



CREATOR

VOLUME 24

NUMBER 4

THE NATURE OF OBEDIENCE

*“My own hand laid the foundations of the earth,
and my right hand spread out the heavens;
when I summon them, they all stand up together.”*
Isaiah 48:13

Oh, what joy it is to obey our King and Creator (John 15:10-11)! When we live a life according to Christ’s commands, God freely gives us the privilege of shining His glory! And it is in the glory of God alone that true contentment can be found. When the Lord Jesus first made all things, He declared them to be good (Genesis 1:25) because creation revealed His character as the Great Architect of the universe (Hebrews 3:1-4; Romans 1:20). When man was added, God proclaimed all things to be *very* good (Genesis 1:31) for upon him alone had He stamped the image of God.

Mankind lost the *imago Dei*¹ when our first parents rebelled against their Lord. Puritan Thomas Watson explains that when Adam and Eve fell in the garden, mankind immediately “lost two things: the image of God, and communion with God.”² And neither of these—God’s image or fellowship with God—can be regained apart from Christ.

Despite the state of the world today, creation carries on the work of shining Christ’s glory, though admittedly its proclamation has been frustrated by mankind’s persistent rebellion against God (Job 26:14; Romans 3:10-18; 8:20-22). Since creation actively reveals Christ’s glory, we must conclude that nature obeys its Creator, whether we do or not.

We are beginning a three-part series that explores how the creation obeys God in countless, beautiful ways. In this issue of the *CREATOR* Journal, we examine the heavens; in the next, we will look at sea, wind, and weather; and in the third, the living realm. It is our dearest hope that by studying how nature obeys Christ—and thus radiates His awesome character—we will be encouraged to seek this same blessing by growing in our own obedience to our Lord through the power of His Spirit!



Andromeda galaxy

¹ *ih*—MAH—go DE—ee, Latin for “image of God”
² Excerpt from a sermon preached on Psalm 73:28

Proposition: Nature reveals the glory of Christ because it universally obeys its Creator.

MATTER AND ENERGY

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. Hebrews 11:3

In order to understand how nature obeys its Creator, we need to begin where God began . . . with nothing. He commanded and all things came into existence. Look around you. There was a time in eternity past when everything you see did not exist. The fact that these things now appear before our eyes demonstrates how incredibly powerful God's word is! The very existence of anything and everything has issued *out of obedience* to His command (Hebrews 11:3).

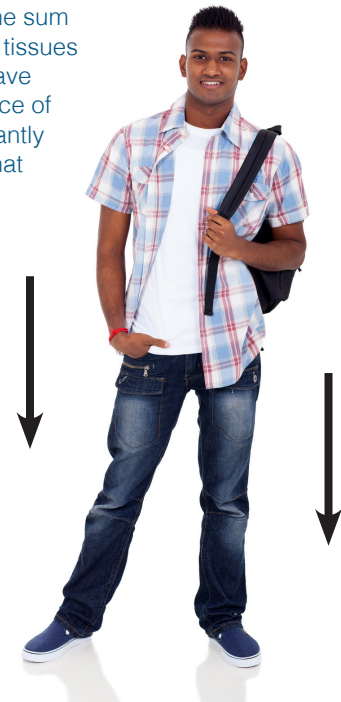
The physical universe is composed of *mass* and *energy*. You probably know what energy is—it's what gets you out of bed in the morning and makes things move (or gives them the potential to move). Electricity is a common form of energy found in our daily lives that causes numerous machines and electronic devices to work, such as an electric car or a computer.

Mass is the substance or stuff of objects. The mass of a building, for instance, is the sum of all the concrete, metal, and wood found in the building. One of the properties of mass is that it can have weight. On Earth, an object with a certain mass possesses a certain weight. In our everyday experience, the idea of mass and weight are interchangeable.³

The thing that normally gives mass a particular weight is something called *gravity*. Gravity is a mysterious force that our Lord Jesus gives all matter. Earth's gravity is strong. Its force is pulling you downward right now and holding you to the surface of the earth, so that you won't fly off into space.

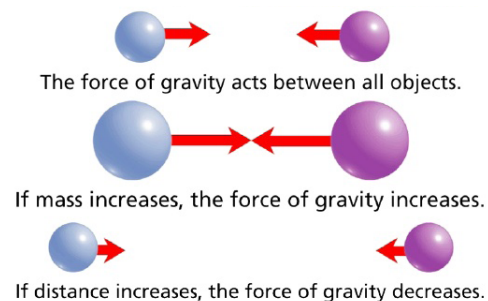
³ This doesn't hold true when an object of a certain mass is transported to another world. A six-pound mass on Earth would weigh only one pound on the moon because the moon's gravity is only one-sixth as strong.

You have mass—it is the sum total of all your organs, tissues and bones. You also have weight because the force of Earth's gravity is constantly pulling downward on that mass.



Earth is not the only thing that produces gravity. All objects, big or small, generate gravity (even you!) and are thus attracted to all other objects. The gravity that a car produces, however, is not strong enough for you to feel.⁴

Many years ago, scientists discovered that the greater the mass an object has, the greater is the force of gravity it produces. They also realized that the force of gravity between two objects decreases as they move further apart from one another.



⁴ An object must be the size of a small moon for you to feel its gravity. Read about gravity in **CREATOR** Volume 13 Number 3

THE LAWS OF MOTION

“Do you know the laws of the heavens?
Can you set up God’s dominion over the earth?”
Job 38:33

It was only 400 years ago that science truly began to comprehend that the universe—far from being chaotic—was established by God in a very orderly way. And no one understood this more than a young English mathematician named Isaac Newton (1642–1727). He came to realize that one of the properties matter could possess is motion. And he discovered three “laws” that God normally uses to command this motion.

Newton’s first law states that an object will not move unless it is pushed or pulled. Likewise, an object in motion continues to move unless acted upon by an opposing force.⁵ A car, for instance, will sit in one spot for years unless someone gets in, turns on the engine (a source of force), and starts driving. But how is it that the car slows down when the driver takes his or her foot off the accelerator once it’s moving? After all, the first law states that a moving object continues to move at the same velocity unless acted upon by an opposing force. Well, a moving car *is* acted upon by an opposing force . . . the force of *friction*. Friction results from the rubbing of the moving parts of a car, one against the other, and the traction of the road upon its tires. Thus, friction works against the forward motion that the engine has produced. If we could transport that same car into outer space and put it in motion going 30 mph (48 kph), the car would continue at that velocity indefinitely because there is essentially no friction in space.

The second law of motion states that if a force continues to push on an object, it will accelerate.⁶ And the amount of acceleration depends upon the amount of force applied.

⁵ In everyday experience, a force can be thought of as a pushing or pulling action.

⁶ When an object accelerates, its velocity steadily increases.

This law also states that the larger the object, the less will be its acceleration, unless greater force is applied:

$$F = m \times a$$

where F equals force, m is mass, and a is acceleration.

We can get a common sense understanding of this law by observing the rate at which different sized vehicles accelerate after coming to a full stop (such as at a stop sign). Generally, a truck with a large mass will accelerate much more slowly than a small car, with much less mass.⁷

The third law of motion states simply that every action or force produces an equal and opposite reaction or force. A good way to understand this might be to picture in your mind two children facing each other on an ice rink. If the boy pushes away from

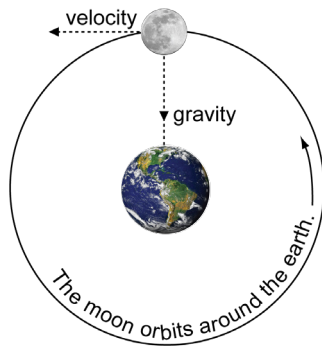


the girl, she will move backwards, but so will the boy in the opposite direction . . . action → reaction.

It may surprise you to learn that God uses these same laws of motion to govern the movement of all the planets, stars, and galaxies in the universe. The moon, for instance, travels forward at almost 2,300 mph (3,700 kph). Since there is no friction in space, the moon doesn’t slow down, but continues at this velocity indefinitely. Now the reason that the moon does not move away from Earth—which is what one would

⁷ This is generally true even though a truck tends to have a bigger engine than a car and thus produces more force.

expect—is that Earth’s gravity *pulls it inward*.⁸ It could be said that the moon “falls” toward Earth in the same way that an apple falls from a tree toward the ground. This “falling” of the moon, however, is precisely countered by the first law of motion, which tries to keep the moon moving in a straight line *away from Earth*. Christ our Creator thus balances the forward motion of the moon



with the force of gravity, keeping the moon in a predictable orbit around Earth. It neither flies off into space or crashes into Earth. This same balance between forward motion and gravitational pull is what keeps all the planets in orbit around the sun, and most stars orbiting around a galaxy.

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies. Joshua 10:13

In the 10th chapter of Joshua, a miraculous, one-of-a-kind celestial event is recorded. With great faith in the power of the LORD, Joshua commanded both the sun and the moon to stand still in the sky for an entire day, as a witness of God’s covenant allegiance to Israel. Critics of the Bible have raised ten thousand objections to this account, but in their criticisms they all forget one thing: “Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the

heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. *Nothing is too hard for you*” (Jeremiah 32:17 emphasis added).

Given the laws of motion and the universal nature of gravity, it is natural to wonder how the Earth could stop spinning and give the appearance that the sun and moon stood still. Wouldn’t everything on Earth fly off into space?⁹ The answer is that *the God of the impossible* (Matthew 19:26) is quite able to suspend the laws of physics—instantaneously stop inertia and reverse gravity—to demonstrate His power over nature. Christ is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe and is not bound by its laws; He created them. Creation obeys Him, not the other way around!

COMMANDING GRAVITY

They saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. John 6:19

A similar miracle took place during Christ’s time on Earth (Matthew 14:22-34; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21). At the end of a long day, Jesus sent His disciples ahead of Him in a boat while He stayed behind to pray. Later that night, Christ appeared to His disciples walking on water. They were greatly terrified for they had come face to face with their Creator!

In Joshua, God suspended the laws of motion; here, Jesus supercedes the law of gravity. How is this possible? Again, we must remember that creation obeys its Master, not the other way around. In other words, God is in no way restricted by the laws He has established for the universe to obey and thus display His glory. Ultimately, Christ is glorified most when He demonstrates His supremacy over all things.

⁸ In this case, Earth’s gravity is called a centripetal force. The word centripetal is derived from two Greek words meaning “seeking the center.”

⁹ The rotation of Earth at the equator is 1,000 mph (1,600 kph).

CREATION OBEYS—WILL WE?

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed . . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Philippians 2:12

The laws of motion and gravity are *not* the same as the laws of our society. Civic laws are put into place to guide men's actions and prevent them from harming themselves and their fellow citizens. These laws are only useful if people obey them, and if disobedience is properly punished.

The laws that function in creation could be better understood as the way nature interacts with its Creator. As God “moves,” so does His creation. Like the royal clothes on a king, God “wraps himself in light as with a garment” (Psalm 104:2). Christ, the King of kings, is “very great; . . . clothed with splendor and majesty” (Psalm 104:1). The reason that the laws of nature are so predictable, and can thus be represented mathematically, is that the nature or character of God does not change (Malachi 3:6).¹⁰ He is faithful in displaying His glory throughout creation (Psalm 89:8) even when we fail to shine God's glory because of our disobedience. He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). The only time He alters these natural laws (Joshua 10; Matthew 14) is when His glory is greatly magnified in so doing.

It is not hard to see why nature reflects and reveals the excellencies of Christ our Creator, for it obeys His every command. Creation—apart from fallen angels and people—cannot disobey its King, and would gain no advantage even if it could.

So why have fallen angels, and all of mankind, committed treason against the Almighty? The answer can be found in Genesis 3: “Did God really say?” Through Satan's deceit, Eve was tempted to disbelieve God. Satan then goes on to say to her, “For God knows that when you eat of it your

eyes will be opened, and you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). *Here's the reason for our disobedience!* Throughout history, both men and angels have given into the temptation to exalt themselves with a perverse desire to be worshiped by others.

Nature knows better. It knows that Christ's design has been and always will be for creation to worship its Creator. (That is why man's worship of nature is such a disordered desire. Please read Romans 1:18-25.) As such, creation experiences the greatest of all rewards for its praise of Jesus—ineffable joy (Psalm 96:11-13).

“It is no small cause of shame that the insensate parts of creation obey God's commands, and men do not.” Ambrose

Oh, that mankind could learn this lesson from creation! Man thinks that his rebellion against God will produce some lasting pleasure—*it never does*. What it does do is alienate us from the One who made us and who is our Joy. Sadly, creation suffers because of man's rebellion (Romans 8:20-22). But God has promised that creation will be “liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” This can only happen, however, through the Creator Himself and His redeeming work.

Jesus, having created all things (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-3), willingly came from Heaven to Earth to bring His people back into the joy of obedience, which was lost in the Garden. He lived a life of perfect, *active obedience* to God's laws during His 33 years on Earth. He then voluntarily subjected Himself to the powers that be and was brutally treated by His enemies, being crucified upon a cross. Theologians call this Christ's *passive obedience* because He willingly *received* punishment from sinners though He, Himself, was sinless. So we have

¹⁰ By contrast, the laws of society are constantly changing.

clear biblical testimony that through Christ's humble life and sacrificial death that He became the *Author of Obedience* for all who believe in Him.

It is, however, not enough for someone to mimic Christ's obedience. No matter how hard the flesh tries, it will always fail to live up to God's perfect and holy law.¹¹ Only by the Spirit of Christ can anyone please God through obedience. But how do we obtain Christ's humility and, by His Spirit, learn obedience? The answer is, by dying to ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Jesus (Matthew 10:38).

Christ gave us another Counselor to guide us. The Holy Spirit is the One who raises God's children from death unto life (Romans 8:2), and graciously gives us repentance and faith in Christ. And it is the Spirit who directs us in the course of active obedience. There is coming a day when Jesus will return to Earth to judge the world (the Second Advent), but until then, Christ's Spirit leads and teaches us (Galatians 5:18; John 14:26).

PLEASING GOD

*So we make it our goal to please him,
whether we are at home in the body or away from it.
2 Corinthians 5:9*

In the beginning, our Creator could look at the worlds He had made and say that they were "good" (Genesis 1:25) because the creation obeyed Him throughout the far reaches of the universe. Likewise, the only way for us to please our Heavenly Father is by obeying His Son. There are some who believe that they can pick and choose which of Christ's commands to obey (including those commands He gave through His Apostles) and still be pleasing to God. Sadly, they are deceived and greatly mistaken.

Do you want to be one who pleases the Lord through obedience? If you are in Christ and He is in you, then Jesus has given you the

Holy Spirit. And if you daily come to God in prayer—faithfully reading His Word—you have all that you need to obey Him and to be pleasing to Him.

What if you are not sure that you are a Christian? Then take your concerns to God in prayer. Tell Him that you want to know His Son, Jesus—that He lived a perfect life of obedience and died on a cross for the sins of those who would believe in Him. Ask the Heavenly Father to give you His Spirit to daily lead you in the repentance of your sins (Romans 2:4). Finally, plead with His Spirit to convert you from the person you have been up until now and into a true child of God (Romans 8:14-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Obedience to Jesus is the sweetest of all things! Nothing can compare to it. May God richly supply us with Christ's humility and an undying desire to please God (Psalm 37:4).

*Jesus answered, "The work of God is this:
to believe in the one he has sent." John 6:29*



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¹¹ The natural man either tries to justify himself before God through his own law keeping or he ends up hating the Lawgiver.