

## Study 5 - NATURAL KNOWLEDGE AND REVEALED KNOWLEDGE - 1

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (**Romans 8:6**)

### Introduction

God reveals His glory to us through revelation – spiritual “vision,” knowledge, and understanding. Receiving revelation from God is an essential step to living perpetually in the glory of His presence. “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). To understand what revelation is, so that we may receive it, we need to recognize that there are two types of knowledge: (1) knowledge that comes through our physical senses – mental, sensorial, or natural knowledge, and (2) knowledge (and wisdom) that comes directly from God – revealed knowledge, or spiritual revelation.

The first type of knowledge is scientific, theoretic, and practical. It is experienced through our five senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. It is information or storable data acquired from and implemented in the natural world. Mental, sensorial, or natural knowledge must be sought after – an act that demands academic learning and discipline. People who live according to this type of knowledge often believe only in what their senses detect, nothing more.

Yet one cannot know God and His glory through sensorial information alone – even though such information is vital for living in the natural dimension of earth. God created the earthly dimension, and He manifest Himself in it, although He does not belong to it. He is beyond it. We must learn to distinguish between the two types of knowledge and receive revealed knowledge from God. To help us do so, in this study, we will take an overview of what the Bible says about these two realms of knowledge and what they teach us about God.

### Study Questions

#### Part I: Helpful Lessons from the Natural World

Even though we live in a fallen world, God uses our physical environment on earth and aspects of our daily lives to reveal Himself and His truths. In the following questions, we will explore various examples of this type of revelation from God.

1. Lesson #1: God reveals His majesty through the created world.

(a) As a review from Study 1, what do the heavens declare? (Psalm 19:1a)

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(b) How widespread is their communication? (Verse 4)

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(c) What can human beings “see” from the created world? (Romans 1:20a)

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(d) What are those attributes? (Verse 20b)

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2. Lesson #2: God demonstrates wisdom for our lives through the traits of various animals, which He created to live in our physical world.

(a) What should a lazy person – and anyone else who wants to gain wisdom – observe about the ways of the ant? (Proverbs 6:6-8)

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(b) If we do not exercise diligence in providing for our basic needs, as illustrated by the ant – if we sleep when we should be working, for example (see Proverbs 6:10) – what may happen to us? (Verse 11)

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3. Lesson #3: God uses the natural development and qualities of plant species, as well as the process of cultivation, to teach eternal spiritual principles.

(a) What qualities and effects did Jesus note about a mustard seed that is sown into the ground, in comparing it with the kingdom of God? (Mark 4:31b-32)

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(b) Using the illustration of planting and harvesting a crop, what did the apostle Paul say a person will reap? (Galatians 6:7b)

(c) What will we reap if we sow to the flesh, and what will we reap if we sow to the Spirit? (Verse 8)

4. Lesson #4: God uses analogies related to human skills and endeavours to teach people about their relationship with Him.

(a) What did the Lord tell the prophet Jeremiah he needed to do before hearing His words? (Jeremiah 18:2a)

(b) Describe what Jeremiah observed at the potter's house. (Verse 3-4)

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(c) What was the spiritual meaning of this illustration? Complete the following:

Verse 6b: "... as the \_\_\_\_\_ is in the \_\_\_\_\_, so are \_\_\_\_\_, O house of Israel!"

**Reason, common sense, and logic serve the soul as revelation serves the spirit.**

5. Lesson #5: God discusses proverbial sayings and common human experiences with people to get them to think about spiritual realities.

(a) Jesus referred to a saying that farmers quoted after they'd planted the seed for their crops. What was that saying? (John 4:35a)

(b) In relation to this saying, what new spiritual reality did Jesus want His disciples to recognize, which He stated, beginning with the words "*Behold, I say to you...*"? (Verse 35b)

(c) What did Jesus say about the weather as He addressed the multitudes? (Luke 12:54-55 NIV)

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(d) What point did Jesus make to the multitudes as a follow-up to these sayings, in order to warn them of their carelessness about spiritual matters? (Verse 56 NIV)

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### **Part II: Limitations of Natural Knowledge**

As we have seen, aspects of the natural world, such as the functions of plants and animals, are instructive and helpful for gaining wisdom. However, natural knowledge can take us only so far, especially when it is influenced by the fallen nature. We must receive God's revelation in various forms – through His Word, His Spirit, His gifts, and other spiritual phenomena – to understand deeper spiritual reality, so that we may know God and His glory and manifest Him to the world.

6. (a) To review, what action did Adam and Eve take, believing it would enable them to expand their knowledge of divine things – an action that involved disobeying God’s command? (Genesis 3:6)

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(b) While they must have sensed their spiritual failure and loss, what knowledge did they immediately gain? (Verse 7a)

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(c) What type of knowledge was it – knowledge of the physical realm or of the spiritual realm? (Verse 7a)

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7. (a) What statement did Jesus make to Nicodemus that emphasizes there is a significant distinction between the natural and spiritual realms? (John 3:6)

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(b) Of what two entities must we be “*born again*” (John 3:3) in order to both see and enter the kingdom of God? (John 3:5)

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8. (a) Can the physical senses of seeing and hearing, or even man’s natural intellect or imagination, know what God has in mind for those who love Him? (1 Corinthians 2:9)

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(b) By what means do human beings gain such knowledge? (Verse 10a)

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(c) What have believers received, and what have they not received, in order to know what God has freely given to them? (1 Corinthians 2:12a)

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**REFLECTIONS ON THE MIND OF FALLEN HUMANITY**

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they essentially decided to rely on natural knowledge more than spiritual knowledge by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result of their sin, spirits died. Moreover, they went from having both kinds of knowledge – natural and revealed – to having only natural knowledge, that is mental and sensorial knowledge. If you base your life on natural knowledge alone, what you perceive is only a shadow of what truly is. Your vision has become distorted.

A lack of revealed knowledge is a characteristic of spiritual death because we do not live according to spiritual reality. Anytime we try to trust in natural knowledge to operate in the supernatural, we are essentially eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Natural knowledge offers information, such as facts or data, but it does not have the ability to effect lasting transformation because it come from the fallen mind of man, not from the mind of God. Revealed knowledge supersedes every rational analysis and carries with it the intrinsic power to transform.

Part III: Consequences of a Lack of Revealed Knowledge

What was the ultimate consequence for Adam and Eve after they disobeyed God and were cut off from their spiritual Source? (Genesis 3:19b; Romans 6:23a)

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Contrast what it means to be carnally minded (having the mind-set of the fallen nature) and what it means to be spiritually minded. (Romans 8:6)

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**Adam and Eve exchanged spiritual, revealed knowledge for sensorial knowledge.**

11. (a) What did the Lord say Israel had done in rejecting Him and worshipping man-made idols instead? Complete the following:

Jeremiah 2:11b: “My people have \_\_\_\_\_  
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 \_\_\_\_\_.”

(b) The people committed two evils in making this change. Their first evil was forsaking God. In doing so, what “*foundation*” did they lose? (Verse 13a)

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(c) The second evil was that they hewed cisterns for themselves, instead of receiving water from God’s fountain. What were the only kind of cisterns they were capable of building? (Verse 13b)

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12. In our previous study, we learned that God’s invisible attributes may be recognized and understood through the world He has created.

(a) What can happen to people when they reject the revealed knowledge of God and refuse to glorify and thank Him? (Romans 1:21b)

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(b) When people profess to be wise based only on their carnal knowledge, into what image of worship do they change the glory of the incorruptible God? (Verse 23b)

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(c) For what do they exchange the truth of God? (Romans 1:25a)

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(d) When people do not want to retain God in their knowledge, what kind of mind might He give them over to? (Verse 28a)

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(e) What else might God give them up to, and what does this lead to? (Verse 24)

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13. What predicament were the Israelites in at the time Samuel the prophet was born, a problem that indicated their spiritual poverty? (1 Samuel 3:1b)

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14. In the following Bible translations of Proverbs 29:18, what happens to people who have no revelation (“*vision*” KJV), or revealed knowledge, from God?

(a) NKJV, NIV: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) KJV: \_\_\_\_\_

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15. What similar idea was conveyed by God through the prophet Hosea? (Hosea 4:6a)

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***The enemy will destroy you in any area where you lack knowledge.***

### **Prayer of Activation**

Father of glory, in the name of Jesus, we ask You to forgive us for having conformed to religion, legalism, and empty traditions. Release upon us a hunger and thirst for Your kingdom and glory. Use us as vessels of clay, chosen to manifest Your glory as we live our lives. Impart the fire of Your presence to us, right now, so we will never again be passive Christians but active and bold ones. We commit to make ourselves available to You, to surrender our bodies as living sacrifices, and to obey Your Word. We want to be a part of the remnant You are raising to manifest Your glory in these last days. We receive everything we have asked for, right now, as we go out into a lost world in the name and power of Jesus. Amen!