

# Geography from a Christian Perspective?

In 1832, four Indian chiefs of the Flathead and Nez Perce tribes left the Pacific Northwest and traveled over the Rocky Mountains toward St. Louis, Missouri. When they arrived at their destination in the fall of that year, they sought out William Clark, who was Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and told him they were looking for "the Book." They stated that they knew their people were in darkness and they had heard that the white man had a "Book" that came down from heaven that could tell them how they could know God (to know more of this amazing account, see *Fifty States under God* by Joy Dean, p.206). Another native Indian tribe, the Creek Indians in Alabama, performed a "Green Corn Dance" every year. This ritual lasted up to 8 days and was supposed to give them forgiveness for past sins (J. Dean, *Alabama State History*, Lesson 9). It is clear as you study these and other native Indian people that they knew that there was a God and that they were accountable to Him. But HOW did they know this? According to Louis Berkhof in his *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (p. 24), the Bible tells us of two ways man knows of the existence of God: from the phenomena of nature and from their own constitution. Another way of stating this is that man knows of the existence of God from the world he sees around him and from what he sees within himself. This type of "revelation" of God to man is called "general revelation" or "natural revelation."

The revelation of God in what we see around us is spoken of in Romans 1:19-20 where the Apostle Paul states, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." This revelation is not given in words--yet it speaks volumes! The Psalmist said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; . . . Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. **There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard**" (Psalm 19:1-3). "General revelation is rooted in creation . . . [it] is addressed to man simply as the creature and image-bearer of God, and aims at the realization of the end for which man was created and which can be attained only where man knows God and enjoys communion with Him (Berkhof, pp. 24-25). All around us--in the flowers, trees, rivers, valleys, mountains, etc., God's work is manifest! Matthew Henry eloquently states, "The workman is known by his work. The variety, multitude, order, beauty, harmony, different nature, and excellent contrivance, of the things that are made, the direction of them to certain ends, and the concurrence of all parts to the good and beauty of the whole, do abundantly prove a Creator and His eternal power and Godhead" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 6, p.370). This is why Paul, in the verse quoted above, stated that man is "without excuse".

The revelation of God in what we see within us is described by Berkhof as an internal witness within man's very constitution. The presence of this internal witness helps explain why the Creek Indians performed an idolatrous dance in which they sought to remove the sins of the past year. Paul stated in Romans 2:15 that men "shew the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." General revelation is why many Indian tribes buried their dead with cooking utensils and weapons of war. They believed in a life to come and knew that "all" was not over when they physically died. King Solomon referred to this in Ecclesiastes. 3:11 when he said, "He hath set the world [or eternity] in their heart." This "eternity" in our hearts is the result of man being made in the image of God! Because of man's sinful depravity, mankind throughout history and even today changes the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man and beasts, worship and serves the creature more than the Creator, and seeks to excuse his sin rather than be accountable for it (Romans 1 and 2). This is why Darwin and his followers sought to prove that the world and man's existence can be explained by an evolutionary process. If they were to admit that there is a Creator, then they must confess their responsibility to Him! Sadly, they are searing their own conscience (general revelation) with a hot iron (1Tim. 4:2). "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22).

It is our desire that the study of this course will help you to stand in awe of the Creator of this great country and that your faith will be increased as you study the effect geography has had, in God's providence, on the making of our history. In Isaiah 45:18 the prophet stated, "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, HE CREATED IT NOT IN VAIN, HE FORMED IT TO BE INHABITED: I AM THE LORD: AND THERE IS NONE ELSE." It is no accident--it is providence!--that the earth is the only planet in this entire vast universe that is able to sustain life (see the DVD, "The Privileged Planet", [www.illustramedia.com](http://www.illustramedia.com)). And it is no coincidence that you have been placed in this great country, for God "hath determined the times before appointed, and the BOUNDS OF THEIR HABITATION: That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:26-27).

Who is this Great Creator? Colossians 1:14-16 tells us that the one "in whom we have redemption through His blood," is the same one "by whom were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth." The wonder of wonders is that the Creator, the Lord Jesus, was not willing to leave man in his sin but became our Redeemer and was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Galatians 4:4,5).

While "general revelation" is rooted in creation and is addressed to man as a creature made in the image of God, "special revelation" (sometimes called supernatural revelation), is rooted in the redemptive work of God and is addressed to man as a sinner. While "general revelation" comes through creation and conscience, "special revelation" comes through Jesus Christ Himself, the Living Word, and is revealed to us in the Scripture, the inspired written Word of God (II Timothy 3:16). Special revelation "aims at leading the sinner back to God through the specific knowledge of God's redemptive love revealed in Christ Jesus" (Berkhof, pp. 24-25).

The Lord Jesus is both our Creator and our Saviour! He has revealed Himself to you both in "general" revelation and in "special" revelation. We hope that you will understand today that truly you are "without excuse." If you have not done so already, won't you bow your heart in humble submission to Him?

Steve Dean

--Rev.