

The Natural Realm  
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## The Natural Realm pt. 1

I had actually started a message from Ephesians chapter 6 to share today, and I felt redirected in my heart to share something today about the natural realm. My wife and I got into a conversation that had to do with how God relates to the natural realm. And the more we talked about it, the more I felt like I wanted to share a few things. I felt like maybe some things that we have seen of the Lord could have led us to draw some wrong conclusions.

It is very possible to have a carnal reaction to a spiritual revelation. Do you know what I mean by that? I mean that it is very possible to genuinely see something in the spirit and yet still respond to it with the flesh. Or to see something in the light, and then try to understand it with the flesh. Or try to make application with the flesh or to the flesh. God is always trying to communicate to us. He is always trying to teach us. And even though we see something that is from God, we often use our own understanding, draw our own conclusions, or make a fleshly application.

And the reason I'm saying that is this...As we have begun to see Lord it has certainly had an effect on how we understand God's relationship to the earth. When you begin to understand the cross as a division between the old and the new, the first and the second, old creation and the new creation, and you begin to understand that God is dealing with a people in his Son, it naturally changes the way you understand His relationship to the earth. It's not something that you have to try to change, it's something that just changes quite effortlessly as your heart sees the Lord.

You start to see where He is, and you recognize where He's not. You start to see what He's doing and therefore what He's not. Truth begins to have this effect in us.

But as that change begins to happen on us, it's not difficult for us to jump to conclusions that aren't from the Lord. Let me try to explain what I'm getting at. Prior to my letting the light begin to show me who God really was, what God had really done, what God was really like, I had firmly in place a whole bunch of religious imaginations. I suppose it is the same with all of you. I had all kinds of ideas about what God was doing today. I had all kinds of ideas about what God wanted to do tomorrow. The natural realm was the realm that was most important to me, in fact it was the only realm that I could access with my natural senses. And therefore as a Christian much of what I did in terms of my relationship to God had to do with trying to figure out what God was trying to say about **my** life, what he was trying to do in **this particular day**, how he was trying to guide **this particular decision**, how I was supposed to listen to his instructions in this situation, etc.

So I lived my life like that for a number of years. "God thank you for this parking space." "God what color should I paint my bedroom?" "Father show me what I should do today after work." "Lord what is the purpose for having me live in this house and go to this school." "Lord what you want me to be when I grow up?"

“Who you want me to talk to today?” These are those kinds of thoughts I had when relating to the Lord, and each of these thoughts were my thoughts. They were my attempts to bring God into my realm, and to makes the things that are most important to me also important to God. That’s what we do. That’s what the natural mind does. **It accesses the natural realm through five senses. And it reads about the spiritual realities of God in a book. And then it assumes that God’s purposes, God’s agenda, God’s attention, is in the realm that we know by sight. Simply put, we want Him to guide us through OUR lives.**

But you see, all of that begins to change when we truly begin to see the Lord. And I think that most everyone in this room has probably experienced some of that in the last few years. The cross becomes this gigantic division. The cross becomes, as we’ve been talking about in the sanctification messages, the way that God has put away the first from himself. The cross is the end of God’s relationship to the first man, the first creation, the first covenant. And these things are more than just theologies to us when we began to see the Lord. These are things that not only are written as words in our Bibles, but they began to be obvious and real experiences of our heart.

**We begin to recognize that God’s purposes are not in the earth.** God doesn’t have a purpose for what color I paint my house. Gods eternal plan does not have to do with what job I choose. God doesn’t necessarily have anything He wants me to do right now. God’s desires and expectations are not in the natural realm or for the natural man. God’s expectations and desires rest safely in Christ. And the purpose that God has for us, is not what we do today on earth, what we say today with our lips, whether we follow his instructions with our hands, etc. **God’s purpose for you is Christ. Christ given, Christ known, Christ formed, Christ glorified in your soul. This is God’s purpose. And that purpose can have outward expression in many things that are done and said. But nothing that we do or say in the earth is God’s purpose.**

So all of that starts to feel real to our hearts. I mean, natural things begin to appear quite different to us. In many ways, they lose the relevance that we have given to them with our natural minds. They lose spiritual relevance. Generally, they never really had spiritual relevance to begin with. But they lose the relevance that we invented and projected onto them. You see, that is what we have been trying to do. We have been trying to give spiritual relevance to natural things. In other words, we have been trying to give our **own** relevance to the natural things that we think are important.

And we do this for a couple of reasons. Part of the reason is that we don’t understand God’s relationship to humanity, or what He’s doing in the earth. And the other reason is a bit uglier. The other reason we give spiritual relevance to natural life is because we love to feel important. **We love to have a perfectly spiritual reason why everything natural is happening in our life.** We love to feel like God is on our team. That he is behind the things that are most important to us. That we are each on our own individual and private mission from God, and every detail of my day, my thoughts, my plans and dreams, is even more important to God than it is to me. Everyone loves to feel that way.

And please don’t misunderstand me. It’s not that we do not have a wonderful and real and personal relationship with God. It’s not that God hasn’t given himself to you as the present and eternal life of your soul. **It’s just the nature of the**

**relationship that we misunderstand. We misunderstand the nature of his relationship with us, because the nature of his relationship to us is Christ. And we misunderstand the nature of his relationship to the earth. Because the nature of his relationship to the earth is the cross.**

And that is why when Christ and him crucified begins to be a reality to our hearts by the revealing of the Spirit of God, everything begins to change in us. We begin to understand that Christ is our life. And therefore Christ, our life, is how we relate to the father. We have received His relationship with his father. The spirit of the Son cries out in our hearts "Abba father". As those who have been translated out of Adam and translated into Christ, we have to see Christ in order for us to understand the relationship that we have. And it's the same way with the Earth. The cross has changed God's relationship to the Earth. And we have to see the cross, understand the cross, know the reality of Christ and him crucified, before we begin to understand the nature of God's relationship to the Earth.

And that begins to work in us with the coming of Light. These things change from words to realities. But what I'm trying to get at is this. **It is very possible, it is actually extremely easy, to begin to see something by the spirit and then jump to conclusions with our natural mind.** And what I'm specifically talking about, this morning, are some wrong assumptions about the nature of God's relationship to the earth.

Throughout the messages that I gave on sanctification, I regularly made the statement that God has ended His relationship with the natural creation. What does that mean? Does that mean that God is utterly absent from your natural life? Does that mean that there is nothing in the Earth, on earth, that he has an opinion about, or cares about? What does it mean that God has ended his relationship with the natural creation?

Well, what WAS God's relationship to the natural creation? This is something very important for us to understand. We all know that God created Adam, and that Adam refused the tree of life, and that Adam fell from his purpose. And we all know that the Adamic nature filled the earth, and Man lived by the law of self-preservation and self-love. From God's perspective, he called it the law of sin and death. And we all know that God began to deal with Abraham and his descendents, and eventually established a covenant relationship with that nation of people in the earth. In other words, God bound himself to a certain kind of relationship, to the natural man in the natural creation.

So what was the nature of that relationship? We've looked at these things before, and I don't have time this morning to go into all of this in detail, but let me say a couple brief things. God took a people out of Egypt that he understood to be, through the death of his lamb, Israel my son. And he entered into a kind of relationship with them where everything they did, and everything they didn't do, everything they were commanded to keep, everything in this relationship had to do with this corporate peak fall walking in God's understanding of Christ. And so God specifically to hold them don't touch this, that is not supported the testimony of mice on. You must build this. You must never go here. You must always goes there. You must fight this battle. But don't fight that battle. You must celebrate this feast. But don't ever celebrate a feast of this god. All of this was God's instructions for so that a natural people could walk out a natural testimony of Christ in the natural realm.

**That is what I mean when I say that God established a natural relationship with the natural world. I don't mean that God became friends with the birds, and started socializing with humans. I mean God initiated a relationship with the natural man through natural commands that testified of spiritual things to come.**

And this relationship we read about in the Old Testament. And it was very specific with respect to what they could do and couldn't do. It was very specific with respect to what they could touch or couldn't touch, where they could go or couldn't go. And the reason it was so specific, is because every thing then they'd were commanded to do in the flesh was a physical material testimony, declaration, of something spiritual and eternal that was coming in Christ.

So the specific instructions, even in this covenant, did not have to do with painting houses blue because God likes the color blue. Or hearing from God how many kids to have, or involving God in our decision about what size home to build, or how to fulfill my purpose through my job, etc. **It's true that God had specific instructions. But those instructions all had to do with making this corporate people into a living testimony of Israel my son.**

**This** is the kind of relationship to the earth that God terminated. And this is where we get confused. One way we get confused, is that we read these stories of God's intricate involvement in the earth and we drag them over into the new covenant, right through the cross, and somehow apply them to all of the natural details of our personal lives. And we just cannot do that. Again, God's involvement in the natural realm in the old covenant was not for individual purposes, and individual instructions, for individual lives. He didn't tell Caleb the which wife he should choose. He didn't tell Joshua how many hours he should practice military strategy. He didn't tell Rahab how to discover her own personal purpose. Israel was a corporate body conforming to the reality and relationship of Israel my son.

So, very often, we start off by not understanding the nature of God's instructions, or why He was giving physical commands in natural circumstances. We read stories of God's involvement with people in the earth and draw our own conclusions. We apply these stories to our own lives according to our own ideas. And that is why, as I was saying, when the cross becomes more of a reality by faith, a lot of these kinds of mentalities begin to look silly to us. We cease praying about things that we recognize have no inherent spiritual relevance. We stop asking God to fix, and change, and bless, and guide in all of the things that are most important to us, as though by default they must be the things that are also most important to God.

But now try to listen to this. Another way that we also can misunderstand God's relationship to the earth is when we allow our imaginations to go too far in the other direction. Imaginations are dangerous on both sides of this issue. **We can imagine what it means for God to be related to the earth. And we can imagine what it means for God to be no longer relate here.**

The cross ended the old covenant. That is a fact. It ended God's detailed instructions and commandments with old covenant Israel. It ended them because they all were fulfilled in the resurrected Christ. But what does that mean? It means that God no longer had anything to say about how a high priest should dress. God, in fact, had nothing to say about a human priest ever again. Those instructions,

those detailed commandments, his involvement in those things, ceased when the true high priest was established forever in the heavens.

God no longer commanded Israel who they could marry and who they could not marry, where they should go, and where they should not go, how they should worship and how they should not worship. **All of these specific natural instructions were part of the testimony. And God stopped relating to specific natural requirements, and orders, and directions, and laws, when all of these things became spirit and truth in Christ.** We have to understand this because this is what we mean when we say that God ceased His relationship with the natural realm.

This is what Jesus says to the woman at the well. "Woman, the hour is coming and now it is, when it will not matter if worshipers go to this mountain in Samaria or to the city of Jerusalem in Israel. The hour has come when the true worshipers must worship the father in spirit and truth.

I could picture one of the disciples listening in on this conversation and thinking, "what do you mean Jesus?" Are you saying that God no longer cares that we bring our offerings to **His** altar? That we gather together outside of His temple? That we ceremonially clean ourselves before His feasts? That we only marry the seed of Abraham? That we don't touch pork, that we wash our hands, etc. Jesus would have answered, God no longer has a relationship with the natural man according to these natural and created things that were part of the testimony of Christ. **God now isn't trying to tell you what to do in the earth. God is trying to reveal what you are in the heavens. God is not trying to order your activities in the natural round. God is seeking to order your soul in alignment with the Life of his indwelling king.**

This is the way that God has ceased his relationship to the earth. In this way God has ended his relationship with the natural round. He no longer is trying to take Israel by the hand, Jeremiah says, and show them what to do. He is putting his Spirit in them, and revealing in them what he is. So God's desire for his people it is not found in the instructions in the natural realm. God's desire and purpose for his people is found in the Revelation of Jesus Christ as the life of their soul. In other words, as Jesus said, the father is seeking worshipers who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

But here's what I'm trying to get at this morning. I'm taking a long way there because I want this to be clear. God has ended His old covenant relationship to the natural realm and the natural man. But what does that mean for us now? How do I now understand God's relationship to my natural life, and my natural choices? Is he now completely uninvolved and unconcerned? Does ending the old covenant mean that God therefore has zero vested interest in anything that happens on planet Earth?

I want to try to answer this questioning the rest of our time together. And I'm probably going to continue talking about this next week. It is true that God has no relationship with the natural man and a natural creation. And therefore it is meaningless for us to spiritualize purely natural things. However, with that said, **there is something on the earth that is purely spiritual. There is something on earth that resides in earthen vessels which God has united His Spirit to. It's not your job. It's not your family. It's His body the church.** The church is

purely heavenly, and God has invested Himself deeply and permanently in a union with the body of Christ.

In other words, **God doesn't have relationship with the Earth, he has relationship with you in the Earth.** And therefore, the Earth has relevance in the mind of the Lord according to the measure that's it is expressive of, and conducive to, heavenly reality. The earth then is relevant to God to the degree that it corresponds to, and aligns with, and does not impede things, that are eternal in Christ.

Try to hear what I'm saying here. I realize there are several ways to misunderstand what I'm attempting to say. God is not trying to make the earth Spiritual. But there are many things that can effect His body because we still live in natural bodies. I'm not trying and it was philosophical or theological. You can see some very practical examples of this in the book of acts.

God, at various times, gave Paul the apostle very specific instructions about where he was supposed to go and establish the church. At one time, Paul was told not to go to a Asia Minor. At another time Paul specifically heard from the Lord that he was supposed to go to Macedonia. Another time it was Rome. In still another time, Paul was given information about the crew involved in a shipwreck. Why did Paul receive this kind of information? Why did God say these things to him about physical places and situations? Is it because God had advice about every natural decision in the life of Paul? No. It is because God now had a relationship with the new man in the heavens in his Son, and His directions in the earth, his investment, his will, had DIRECT connection to, and relation with, the body of Christ.

Can you see what I'm trying to say? **God still involves himself in the earth. But his involvement in the earth is not earthly. God directs us in earthly things for spiritual reasons and towards spiritual reality.**

So there are going to be things that, regardless of what we imagine, are not really relevant to God. But there is something in the earth (not of the earth, but in the earth) that is incredibly relevant to God. **And so...God will certainly direct natural choices, natural locations, decisions, and questions that are related to the good and the growth and the functioning of his body in the earth.** I hope you can see the distinction that I'm trying to make. God has ceased his relationship with the natural man in the natural realm in the old covenant. But God has His spiritual body in earthen vessels. And because of this, He is not disconnected from all natural things.

I'm not trying to split hairs. These two things are very different in the mind of the Lord. **There are those things that are natural and we want them to be spiritual. And yet there are those things that are spiritual that we still think to be natural.**

We've talked before about making decisions in the natural realm that are conducive to experiencing spiritual reality. That is similar to what I'm talking about now. Imagine for a minute Paul being driven out of Jerusalem by the Jews. He stops somewhere along the way turns his heart to the Lord, and says "Lord where should I go to proclaim the reality of Christ?" Is God going to answer, "I don't care, its all just natural anyway? " Or if Paul were asked a question by a Christian in Ephesus, "what you think God wants, should I be a part of this church you are starting? Or

should I just go home and try to know God by myself?" It's Paul going to answer, "it doesn't really matter because both options have to do with natural choices?"

**In each of these cases, God is going to direct the seeking heart to the decisions in the earth in a way that is most conducive to knowing and experiencing and glorifying the finished work of God in the heavens. God is involved in the earth. But God's involvement in the earth is not earthly. God is involved in our decisions. He will guide and direct decisions. By God's direction in natural decisions is always towards the souls experience off and growing in the reality of the new man in a new covenant that relates to God as a new creation.**

The other day my wife and I were talking about this. She was saying that she thinks that some people, when I talk about the cross dividing from God the natural man creation and covenant, they think that I'm saying that God is therefore not remotely invested in or involved in anything natural. So I want to be very clear about something this morning. **God is very involved in a very personal way with your soul, with your life, with your decisions. Not really in all of the things that we would like to have spiritual relevance but simply do not. But rather in whatever way that His direction in the earth can point you to a greater reality and experience of the heavens.**

Let me try to summarize what I'm saying by repeating something I said. **God is involved in the natural, but not for any reasons that are natural.** God will guide decisions in a physical world, but he will guide them in such a way that hearts are steered towards spiritual reality. There is nothing outside of Christ that is spiritual and relevant to God. But while we have these earthen bodies, God will continue to touch, and steer, and direct decisions in whatever way might guide our hearts into the reality of his body, the Fellowship of the faith, that we all might grow up in him in all things unto a mature man lacking nothing.