

Revelation

Psalm 19:1 *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun,

⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man (gibbor/gigas/giant), runs its course with joy.

⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

⁹ the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned [or bright, shine]; in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.

¹³ Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 19

Nineteen

IN 1985, PAUL HARDCASTLE, a British composer specializing in the synthesizer, released a rather delayed Vietnam pop-synth song called “Nineteen.” Taking the voice of Peter Thomas (famous as the narrator on *Nova*), and making him sound like the stuttering electronically sampled voice of Max Hedroom (the world’s first computer-generated TV host), the lyrics begin, “In 1965 Vietnam seemed like just another foreign war, but it wasn’t. It was different in many ways, as so were those that did the fighting. In World War II the average age of the combat soldier was twenty-six. In Vietnam he was nineteen. In inininin Vietnam he was nineteen. N-n-n-n nineteen, nineteen, N-nineteen, nineteen.”

If you’ve ever heard the song, you would not soon forget it. Someone said of the song’s reliance on sampling, “There were no precedents for something like this.” The only other song that even came close to its sound is Falco’s “Rock Me Amadeus” released later that same year. “Nineteen” went #1 in the UK and stayed there for five weeks. Though, in the States it only reached #15 on the US

Billboard Hot 100, and I haven't heard it on the radio is probably 30 years. But I was reminded of it because of something I was reading about this week's Psalm.

Psalm 19 might seem like just another psalm. But it is different in *many* ways. C. S. Lewis wrote, “**I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.**”¹ People have not quite known how to label this song. Some call it a **wisdom psalm**, others a **creation psalm**. Still others a **Torah psalm**. In fact, all of these elements are contained herein. But to help you remember it, I want to first take you on what will seem here at first to be a rather strange journey into the the number 19.

There are only three psalms in all the Psalter that deal *primarily* with Torah (others do touch on it, of course). Their numbers are: **Psalm 1, 19, and 119**. Notice what seems to be simply a coincidence—the numbers 1 and 9 and no others are in these. The number 19 is especially prominent. In fact, scholars have written papers on how this may not actually be a coincidence at all.

¹ **C. S. Lewis**, *Reflections on the Psalms* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1958), 53.
<https://korycapps.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/cs-lewis-on-the-psalms.pdf>

First, the **immediate context** of the placement of these songs. As we saw, the first psalm (along with the second) serves as an introduction to the entire book. Its focus is on the happy man who keeps Torah. We also saw how the Psalter is divided into five books. In the first book, there is a smaller section of Psalms 15-24 which form a chiasmic unit with Psalm 19 at the center.² (to bookend it, Psalm 15 and 24 also have to do with obedience). This makes Psalm 19 **the conceptual heart** (though not the numeric center) of the first book and its focus is on the relationship of creation and Torah.³

Psalm 15 entrance liturgy
 Psalm 16 psalm of trust
 Psalm 17 prayer for help
 Psalm 18 royal psalm
 Psalm 19 Torah psalm
 Psalms 20-21 royal psalms
 Psalm 22 prayer for help
 Psalm 23 psalm of trust
 Psalm 24 entrance liturgy

² See **Philip Sumpter**, “The Coherence of Psalms 15-24,” *Biblica* 94.2 (2013): 186-209. http://www.academia.edu/3848951/The_Coherence_of_Psalms_15_24_Gregorian_Biblical_Press_2013_

³ **Patrick Miller**, “The Beginning of the Psalter,” in J. Clinton McCann (ed.), *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 88 [83-92].

Psalm 119 is **the conceptual heart** of the last book, and it too focuses on the relationship of creation to Torah (see **Ps 119:89-93**).⁴

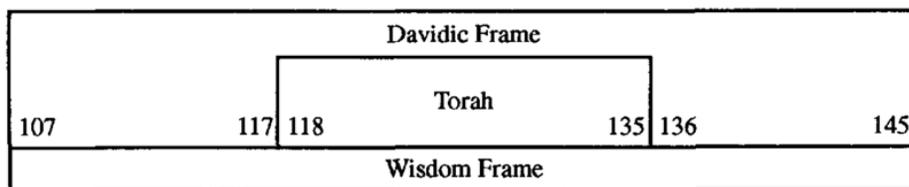


Figure d. *Book V*

Finally, both psalm 19 and 119 have very deliberate thematic links with the previous psalms (18 and 118). Is it a coincidence that the heart and soul of the first and last books both have the number “19” in them, and that these are the only psalms that have this number?⁵ It is quite likely not accidental at all. But what might account for such placement?⁶

⁴ See **Gerald H. Wilson**, “Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms,” in J. Clinton McCann (ed.), *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 79 [72-82].

⁵ The Hebrew Bible marks the number of the Psalms this same way, and the way they wrote out their numbers for 19 and 119 have the same immediate similarity they do in English.

⁶ The following is a very brief summary of the fascinating article **Alan Lenzi**, “The Metonic Cycle, Number Symbolism, and the Placement of Psalms 19 and 119 in the MT Psalter,” *JSTOT* 34.4 (2010): 464 [447-473].

http://www.academia.edu/1109219/The_Calendrical_Basis_for_the_Placement_of_Psalms_19_and_119_in_the_Masoretic_Psalter

The argument revolves around (pardon the pun), of all the strange things, the calendar—specifically something called [the Metonic Cycle](#). The Metonic Cycle is called in Greek: *Enneadecaeteris* or “[nineteen years](#).” See a reason why this might be related already? Our modern year is what is known as a [solar year](#). We mark a year by the cycle of the earth moving around the sun. This takes approximately 365 days to complete one cycle. But other civilizations used [the moon](#) rather than the sun to determine their year. These are called Lunar Calendars. Lunar calendars work much better on a month system rather than a yearly one (29 or 30 days).

The problem with Lunar Calendars is that the average 12-month lunar year is only 354 days. And so, after just nine solar years, a lunar calendar would be off by three solar months. Soon, you will have winter months warm and summer months very cold. Imagine being a farmer under this system! Well, the Jews used a lunar calendar during at least the early centuries of their existence.

To solve this problem, it was discovered by the Persians that approximately 19 solar years have about the same number of days as 235 lunar months. Knowing this, they could add extra months approximately every three years,

and they added a second month on the special 18th year. This allowed them to keep the seasons regular. This became known as a lunisolar calendar. And so with a special 18th year, each cycle, like a new creation, would **begin anew on the 19th year.**

Thus, the suggestion is that some creative scribe (perhaps Ezra) decided to mark the heart and soul of the first and last books of the psalter with the same numerical placement of the only two songs (outside of Psalm 1) that focus the center of their attention on Torah. It would have been a clever memory device at the very least. But more, it made the placement serve a theological purpose, adding to the significance of the songs as they both discuss how the heavens (in Psalm 19 it is specifically the sun) have such an affinity to Torah. Their placement speaks to and serves a kind of symbolic function of a new creation. N-n-n-n nineteen!

Creation's Voice: Psalm 19:1-6 and Genesis 1

With what I hope is therefore an interesting and helpful way for you to begin thinking about Psalm 19, let's move

into the song itself. For the song teaches us about **the relationship of Torah to creation**. Again, it is a “**Psalm of David**.” And again, it is “**to the choirmaster**,” or “**For the End**.” It begins by taking our minds to the beginning, and then moves us to the present, and finally to the consummation of all things in The End who is Jesus Christ. In fact, what I’m going to suggest to you is that the first six verses, while speaking about creation, actually teach us five specific things about Jesus Christ. He is the glory, the word, the sun, the bridegroom, and the strong man of these verses.

Glory

“**The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork**” (**Psalm 19:1**). Our minds are taken to the very first verse of the Bible: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (**Gen 1:1**). There is beautiful parallelism in this verse:

The <u>heavens</u>	...	<u>declare</u>	...	The <u>glory</u> of God
The <u>sky</u> above	...	<u>proclaims</u>	...	His <u>handiwork</u>

Heavens parallels sky; declare parallels proclaims; glory

parallels handiwork. **Glory** is the word *kavod*. The psalms have talked about glory before, but it has always been the Psalmist's glory (3:4; 4:3; 7:6; 8:6; 16:9). This is the first time we learn about *God's* glory.

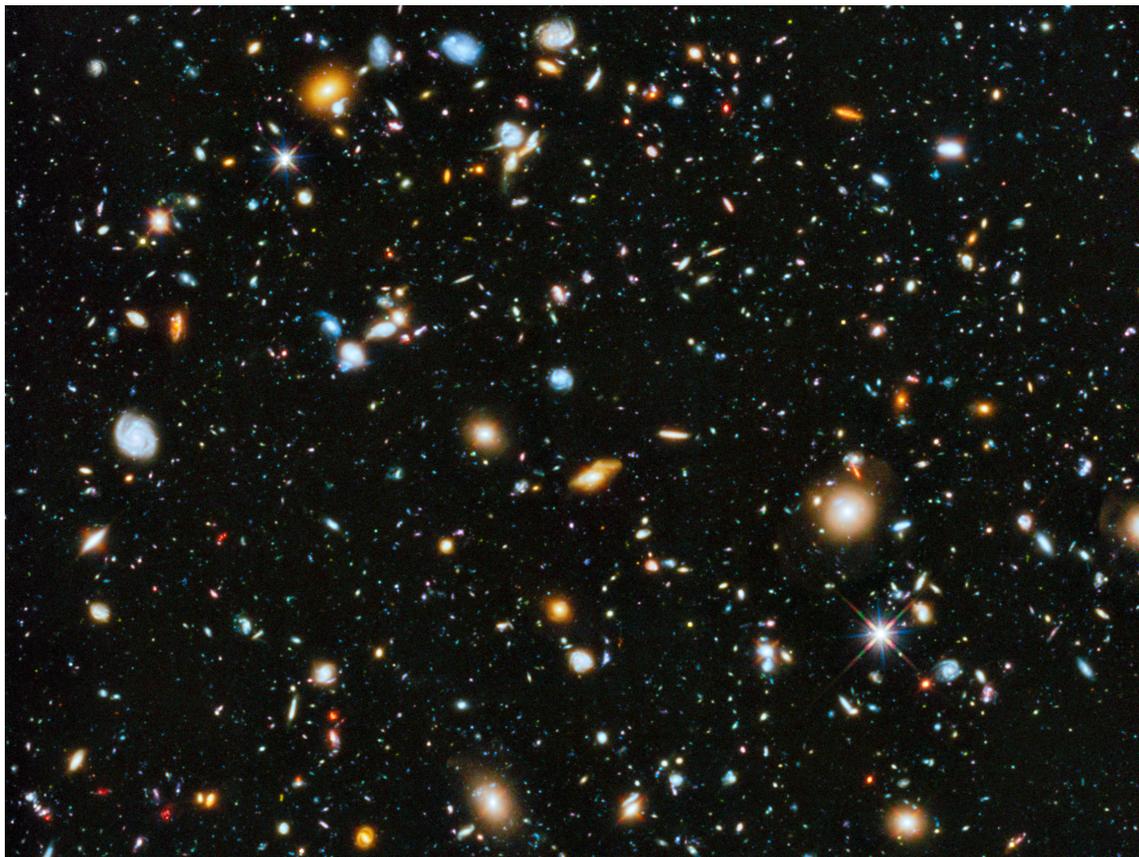
The word literally refers to **heaviness or weightiness**. Certainly, God is a weighty topic! God's glory is his honor (1Ti 1:17), his righteousness (Ps 115:1), his authority, his transcendence (Isa 6:3), and his power (Ps 29:1). And the word is often connected with manifestations of light (Isa 59:19; 60:1).⁷ Curiously, the word is also paralleled with a humanlike figure in Ezekiel. The prophet sees “**the likeness as the appearance of a man**” (Ezek 1:26), but then concludes it is “**the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the LORD**” (vs. 28), and later, the Glory IS the LORD (9:3-4). Thus, John will say of the “light” coming into the world, we beheld *his* glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (John 1:4, 14).

The heavens are full of **lights**, and though we will see one particular light more specifically as the song continues,

⁷ William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 151; Gregory R. Lanier, “Glory,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

here it is enough to say that what he has placed in the heavens is his handiwork. These lights are his creations. And they are speaking of the glory of the LORD.

David could not have imagined what we now know about the lights of the heavens. In the now famous **Hubble Ultra-Deep Field** picture taken between 2003-04, scientists deliberately pointed the Hubble Telescope into the absolute darkest part of the sky, in part so that they could get the best possible picture of whatever might happen to get there, which many presumed was pretty much nothing.



Hubble Ultra Deep Field

The size of space they were looking into would look no bigger to your eye than a 1mm by 1mm square of paper held 1 meter from your eye. What they found was simply astonishing. An estimated 10,000 *galaxies* full of stars! And that's only what they could see.

To put that into perspective, there are only 9,096 visible individual *stars* across the entire sky—both hemispheres, so less stars than there were galaxies in this field of vision. But each galaxy contains, if they are just the equivalent of the Milky Way, an estimated 100-400 billion stars. And that's only in an area 1/13,000,000 of the total area of the sky.

One estimate of the total galaxies in the known observable universe is 10 Trillion, which would mean that there are 10^{24} (a septillion) stars out there. To put that into perspective, you could fit 1.8 trillion pennies into the Empire State Building. So you would need 864 quintillion Empire State Buildings to fit these pennies all into. But these are stars that are trillions of times bigger than pennies! This is God's handiwork. This is God's glory, power, and because he stands above it all, his transcendence. No mind can fathom this.

Word: General or Natural Revelation

Therefore, probably the most important part of Psalm 19:1 are the verbs: “**declare**” and “**proclaim**.” These refer to speech. They are a form of God’s word. In other words, **God is speaking through the heavens (through Torah, then David)**. The heavens themselves cry out, “**This God is glorious!**” This language continues into the next three verses. The context now moves to the earth. “**Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge**” (**Ps 19:2**). Again, the same kind of parallelism:

<u>Day to day</u>	... <u>pours out</u>	... <u>speech</u>
<u>Night to night</u>	... <u>reveals</u>	... <u>knowledge</u>

We now have two verbs: “**declare**” (*saphar*), “**proclaim**” (*nagad*), and one noun “**speech**” (*emer*) that all reveal to us “**knowledge**” (*daath*). This is no secret knowledge, no hidden knowledge, no *gnosis* of God. It is plain and evident to everyone. Paul, reflecting perhaps on this very passage says “**what may be known about God is plain ... because God has shown it**” (**Rom 1:19**). And what has he shown? “**His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine**

nature” (20). In other words, his glory. These are “clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” And therefore, everyone knows God. This is why Psalm 14 began, “The fool has said in his heart there is no God.” But alas, men suppress the truth, because they are wicked.

David is not reflecting upon the state of man here, but simply on the revelation of God to them. Theologians call this kind of revelation “general” or “natural” revelation. General, because it comes to all people. Natural because it comes from nature. This is God’s word to everyone. It goes out everywhere. Thus the psalm continues, “There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard” (Ps 19:3).

Again, we have three words, this time three nouns: “speech” (*emer*), “words” (*dabar*), and “voice” (*qol*). Greek word for “words” here is the plural of *logos*. These each points to the verb “heard,” which in Hebrew is *shema*. “Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One” (Dt 6:4). This is David’s Shema of natural revelation.

The next verse completes the theme. “Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the

world” (Ps 19:4a). In a remarkable presentation at Desiring God’s national conference a couple of years ago, Louie Giglio put together a mash up of sounds from the Vela Pulsar (yes, stars makes noise), 16 millisecond pulsars in the star cluster 47 Tuc--the brightest globular cluster in the night sky, and some humpback whales (he must have been watching Star Trek IV recently), and created what can only be described as an awe inspiring, completely natural (i.e. from nature) instrumental that became the music for Chris Tomlin’s song “How Great is Our God.”⁸ He was trying to show that quite literally, their voice goes out, and now we even have the instruments that are able to receive their sounds.



⁸ You can find a Youtube video of the presentation here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hd_iK6IMHCE

I like the idea of putting a song like that to such music. He doesn't play the whole song, but the end of it says:

The Godhead Three in One
Father Spirit Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb ...
Name Above All Names
Worthy of all praise

So what are these words of heaven directing us to see with our mind's eyes? Remember, the language is crystal clear here. All of these words: *declare, proclaim, speech, words, voice, and hearing*, they all point us to God's invisible Word. For that is what these words are—words about the Word. Holy Scripture tells us, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made**” (**John 1:1-3**). This is the Apostle's commentary of **Genesis 1:1-3ff**, “**In the beginning God created the heavens and the**

earth ... and God said ... and God said ... and God said.”
And this language of David’s of heavens and earth, day and night, and speech is the language of Genesis 1.

Sun

But David is thinking about natural revelation, and somehow this means that even the pagans know God’s word. But how could they know it? The psalm continues with a key transition from 19:4a to 19:4b. The figure of the Word transforms into the image of the sun. The focus narrows now from all of the heavens to that great glowing orb of heat and light that gives life to all things on this planet. “In them he has set a tent for the sun” (Ps 19:4b). In what? In the heavens. In the heavens, God has placed the sun. In this way, the sun (*shemesh*) is viewed as the crowning achievement of God’s heavenly creations. Its voice is spectacular and absolutely stunning in what it sings to mankind.

Bridegroom

The metaphor of a tent moves us into poetic, even mythical language of the sun’s traverse across the sky. The

tent was a way ancient people's described the nighttime residence of the sun, after he set in the evening sky. Thus, in the next verse David uses the image of a bed chamber and a **bridegroom**. Darkness meant the sun was going into his tent, his chamber for the evening. Both depict the same thing, but differently. Now, the sun is personified as a bridegroom.

Strongman

And then he switches one more time to a strong man or giant running its course with joy (**Psalm 19:5**). The word used here is used to describe the LORD, the God of gods, the Lord of lords (**Dt 10:17**). This change signals that it is no longer the night, but the daytime that is in view. Let me explain these for a moment in the context in which they would have originally been understood. This is quite important.

Just What are the Heavens Declaring?

Ancient peoples thought of the stars, and the sun in particular, as a god. An Egyptian hymn to the sun god **Ra** uses imagery relevant to Psalm 19:

Hail to you, Re [the sun god], perfect each day, who rises at
dawn without failing ...
Fine gold does not match your splendor ... [cf. v. 10]
When you cross the sky all faces see you ...
In a brief day you race a course....

Similarly, A Mesopotamian hymn to **Shamash** [note the similarities to the Hebrew word for “sun” above], their sun god, declares: “You cross regularly through the heavens, every day you traverse the vast earth.” Mesopotamian texts also portray the sun-god retreating to his chamber each night to be with his bridal consort, Aya: “**Shamash has betaken himself to his chamber.**”⁹

Here we are walking on a razor’s edge, and some fall upon its sharp point to their own peril. Liberals love connections like these because they think that in them they can find the seeds of reason for destroying orthodoxy. For example, while the Egyptian sun god was a male, **Shemesh** was a female (the moon god was the male). The Hebrew

⁹ See **John H Walton**, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 335–336.

word can be masculine or feminine in form. “Ah!” they think, “Hints of goddess worship in Israel.” Thus one writes, “The psalm in fact described a tent set for Sun, and then the bridegroom, who was another deity, leaving his chamber. This was originally the marriage of El the moon god and his bride the Sun. Their child was Venus, the Morning Star, but in Jerusalem he was Yahweh, the king.”¹⁰

But this is not how the Scripture uses the imagery at all. David here calls the sun the *bridegroom*, not the bride. Then there are prophecies such as Joel, “Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the drive her chamber” (Joel 2:16), and Malachi, “But for you who fear my Name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings” (Mal 4:2), and Ezekiel with a connection to Psalm 19:1, “The Glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east ... and the earth shone with his glory” (Ezek 43:2), and the very curious “Behold, the man whose name is the Branch ... shall build the temple of the

¹⁰ Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 153. Barker’s writings are often fascinating, always stimulating. She understands, for example, divine council theology very well. But her moderate liberalism can be difficult to stomach.

LORD” (Zech 6:12), where “branch” becomes the eastern sunrise in the LXX.¹¹

So guess how this imagery is taken up in the NT. While Christ is called the morning star (2Pe 1:19; Rev 2:28, 22:16), in the birth narratives of Jesus he is the product of a *virgin* birth. There was no consort of the Father giving birth to Jesus. Rather, it was the virgin Mary. In his account, Luke tells us that Zechariah the father of John the Baptist prophesized, “You child [John] will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high” (Luke 1:76-78). Commentators tells us, “Messiah is intended by ‘rising sun,’ which is confirmed when one examines the messianic background of the term *anatolē*. God will visit his people in Messiah, the coming light.”¹² Jesus is the Sun and the Morning Star because he is both the One God and the

¹¹ The word is *antole*. The verbal form *antello* (“rise”) translates imagery of the sunrise (Mal 4:2). There is a slight word association between branch (*tsemach*) and sun (*shemesb*) in the Hebrew. See David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 265 and Barker, 133.

¹² Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 1:1–9:50*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 191.

Second Person of the Trinity.

And of course, there is the whole **bridegroom theme**. Our Lord says, “**Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast**” (**Matt 9:15**). Jesus sees himself as the Bridegroom! (see also **John 2:9; 3:29; Rev 18:23**).

Thus, the Father’s can come to our rescue if we go astray. Novatian said, “**He it is who ‘comes forth as a bridegroom from his bridal chamber.’ For he returns even to the height; ‘since no one has ascended into heaven except him who has descended from heaven, the Son of man ... This Word descended from heaven as a bridegroom to take on our flesh**” (**Novatian, On the Trinity 13.4-5**). Fulgentius, “**For in the one person of the only-begotten God, who ‘like a bridegroom comes out from his wedding canopy,’ the union of each nature remains inseparable**” (**Fulgentius of Ruspe, Letter 14.11**). And Augustine, “**Coming first into the virginal womb, where the human creature, our mortal flesh, was joined to him that it might not be forever mortal—and came ‘as a bridegroom coming out his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.’ For he did not delay but ran**

through the world, crying out by words, deeds, death, life, descent, ascension—crying aloud to us to return to him” (Augustine, *Confessions* 4.12.19). And again:

So he came forth today like a bridegroom from his sacred chamber, and as the psalm continues, he exulted as a giant to run the course (Ps 19:5). He came forth as a bridegroom, he exulted as a giant. Beautiful and strong; beautiful as a bridegroom, strong as a giant. Beautiful so as to be loved, strong so as to be feared; beautiful to give pleasure, strong to win victories ... Christ could not be afraid of the death he had spontaneously taken on. That’s why it is said, He exulted as a giant to run the course. He came down, you see, and ran; he ascended, and took his seat.

(Augustine, Sermon 372: On the Lord’s Nativity)

Martin Luther translated an old song by Ambrose (which Augustine actually made his parishioners sing the very day he quoted the above).

Come now, Savior of the nations

Known to be the child of the Virgin
All the world marvels that God
Would prepare such a birth for him

He left his chamber
The royal hall so pure.
God by origin, and man, a champion,
He hurries to run his course.

His course originated with the Father
And returned again to the Father
Went below to hell
And back again to God's seat¹³

And thus Luther concluded, “It all refers to the daybreak of the Gospel.”

Jonathan Edwards said something similar, “The Holy Ghost, in these expressions [Ps 19:4-6] which he most immediately uses about the rising of the sun, has an eye to the rising of the Sun of Righteousness from the grave ... The Sun of Righteousness rises from under the earth, as the

¹³ In [Anne Leahy](#), J. S. Bach's 'Leipzig Chorale Preludes: Music, Text, Theology, Contextual Bach Studies, No. 3, ed. Robin A. Leaver (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 139.

sun appears to do in the morning, and comes forth as a bridegroom. He rose as the joyful glorious bridegroom of his church.”¹⁴ In these ways, the first half of Psalm 19, which has been all about the Word, climaxes with a mysterious prophecy of the coming of the Son of God/Sun of Righteousness in the flesh.

The creation itself sings the praises of *Christ*. Even the pagans know something about the Son. The Greeks knew the *logos* through philosophy, but perverted it. Egyptian priests told about it in their own mythology of Ra, but worshiped the creation instead of the Creator.¹⁵ The magi knew of the coming of Messiah through astral prophecy and star alignment.¹⁶ This is exactly Paul’s argument in Romans 10 when, after saying “So faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (10:17) asks, “But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for ‘Their voice

¹⁴ Jonathan Edwards, Misc. #328 in *Notes on Scripture*, ed. Stephen J. Stein, vol. 15 of Works of Jonathan Edwards (1998), 311.

¹⁵ This is exactly Lewis’ point when notices many similarities between the Christian story and the pagan myths and says that this is exactly what we should expect to find if the Christian story is true, for that would mean that God had told everyone about it ahead of time in various ways. See C. S. Lewis, *Is Theology Poetry?* (Originally presented to the Oxford Socratic Club in 1944, first published in 1962, and republished by Samizdat University Press, 2014), 8-9. http://www.samizdat.qc.ca/arts/lit/Theology=Poetry_CSL.pdf, last accessed 12-8-2016.

¹⁶ Dr. Heiser has a fascinating study of how this could be from Revelation 12. See Revelation 12, Astral Prophecy and the Birth of Christ on 911, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O44nNzRa81Q>, last accessed 12-8-2016.

has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world’” (18). This is a citation of Psalm 19:4. The voice about what? The voice about Malachi’s Sun of God. But this is still only natural revelation. Something more is needed, and needed quite badly.

Torah’s Voice: Psalm 19:7-14 and Genesis 2-3

We do not actually hit the center and high point of the poem until we come to **vs. 7**. Here, the tone whole poem shifts so suddenly that even someone as well versed in poetry as C. S. Lewis said, “**The actual words supply no logical connection between the first and second movements.**”¹⁷ But scholars since Lewis have come to see that this is far from true. In fact, what they have shown is a remarkable relationship where the first half of the poem reflects on Genesis 1 and the second half on Genesis 2-3.¹⁸ First though, we need to look at the main theme.

Verse 7 introduces us to “the law.” The word here is *torah*. We have heard about it already this morning.

¹⁷ Lewis, 54.

¹⁸ In the discussion of this that follows below, I am using especially David J. A. Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh (Psalm 19),” *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 8-14.

Translated by the ESV, LXX, and KJV as “law,” Jewish translations go with the transliteration “Torah” (Targum, CJB) or the translation “teaching” (TNK). This important word *torah* derives from the verb *yarah* which means “teach” or “instruct.” This is a helpful observation, because we refer to the first five books of Moses as the Torah. But these books contain a lot more than just laws. In fact, there are hardly any laws in the first book 69 chapters of the Bible. It is all history. But it is instructive history, isn’t it?¹⁹

If we think of *torah* as being instruction which includes laws but is a broader topic than just law, it helps us understand vv. 7-9. Here, David finds five other words that are companion terms that help define *torah*: **testimony** (*eduth/maturia*), **precepts** (*piqqud/dikaioma*), **commandment** (*mitzvah/entole*), **fear** (*yirah/phobos*), and **rules** (*mishpat/krima*). Some of these clearly refer to laws. But others don’t really fit that idea very well at all. Why would he put “fear” as a synonym for laws?²⁰ Because it isn’t. It is a synonym for

¹⁹ For a good short discussion see Gordon Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 4. Thank you Ron Thomas for pointing me to this article.

²⁰ *Yirah* is very close to *yarah* (instruct). There are several other lists like these throughout the OT, but are found especially in Deuteronomy and the Kings. Here is a sampling (see below):

torah. The fear of the Lord is his instructions. The testimony (which is God’s word again), is his instructions. In this broad sense then, the entire word of God can be considered Torah, because it is all his word, his instruction to man.

This helps explain to some degree the psalmists response to torah. It “revives the soul,” and “makes the wise simple” (Ps 19:7), and “rejoices the heart,” and “enlightens the eyes” (8). Certainly, when you keep the laws of God, they do these things. And yet, what about when you break his laws? Do they then revive your soul? Do they rejoice your heart? No. But the gospel within *torah* certainly does! And God never gives his law without also giving us his gospel.

What we are talking about now is what theologians refer to as special revelation. It is a different word or speech of

		Gn 26:5 Obey	Dt 8:6 Keep	Dt 11:1 Love	Dt 26:17 Walk	Dt 30:16 Love/Walk	1Kgs 2:3 Keep	Ps 19	Ps 119
English	Hebrew								
Charge	<i>mishmereth</i>								
Commandments	<i>mitsvah</i>								
Statutes	<i>chugqah/choq</i>								
Laws	<i>torah</i>								
Ways	<i>derek</i>								
Fear	<i>yareh</i>								
Ordinances/Judgments	<i>mishpat</i>								
Voice	<i>gol</i>								
Testimonies	<i>eduth</i>								
Precepts	<i>piqqud</i>								
Word	<i>debar</i>								
Saying (word)	<i>imrah</i>								
Path	<i>nathib</i>								

God. This is not the knowledge we gain from science and looking at the heavens. It is the knowledge we get directly from his spoken/written word. One comes from his creation and is about him. The other comes straight from him and is about him. In the Psalm, torah is “to be desired more than gold” (10). It is “sweeter than honey” (10). In other words, *torah* is seen as even more glorious than the voice of God in the heavens. Why?

Because the heavens are but a mere reflection of *torah*, which sustains them. There is a conceptual relationship between the highest created thing in the psalm—the sun, and *torah*. The sun is a shining, golden thing. It is no coincidence that gold and honey are earthly counterparts to it. Both are golden. Both are shining. Thus, *torah* is compared to the sun itself in the images.

But *torah* does things that the sun and natural revelation cannot do. It makes a person wise (7). Wisdom is different from knowledge. You can be full of knowledge but be completely lacking in wisdom. Scientific atheists are an example. Conversely, you can be full of wisdom, but have very little knowledge. Wisdom is the fear of God.

It warns God’s servant (11). In another verbal stem, the

word for a “warning” here actually means to shine or be made bright, a similar idea to light and gold and the sun and honey. Torah illumines our minds, by warning us of moral danger. Studying the solar system can’t do that.

Similarly, through Torah you can **discern your errors** (12). When you are wrong about a thing, knowing torah puts your mind straight. God knows that we live in an age utterly void of discerning errors. Why? Because God’s word is utterly lacking from public discourse, even much of our church discourse. Right is wrong. Down is up. Left is right. Falsehood is truth. Bad is good. Male is female. Two is one. The relativism of our age knows no boundaries. Therefore, men are incapable of discerning errors. In fact, errors become truth. And a nation becomes utterly mad.

When you keep torah, there is **great reward** (11). It keeps you “**innocent of hidden faults**” (12). It keeps you from committing **presumptuous sins** (13). It keeps those sins from having **dominion** over you (13). How many people are enslaved to a certain sin? It is because Torah is not penetrating that part of their heart. It **makes one acceptable** in God’s sight (14). I’ll come back to this one at the end.

What I want to point out now, to help you remember

what you are reading here, is how all of this language actually takes us back to the **Garden of Eden** and especially to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This seems to be done deliberately so that Gen 1 = Ps 19:1-6 and Gen 2-3 = Psalm 19:7-14.

David says Torah *revives his soul*. This seems to be a metaphor for food which is said to revive the soul (**Lam 1:11; 1:19; Ps 23:3-5; Prov 24:14; Isa 65:1-3**). Similarly, in Eden the temptation was that the Tree was “**good for food**” (**Gen 3:6**).

David says the testimonies, that is God’s word as a witness is sure. It can be trusted, because *it makes wise the simple*. This is exactly what the Tree of Knowledge was said to be Eve as it was “**to be desired to make one wise**” (**Gen 3:6**).

David says the precepts of the LORD are right. That is, his commandments are right. *They rejoice the heart*. Certainly, this is exactly what Eve thought when she looked at the forbidden fruit. **Gen 2:9** had said that it was pleasant to the sight. Throughout the proverbs, wisdom makes a father rejoice (**Prov 10:1; 15:20**; etc.). Wisdom herself said, “**I was daily his [Yahweh’s] delight, rejoicing before him always**”

(8:30-31). If the fruit was actually a grape, as the parallel story with Noah getting drunk may imply and the Rabbis often taught, how much more as wine is said to “gladden the heart” (Ps 104:15).

David said the commandment of the LORD is pure. This is a parallel thought to the previous one. But now he says that it *enlightens the eyes*. After they ate, it says of our parents, “their eyes were opened” (Gen 3:7). But they were no longer pure. They knew that they were naked and sought to hide.

David next talks about the fear of the LORD. Why? It seems to out of place if he is talking about law. But not if he is recalling the Fall of Adam. The fear of the LORD is clean. Adam did not fear the LORD and became unclean. The fear of the LORD *endures forever*. Adam did not endure forever, but rather, *he died*. In eating of that Tree, the opposite obtained.

Hence the conclusion is that *the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether*. And therefore they are to be desired more than gold. It reminds me to the “It is good” pronouncement throughout Genesis 1. Except that now, it is now creation that is good, but *torah*. Torah is better than

creation as a voice of God because it alone has the power to affect divine human relations in a positive way. We need God's special revelation if we are to be saved.

Thus, *it serves as a warning* to the servant of the LORD. Keeping them brings great reward. They allow one to discern their errors. Curiously, Torah allows God to declare him innocent from hidden faults (12). This can only be if Torah is a broader idea than Law, but that it also includes even the gospel.

Perhaps *two more links* with the Genesis story end the psalm. *Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins* (13). At the end of the verse this turns into “*great transgression.*” This certainly fits with Adam. And then it says, “*Let them not have dominion over me!*” This recalls what God told Cain, “*Sin is crouching and its desire is for you, but you must master it*” (Gen 4:7). The word “master” is the same word as “dominion” here. If you do this, then you will be blameless.

The Psalmist's Voice: The Meditations of my Heart

But alas, who can do these things? The Psalm finishes with these striking words. “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight.” This is one of the most famous closing lines of any part of the Bible. And now the focus moves from the voice of creation, to the voice of Torah, to finally the voice of the Psalmist. **The words of my mouth.** What words come from your mouth as response to these things?

There are David’s word of response. “O LORD, my rock and my redeemer” (Ps 19:14). It is a confession of faith. But faith in what? **The Rock** takes us back to Psalm 18 where we saw that the Rock is Christ. “Redeemer” is the word *go’el*, and it is the same word used throughout the book of Ruth for the kinsman-redeemer.²¹ The *go’el* was usually the nearest of kin who had the legal and moral duty to

²¹ “The final word of the psalm, *gō’ēl*, translated here as *redeemer*, is language borrowed from the realm of kinship law. The *gō’ēl* refers to the next-of-kin who bears the responsibility to “buy back” or “redeem” a relative who had fallen into slavery (Lev. 25:48–49) or the responsibility to execute vengeance against someone who has murdered a kinsman (Num. 35:16–28). The poet closes this psalm by referring to God as a family member. Yet God is not just any family member. God is the family member who bears the responsibility to rescue the psalmist when the waters of life run too deep or to execute justice on the psalmist’s behalf when justice is beyond the psalmist’s grasp.” Rolf A. Jacobson and Beth Tanner, “Book One of the Psalter: Psalms 1–41,” in *The Book of Psalms*, ed. E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 212–213.

provide for a relative who needed help. God, in his divine essence, is *not* our kin! He is not like us.

It is the *Persons* of the Godhead, and not the divine nature that are our kin. The Son who became flesh has been called our **brother** (**Heb 2:12**). Through the Son, we have a heavenly **Father**. By the Holy Spirit we are adopted into God's royal family by faith. **The Son is the Kinsman** who redeems his people.

He is the Glory of God. He is God's Word that spoke all things into existence and the heavens declare him. He is the Sun of righteousness, and nothing is hidden from the heat of his sight.²² "His judgments are true and just, for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants" (**Rev 19:2**). He is the bridegroom and he has taken a bride from among the nations, and even today he is calling her and washing her with his word by his Spirit. She is

²² This phrase refers to **Ps 19:6b**, which Lewis calls the key phrase of the whole poem. Craigie comments on it, "The clause marks the transition between the two parts of the psalm and at the same time links them intimately together. Just as the sun dominates the daytime sky, so too does *Torah* dominate human life. And as the sun can be both welcome, in giving warmth, and terrifying in its unrelenting heat, so too the *Torah* can be both life-imparting, but also scorching, testing, and purifying. But neither are dispensable. There could be no life on this planet without the sun; there can be no true human life without the revealed word of God in the *Torah*." Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 183–184.

making herself ready. He is the Strongman, mighty in battle, strong to save. He is the giver and obeyer of Torah. He is the Rock and the Redeemer. He is the point of Psalm 19 both in general and special revelation.

Now you, who have heard these things are without excuse doubly so. For his voice has gone out into all the world, and it has gone out into the congregation of his people, showing you his glory, telling you of his power, explaining to you just holiness, giving you his obedience, shining upon you his light, proclaiming to you his gospel. “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” Desire the LORD more than gold. Savor him more than honey. Delight in his light. Repent of your sins. Trust in Christ alone. And add your voice to the Psalmists and to millions of others who know of the great salvation, freedom, and hope that are in Christ alone. *Then* you will be acceptable in his sight, he will declare you innocent of hidden faults, and the curse brought about by our parents will be lifted from your heart, as God grants you eternal life forevermore. This is Psalm 19.

Two Chiasms:

- A) 19:1, The testimony of heaven: it glorifies God
 - B) 19:2-6, Their witness is obvious to all + cannot be hidden
 - C) 19:7-11a, Torah's Testimony is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, desirable, sweet**
 - B¹) 19:11b-13, My witness is in keeping Your word
 - 2a) 19:14 Let my testimony (mouth + heart) likewise be acceptable YHVH my strength + Redeemer
-
- 1a) Psa 19:11b, By them Your servant is warned + in keeping them there is great reward
 - 1b) Psa 19:12a, Who can understand his errors
 - 1c) Psa 19:12b, Cleanse me from secret faults
 - 2c) Psa 19:13a, Keep me back from presumptuous sins
 - 2b) Psa 19:13b, Let them not have dominion over me
 - 2a) Psa 19:13b, Then I shall be blameless + innocent of great transgression

First stanza (v. 2–7)

Central stanza (v. 8–11)

Last Stanza (v. 12–15)