computer data systems so that the modules as they were assembled mechanically could also be integrated into the overall Space Station.

By the time it was done, what you see here in the picture and this picture was taken by one of the last Space Shuttle flights as it undocked and separated from the Space Station. If you could lay it on the ground, it's bigger than a football field. If you could weigh it, put it on a scale, it weighs in this configuration just under a million pounds. The pressurized volume of all these modules that are connected together that the crew lives and works in, if you took all that volume, it's the equivalent volume of a 5,000 square foot house. So it's an amazing orbital outpost, an amazing unique vantage point from which we can go and then we do a lot of science and research on board but also to look out the window and view the earth and get that perspective that's off the planet of the center of God's creation and his creative work, that is our habitation, the planet earth.

It orbits the earth every 90 minutes. If you imagine the globe of the earth and the equator, the orbit of the Space Station is inclined to the equator of 51.6 degrees. What that means is when we orbit the earth every 90 minutes, we cross the equator, go up to 51.6 degrees north latitude, come down the other side, cross the equator 51.6 degrees south latitude. In that 90 minutes, the earth is rotated just a little bit so we're in what's called an inertial orbit. So over 24 hours, the earth rotates once under us while we orbit. So if you can imagine that then, based on my description, over time we orbit over the entire planet except for the two poles, the north pole and the south pole, and because of the phasing of the orbit, each time we cross over, say, Cincinnati, it's under different lighting conditions. The sun might be directly overhead when we cross at noon. It might be early morning. It might be evening. It might be nighttime. It might be in the middle of the night. It might be dusk. So you get to see the entire planet except for the north and south poles in different lighting conditions as you stay up there days and weeks, and over months you watch seasons go by. You watch the snow cover migrate south over the US, or migrate north in the southern hemisphere. Then you watch the spring thaw, you watch the fields go from brown to green. In my last flight in 2016, I'll show a picture and you can see the bloom of some unique agriculture. So it's an amazing vantage point to study the details of the earth's surface.

When you go around the earth every 90 minutes, you see a sunrise or a sunset if you're in the window watching every about 45 minutes. The days are usually longer than the nights so it's not exactly 45 minutes but twice every orbit you see a sunrise or a sunset. So here we are over nighttime earth, the sun is just coming up or just setting here on the horizon. The blue arc behind the station there is the lit atmosphere backlit by the sun. There what you see is a point of light.

Here's a view out the window of the earth in full daylight so you see the Space Station structure around us. Actually in the foreground right of center is the Soyuz, Russian Soyuz spacecraft of which I launched on three different times in my last three flights. And that gets us there to the station, serves as our lifeboat while we're there and then gets us home in a planned time normally about six months after launch.

So this is the environment that we are in from our vantage point. Nighttime. Now this is a little little bit magnified with the exposure of the camera but what you see there is the starfield on the night side of the earth. In the background of the station structure there, you can see the arc of the glow of the atmosphere there, the yellow arc. There's some lit parts of the earth you see below that arc and those are either city lights or lightning flashes from thunderstorms which is amazing. When we get to the end of our time, I'm going to show you a video that will give you a better illustration of that phenomena, just absolutely amazing.

Here's a little bit closer view, a plain view of a sunset. You can see the layers of the atmosphere in different colors. The oranges and the blacks on the very bottom are, think the lower part of the atmosphere where the sun is shining through clouds and the black is where the clouds are so thick that the sun doesn't shine through them, so essentially shadows, we're looking at the backside of shadows. Then where you see the oranges, there is still some sunlight coming through the weather systems. Then it gets into bright white or yellow. And then on up in the upper atmosphere above the weather systems are the blue upper parts of the atmosphere.

Here's a close-up view of the lower part of the atmosphere, again just the edge of the sun disappearing over the horizon, and you see the yellows and the oranges and the blacks which are cloud systems. Just incredible beauty in every aspect and that's why you never get tired of studying the earth from that vantage point.

There you see a clearer view of the layers of the mid and upper parts of the atmosphere and its color and notice how you respond to this. I assume you respond with a little bit of awe and wonder. That reflects us bearing the image of God. I just mentioned that, I won't go very deep into that but it's important for us to contemplate those things too. Why do we even care about this? Why do we think about it? Why do we have a curiosity? Direct testimony to bearing the image of God.

Here's a fascinating very unique phenomena we call noctilucent clouds. The theory is that they are ice crystals that have been carried up to the upper parts of the atmosphere and then due to the currents, the air currents, they form these geometric or repeating symmetric patterns, if you will. They are seen over the north pole and south pole at different conditions. Typically over the north pole in June or July, over the south pole in the December timeframe. So it's when the days are long, in fact, they are continuous over the north pole in the summertime, June and July. And where we are in the Space Station, the sun is over the horizon but the sun is shining up over the north pole and giving us this illumination of this phenomenon we call noctilucent clouds. You can see that they are

very unique and this is one of the better pictures that I got of it, but when we see this, it draws our curiosity, we're fascinated by it. We think of words like awe and wonder. We think of words like beauty, all of which need God as the attribution, right? And when we think of awe and wonder, it demands God as the explanation and his creative work. The concept of beauty ultimately finds itself in God himself. Power is also a word that comes to mind when we see all of this and I'm going to show you some other pictures as well that give a depiction of power. The power that we see in this, the beauty that we see in this points to glory and glory is the consummation, the consummation of beauty, present beauty that we see in life here is linked, I believe, to coming glory in eternity.

So it's a glimpse, if you will, of an eternal perspective and the coming eternal glory. Psalm 50:1 and 2, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth." So when we see something beautiful in our experience of day to day life, it points to God, it points to the ultimate glory which is in God himself. Psalm 113:4, "his glory is above the heavens." It also reflects creation itself. What we see reflects his goodness. His goodness, and you'll see this a little bit more in a few minutes. Paul writes to Timothy in the first letter in chapter 4, he says, "For everything created by God is good to be received with thanksgiving." I know that's a familiar verse to you.

This goodness, this beauty, this power that we see in creation also gives witness to design and purpose, and I'll talk a little bit first about design. In this picture here, we see these repeating patterns. We would think that's evidence of a designer, right? There's something in symmetry, something in the harmony of either a view or of sound or whatnot that draws our attention and we can attribute design to it. Design in creation is seen everywhere. I'm going to flesh that out a little bit more in a couple of minutes but we see in God's creation a unity in its diversity. There's infinite diversity we see in God's creation but yet there is a unity in it, a unity in design and purpose. There is a balance in things that we see in that design. There's symmetry, as I mentioned. There's harmony. There's order, which I'm going to get into a little bit more as well.

In this creative design that we see evidence of in creation, we see an artistry, right? And artists actually are reflecting the artistry, God's creative artistry in his creative work. Psalm 19 declares that the heavens are the works of God's molding fingers, if you wanted to take the literal meaning of verse 1 there. Proverbs 8:25 pictures the mountains as being shaped. Artistry in our experience gives, if you're into art, whatever kind it is, we know it gives pleasure, images of delight, and in the Bible images of delight are often linked to nature in the Bible. Genesis 2:9, for example, talks about the garden and describing the garden he says, "Out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." So even the pleasures of life reflect the goodness of God, reflect the artistry, the creative artistry of God and something that we ought to have in mind in our conscience as we live out day to day and see these delights, if you will, that we can only attribute to God. Jesus calls us, of course, to contemplate the beauty of nature when he speaks of the lilies of the fields surpassing the splendor of Solomon's clothing. His creative work is beautiful. Human artists, of course, reflect that. They are trying to create beauty and that reflects the ultimate beauty of God's creative work. God's creation bears his fingerprints and reflects his goodness.

So this gives witness to design, it also gives witness to purpose. God's creation is ordered with a purpose and that's clear to us too. There's an order in his creation which gives testimony to purpose. Let's go through a few more examples of what we see.

Here we see the passing over of the nighttime earth to the daytime earth. So you see the structure of the Space Station here and you see the dark part of the earth there to the left, and you see the lit part of the earth to the right. We call that the terminator, we cross the terminator twice in orbit obviously, and it's the line basically that separates the lit part of the earth from the dark part of the earth. I love this picture because it gives direct testimony to the authorship of Scripture, that it is the word of God. Job 26, you don't have to turn there but let me just read a couple of passages from Job 26 which is attributed to be the oldest book in the Bible, as I think you know. In verse 7 he's talking about the majesty of God's creative work. In verse 7 he says, "He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing." And having circled the earth, I don't know, 16 times a day times whatever the number was, 532 times, you can do the math. There are no strings attached. He has hung it on nothing. Now by the way, I know I wouldn't get the question here but the earth is not flat. [laughter] I do get that question nowadays. I don't understand it. My answer has gone down to something simple, it's just utter foolishness. But Job 26:10 describes this picture. It speaks of God's majesty in his creation. It says that God "has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness." We would never describe that in that way from the surface of the earth. Job 26 describes this picture from being off the planet literally, so it's a great testimony to the authorship of Scripture.

Some other examples I have here of beauty and awe and wonder and on the surface of the earth, this one is with a bigger lens, so a close-up. This is a glacier in the northern part of Pakistan, in the high mountains of Pakistan and it invokes your curiosity in its patterns again and its beauty in and of itself.

Or this glacier in the southern tip of South America in the Patagonia region, and glaciers became one of my favorite things to photograph and to study while I was up there and the Patagonia region is one of the most beautiful glacier systems on the planet.

Or this river delta which is very unique on the earth. It's on the island of Madagascar. You see this very beautiful unique pattern of tributaries coming into the delta. You also see this unique color of almost a bright orange which is from the clay or the type of soil that washes down from it. This is probably the most photographed river delta in the world from off the planet because it jumps out at you without magnification from our vantage point. By the way, the jagged edges of the photograph are because a lot of these photographs have more than one frame Photoshopped together, merged together in Photoshop.

Here we are looking up the Andes Mountain from the southern end of South America, so you've got the Pacific Ocean on the left and the spine of South America, the Andes' peaks on just right of center with, again, the Space Station structure there in the foreground.

A little closer to home, the Grand Canyon carved out from our vantage point, carved out West there. Many of you, I trust, have been there. People ask what it's like to go to space and see the earth from our vantage point, one of the analogous places on earth that a lot of people have gone to that I use is if you stood on the rim of the Grand Canyon and took in the experience of that vast gouge out of the earth from that vantage point. That comes close to what you experience from off the planet and this is the view of that place from off the planet.

This is the same thing, the Grand Canyon right after a snowfall in late 2009, as I recall.

Mount Saint Helens which, by the way, is a great study that gives lots of evidence that supports the biblical account of the flood and what occurred in the not-too-distant past. This, of course, eruption happened in May of 1980. I remember it well and most of us in the room, I think if you're old enough, remember it. We're living now just two hours south of it so we're going to have great access to it, but a fascinating view from our vantage point.

This one I've got to pause and tell a little bit of a story. This obviously is a volcano erupting. This was in May of 2006. I was six weeks into my first six-month stay on the Space Station. It was during the period of time after the tragedy of the Columbia accident and the loss of that crew that we had grounded the Space Shuttle for the better part of 2 1/2 years to fix that problem, and we had gone down to just a crew of two on the Space Station to reduce the logistics requirements, just practically didn't have to take as much food up there or clothing. So we were a crew of 2 six months into the stay. My crewmate was a Russian by the name of Pavel Vinogradov who remains a good friend to this day, and I was just having kind of a down day. You know, we all have those every now and then. And Anna-Marie and I, my wife and I had talked every day. That was our habit, at least once a day, usually twice a day, and I had talked to her that morning and I had shared with her that, yeah, I was just having kind of a down day but I'd get over it, it would be fine, and for me it was six weeks into this stay for a six-month stay, the end was over the horizon still.

So we had a good talk and then I went on about my business. Well, as was our habit, I took a break midmorning and went back to where Pavel was working where we would have a little break and have a bag of tea out of a straw, hot tea through a straw, that's how you drink it in a weightless environment, and visit for a little bit. We did that and then I was going to go back to work and so I started floating toward the front of the station where my work was, and I passed over a window and I saw the Aleutian Islands passing below us. I recognized them immediately as the Aleutian Islands so I grabbed the camera that was stowed nearby and framed a picture, took it, framed the next island, took it, framed the next island, took it. Something in the back of my head say, "Hey, that last one didn't look right," and I went back and reframed it and there was this volcano erupting, and you can see the entire plume of the volcano so it had just started.

So I was all excited to have this what appeared to be a new discovery of an erupting volcano and I quickly scurried up to the front of the Space Station, got on the communication with Houston, Mission Control, called them up and said, "Hey, we just passed over the Aleutians and one of the islands is erupting. It's new. I've got some pictures." And I gave them the whole spiel, I was all excited about it, I got them excited. Well, we finished that communication pass and I went back to my work but orbiting the earth every 90 minutes, I set the alarm on my watch to be back in the window to take some more pictures of this erupting volcano.

In the meantime, another astronaut by the name of Steve Bowen was in CAPCOM in Mission Control in Houston. He got on the internet and found the Alaskan Volcano Observatory and he called them up and he said, got a scientist on the phone and said, "Hey, we just got a report from the International Space Station that one of your volcanoes is erupting. Are you aware of it?" And they were not aware of it because they have sensors out there in this very remote island but they didn't get real time data back, the data would be transmitted back, I don't know, two or three times a day perhaps or maybe once a day.

So they were not aware of it. He also could tell by the tone on the other end that they weren't buying this, that this was not on the up and up, surely it was a prank call trying to pull something over on them. Well, Steve got the scientists' phone number and her name to me on the station during that orbit so I called her up. When you get a call from the Space Station in those days, it didn't sound right. There was a little unique sound quality to the call and there was a delay in the transmission of the call. So she knew that the call was not a regular phone call but I could still tell that she did not believe me when I said, "Hey, this is Jeff Williams on the Space Station. I heard you already got the report. Did you get my pictures yet," I asked her. And she had not gotten them and I said, "Well, I'll email them to you directly," which I did. So we had a good conversation. She still had a little bit of doubt in the back of her mind which we cleared up later. They found out it was all on the up and up in the end, and of course, that brought a lot of excitement to the Alaskan Volcano Observatory in addition to the two of us on board, in addition to Mission Control in Houston, and when we came back around 90 minutes later, here's the volcano. No plume. Not even a puff coming out of it, just fresh lava flowing down the sides and the plume had detached and was blown downwind.

To this day, I'm the only person that I know of on or off the planet that saw that particular eruption and during the time from the phone call to when this occurred because I also called Anna-Marie back and told her about this, she had been praying specifically that the Lord would bring something into my day to lift me out of my slump. We never dreamed it would be a volcano eruption, and I know she's watching us, Don acknowledged if I didn't tell the story, I would hear about it tomorrow when I got home. But what a wonderful, she calls it the leftovers of God's grace. If we look for it, God gives us even the little things in life to encourage us, to delight us, or to lift us out of slumps in life.

Here are some more examples. One of my favorite subjects was coral reefs. Right now we're flying south of Cuba looking north. You can see the Florida Peninsula there in the

center of the screen. Just left of center looking north up the Peninsula off to the right, the turquoise blue are the Bahamas, the coral reefs in the Bahama Islands.

Directly overhead now, the Florida Keys so we are looking down and you see the sweep of the Keys and the beauty of the ocean around the Keys, the turquoise coral reefs. Just east of that location and we see the most beautiful coral reefs in the world in the Bahamas here. Just incredible.

A close-up of the largest reef is seen here. It doesn't look real and, again, we see this pattern of symmetry. We think the word beautiful, it invokes delight in our response. It doesn't look real. It looks like a watercolor painting you might see hanging in a museum somewhere but this is what the coral reefs of the Bahamas look like from above.

Another example of this is in central Australia. Australia in the outback, anyway, it looks like a different planet. Very arid, lots of dry lake beds which is what this is, and very unique in its color and pattern.

I talked earlier about the power of God's creation. This is a hurricane that was off the East Coast, as I recall, in 2006. It never hit land but an incredible witness of the power that God has put in his creation.

Other things that result in tragedies include fires. This was a wildfire in September, 2006. It was called the Day Fire. If you're familiar with the area of Southern California, the lower right corner is Rogers Lakebed where Edwards Air Force Base is. So this is just north of Los Angeles, a huge fire that burned again in September of 2006.

Sand dunes, another favorite subject of mine. This one, I can't remember if this one is in the Sahara or on the Arabian Peninsula but sand dunes are all unique but you see repeating patterns in them, you see harmony of pattern, you see harmony of color. They have their own beauty that we would put in a unique category.

Here's another example of sand dunes interspersed with flat arid areas but a different type of pattern of dunes.

Here's one that's very unique in the Sahara desert and it's unique because the geometry of the pattern is very obvious here. You see orthogonal repeating lines which is more, those of you with any kind of math background, it's more mathematical than the previous ones. The previous ones look more natural, this looks more almost artificial because of the squares or the geometric patterns that you see in both large-scale as well as small-scale. But this one of the best examples that I have in photography of the earth of the mathematical order in God's creation which we completely underestimate. There is order in God's creation that we take for granted each and every day, that life would not be possible without that order. I call it a mathematical order and mathematical order is something that is behind all areas of science.

Think, for example, physics. The engine in your car is designed to accelerate you to a certain speed and also allow you to brake when you need to, to stop and all that. All that is based on physics, it's all based on $F=MA$, a force is equal to the mass times the acceleration. If you heard of Isaac Newton, he invented that equation or discovered that characteristic, that law, if you will, that was present. That's an example of mathematical order.

Launching a rocket to get to the Space Station, you launch at a very precise time, on a planned day, and a planned time, and you fire the rocket for a little less than nine minutes going from sitting on a launchpad on the planet earth to a very precise orbit that then later you know mathematically at a very precise time you're going to rendezvous with the Space Station, and then dock with it, each going 17,500 miles an hour which is orbital velocity, and docking about .1 feet per second plus or minus an inch or two. So a lot of precision in that that is predictable and can be executed in such a way because of the mathematical order in God's creation, the physics of creation.

Think chemistry, the periodic table. There's an order just in material. Think if you're not into science or even math, think music. The beautiful piano that we heard played earlier, the singing of our voices in harmony is because of the mathematical order in God's creation. It's very predictable. If you know what octaves are in the mathematics of music, you have an appreciation for that both objectively and subjectively. Objectively, it's very predictable, we can put together chords, and I'm not a musician but we can put together all of those things that produces music that is pleasing to the ear. Then subjectively, we know what is harmony, we know what is dissonance, we know what's pleasing to the ear, we know what's not pleasing to the ear, and we've all heard lots of noise in life that we want to get away from, and we are comforted and it brings delight to hear good music, demonstrating the order and the predictability in God's creation.

So it's something we take for granted, as I said, but it's all around us. I believe the order in God's creation is infinitely precise. We're only limited by our ability to measure it, to find it, but the deeper we look historically with the biggest telescopes, with the most powerful microscopes, all we discover is more and more order at large-scale and small-scale in an integrated way, you know, across systems. We might look at something and see chaos and disorder but within that even there is order and harmony and predictability. Again, I believe the precision in God's ordered creation is infinite in its position, only limited by our ability to measure it. By the way, science and I'd better check the clock here, science, or I will run away with your time, science as I presume many of you know, in its classic sense the age of science, think Isaac Newton which I had mentioned before, was motivated by a biblical worldview, by this very thing, that God had ordered his creation in a way that was discoverable, observable, useful. It was a major component in the dominion mandate to subdue his creation in the garden of Eden. That is subduing his creation so all of science, all of technology development, all of engineering is doing just that.

The smart phone that many of us have in our pocket, think about it, the basic element of this is sand, silica, and because of the order in God's creation and man's given ability,

we've been able to mine the sand out of the gravel pit and develop it and do all of the other things to include transmitting radio waves or energy waves literally around the world and accessing information, digital information and getting it back almost instantly. That's a direct demonstration of the order in God's creation and our drive, humankind's, civilization's drive to search it out, to discover it, to exploit it, to develop it, to subdue it.

Psalm 111, which I read in the beginning, go back and read verse 2 again. Verse 2, "Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them." That verse motivated many scientists in the age of science, in the age of discovery. There was a man who was put in charge of a new laboratory at Cambridge by the name of Faraday, and any of you who have studied electromagnetism know the name Faraday. There are Faraday's laws. He was put in charge of Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge which was a new laboratory dedicated to that discipline, and carved in the big wooden doors in the entrance of it was verse 2 of Psalm 111. That motivated him in his endeavors. He's one of many examples in history of Bible-believing theologians, many of them were also scientists, motivated them in the pursuit and understanding of science, classical science with these convictions that we've been rehearsing tonight that God has ordered his creation in all of these ways and made them discoverable, observable and useful to us.

Now because of the fall, we know that history since then and there's been a separation, a wedge put between science and the Bible and I get those questions all the time. People say how can you reconcile science and the Bible? And I say there's no problem. There's no conflict there. In fact, science, real science as we know it, as I said, was motivated by the convictions drawn from the Scriptures. So the conflict is not with the science, it's with the presuppositions that go into your science. It's a philosophical conflict and it boils down to two camps, either you believe that God has revealed himself in nature and uniquely in his word written and incarnate, the person of Jesus Christ, and that explains everything and everything is derived from that basic presupposition. Or on the other end of the spectrum, there is no God, everything has occurred naturally by chance over time and now I have to explain everything with that presupposition. That's where the conflict is, not in the science.

All right, I'll move on through some photography here. Example of some repeating cloud patterns, another example of order here and it's hard to see but in the background is a picture from the Midwest in the Iowa, Minnesota area. If you could see the real picture, it's probably hard to see on the screen but there would be the square miles which gives you a testament of the history of the US and the Homestead Act and all of that, but also you'll see crops growing back there which is another obvious example that we take for granted of the provision God has put in his creation.

Here are logging operations in Washington state not too far from Mount Saint Helens. You see them log in square miles, I presume they are. It looks like a checkerboard kind of laid out over the hills, the foothills of the nearby mountains. Another example of provision coming out of the earth.

Here are grain fields north of Paris. So you see not only the agriculture but you see the unique pattern that is a testament to the history of when they were developed different than the square miles in the Midwest of America, for example.

I mentioned earlier watching the seasons go by and the blooms, this bright yellow jumped out at me in 2016 during that flight in the spring. This is over Eastern Europe. It turned out this is the blooming of rapeseed from which canola oil is produced, so it's an example of the provision of God's creation and mankind's ability to develop that provision and produce things out of it, the production of wealth which Moses says that God has given us in the book of Deuteronomy, for example.

Another example of provision coming out of the earth, it's an open pit mine. This one, I can't remember, it's either Arizona or Mexico, it's in that part of the world. Or this open pit coal mine in Eastern Europe, another example of drawing the provision out of the earth which God has placed her there.

Salt ponds in Western China in the middle of nowhere. Because of the coloring, unique pattern stands out very vividly from our vantage point.

Fish farms near Alexandria, Egypt, not too far from, well, off the Nile River, the Mediterranean Sea. So this is right when the sun glint hit this location so I took this picture and the details of the fish farms, all the dividing lines of the different places where the fish are grown stands out here. So a great testimony to mankind's ability, again, to exploit the provision put in God's creation. I understand that in this location it's mostly growing of tilapia for the European market.

Or the Nile River delta here which, of course, has a lot of history and has been a significant place on earth both historically and presently, and we see here the contrast between the irrigated land of the Nile delta and the desert around it, again a testimony of the provision found in God's creation which is our home called earth. Isaiah 45:18, I think you know the verse well says, "He established the world to be inhabited." So what we see is purpose in all of this.

He made the earth to fit perfectly for our habitation by design and for a purpose. The earth has been called a privileged planet. There's a book by that title, a very interesting book, I would recommend it to your reading, "The Privileged Planet," and the thesis there is that the earth is so unique in its placement in the solar system around a sun that is unique in its stability, and at a distance that is unique, at an inclination that is unique, and many other factors. It's very unique that if you varied any of them at all, life would not be possible here. So the book goes into great detail to show how there's purpose even when we observe the earth and to see its place in what it has in its design.

I mean, think the atmosphere. When we leave the planet and go to the Space Station, we have to maintain the atmosphere that we're breathing inside the Space Station. We have to maintain the oxygen levels. We have to reduce the humidity continually because we're exhaling humidity. We have to remove the carbon dioxide continually because we're

exhaling carbon dioxide. We have to maintain the temperature within comfortable conditions. There's a lot of equipment and the equipment breaks occasionally, to maintain those conditions. It has to be repaired often. We need redundant equipment so that if one fails, another piece of equipment picks up the need. We recycle water up there because we can't send all the water up there all the time so we recycle as much as we can so we have more of a closed system. The earth has all of that by design. The atmosphere is self-regenerating. The water cycle is self-regenerating. In addition to everything we extract out of the ground, out of the air, we have all of that by design. The magnetic field is another example. It protects us from the radiation. So it is clearly made to be inhabited. It is a provisioned habitation.

Now I would like you to turn with me to Job 28. Again, considered the oldest book of the Bible but giving testimony to what we experience in life and to history, it's a demonstration that this is the word of God. And there are two things, two themes I want to preview you on in the early verses of Job 28. One is the remarkable provisioning that God has put in his creation, and then the other thing which I have alluded to is mankind's ability to extract that provision. And in the background, the context of this verse, archaeological excavation has in the region over there, has discovered mines deep into the ground, shafts into the ground, and evidence of the extraction by rope of people in perhaps buckets or other containers and evidence of the different materials named here. So even current finds demonstrate the history of what is described here in Job 28 but, again, the provisioning and man's ability. Now granted as we read through this, it's speaking also to mankind's arrogance in his ability to this, and we'll see that too but that's not my main point. My main point is the provision we find in man's ability to extract that provision.

Chapter 28, verse 1,

1 Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold that they refine. 2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. 3 Man puts an end to darkness and searches out to the farthest limit the ore in gloom and deep darkness. 4 He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives; they are forgotten by travelers; they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro. 5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. 6 Its stones are the place of sapphires, [these are sapphires to be discovered and man knows to go dig up the ground to make that discovery], it has dust of gold. 7 That path [to those places of that provisioning] That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon's eye has not seen it. 8 The proud beasts have not trodden it; the lion has not passed over it.

In other words, this is unique to those who bear the image of God, this ability, answering the commission to subdue the earth is unique to man, not common with the animals.

9 Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. 10 He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious

thing. 11 He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light.

So again, testimony of the provision in God's creation and the ability of mankind. When we see it through that lens, that biblical worldview, it helps us to understand the history of civilization, the history of mankind from creation on in a new light. It's seeing it with a biblical worldview.

Here's a close-up of the same area in Egypt. Those are the pyramids. The pyramids right there in the center seen through a 500 millimeters lens.

An example of one of the great empires, this is the island of Venice in Italy, the Venetian Empire which was one of the two great empires in its time basically struggling for power and control over the Mediterranean shipping.

Here's an example of provision, this is the breadbasket of America looking up to the north, the Central Valley in California there, Pacific Ocean covered with clouds to the left. Sierra, Nevada to the right.

New York City which is kind of seen as the economic center of the world, right? This is, in one sense, in an economic sense or in a financial sense, it is kind of the powerhouse, on the top of the list if you consider economic development of civilization bringing the provision out of the earth, God's creation and man's ability to extract from that.

So if we look through the lens of Scripture, we see all these things in a different way. As I mentioned in the beginning of the hour, it's through the lens of redemption, though, that we can properly see these things. From our vantage point orbiting the earth every 90 minutes, every day we cross over several times this part of the world, so you can imagine what it is like when you understand the history of the Bible. From the call of Abraham all the way through the life of Christ, you can see the entire history of the Bible here from one vantage point. Here we see that Sinai Peninsula. Right dead center there is the Dead Sea, no pun intended, the nation of Israel. But we can see the entire history of the story of redemption here from our vantage point. A close up view here of the life of Christ, the Dead Sea on the bottom looking up the Jordan River, the sea of Galilee and the nation of Israel. So again, this is only understood through the lens of one redeemed whose eyes are opened by the power of the Spirit by the grace of God in this way. That's the only way it can be understood in this way, through the lens of redemption.

Let's go back to Job 28 because it points out just that. This is where it's obvious that he's speaking to the arrogance of natural mankind. Job 28:12, that starts with that word that should get our attention every time, "But. But,

12 But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? 13 Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living. 14 The deep says [figuratively], 'It is not in me,' and the sea says, 'It is not with me.' 15 It cannot be bought for gold, and silver...

16 It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in onyx or sapphire... 18 No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. 19 The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. 20 From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? 21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. 22 Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'

It reminds us that we know it exists, we know there's something beyond what we can gain, what we can attain, what we can grab naturally in our natural state, but it's unattainable and it's what is referred to here as this wisdom, this ultimate reality. And we know very well either from experience or from experience of friends or family or acquaintances, that this search is real. It's predominant in every human soul. As one described it, this void that's in us that only God can fill, right? So we know it exists but it's unattainable, it's beyond our reach.

Verse 23,

23 God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. 24 For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. 25 When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, 26 when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, 27 then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. 28 And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'

The fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord. And we don't have time to go through it, but you know some of these passages well. I'll give them to you as homework. You can go to Ecclesiastes, right, and you see a very parallel verse at the end of Ecclesiastes where Solomon rehearses all of the things of life that we pursue in life but they all end in vanity. They are all vanity. He ends with a conclusion that the fear of the Lord, the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 8 is a personification of wisdom. Proverbs in earlier chapters, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of understanding. In Christ comes wisdom, knowledge and understanding. God created creation, all of creation in wisdom, knowledge and understanding. John 1 says that Jesus Christ is the creator of all things. Paul says in Colossians 1 that Jesus Christ is the creator of all things and the sustainer of all things. The author of Hebrews in chapter 1 says the same thing. It all comes back to Christ and the fear of the Lord, in a sense, is equivalent to the grace of God given with the gift of faith. It's coming to faith in Christ that we experience the fear of the Lord. It comes together and it is granted to us by grace. Paul writes to the Colossians in chapter 1 that Christ is true wisdom and that to the world it's foolishness. It all comes back to Christ. It all comes back to the lens that we have being as one redeemed by the grace of God, and then we can grow in our understanding of a biblical worldview, and from

whatever vantage point we have in life, we can see through the lens of Scripture the wonders of God's creation, the unique provision and ordering and purpose and design in this creation for you and for me, and his works of providence as we live out our time and place, our station in life, our callings in life faithfully in response to that calling, stewarding the opportunities given to us and trust in that providence even in the dark days, in the down days, in the struggles, all with a view of eternity and a view to glorify Christ and be faithful and obedient to his call.

I'm out of time but if you would give me three more minutes, I want to end and this is my get off the stage video. It's a three minute video that gives you a glimpse maybe of the beauty, the awe and the wonder that you experience from this vantage point and you're going to see magnificent arrays of northern and southern lights or Aurora, you'll see some thunderstorms and rippling. It's going to be a little faster than real time. It's sped up just for practicality but I want you to think about these things and point it in a new way perhaps, or a deeper way to this Lord and Savior who we call Jesus Christ who has been revealed to us by grace.

[Video.]

Stars over southern United States
US west coast to Canada
Central Europe to the Middle East
Aurora Australis over the Indian Ocean
Storms over Africa
Central United States
Midwest United States
United kingdom to the Baltic Sea
Moonset
Northern United States to Eastern Canada
Aurora Australis over the Indian Ocean
Comet Lovejoy
Aurora Borealis over Hudson Bay
United Kingdom to Central Europe

Music: Howard Blake's "Walking in the Air"

"We're walking in the air
We're floating in the moonlit sky
The people far below are sleeping as we fly

I'm holding very tight
I'm riding in the midnight blue
I'm finding I can fly so high above with you

Far across the world
The villages go by like trees

The rivers and the hills
The forests and the streams

Children gaze open mouthed
Taken by surprise
Nobody down below believes their eyes

We're surfing in the air
We're swimming in the frozen sky
We're drifting over icy
Mountains floating by

Suddenly swooping low on an ocean deep
Arousing of a mighty monster from its sleep

We're walking in the air
We're floating in the midnight sky
And everyone who sees us greets us as we fly."
[End of video.]

Pastor Don Green. Stunning. It kind of leaves you speechless, especially the end on that final video. Jeff, thank you so much for coming and sharing your life and your providential experiences with us. We're all greatly blessed by it. And ending on the same note that we began, that the heavens are declaring the glory of God and we've had a unique perspective of that given to us by the Lord through his servant here this evening and, Jeff, we're very very grateful. But with everything that Jeff has said, my mind was drawn to this familiar passage at the end of Romans and what a fitting text for us to end upon.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 for
who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 or
who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? 36 For
from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory
forever. Amen.

Go in peace. You are dismissed.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com.