

# The Doctrine of Interaction

## Lesson 10

*The Issue:* The authority of God over our lives is the point of departure for all of us who believe. The Scriptures teach us that human personality has a place assigned to it. In this position given by the Lord then the role of man is not diminished but rather is changed. We must know something about the nature of this imposed change.

*Underlying Assumptions as Expressed in Everyday Terms:*

- 1) The field of matter and energy in which we live makes “real world” claims on all of us. These claims cannot be ignored nor converted into mere religious questions.
- 2) It is a very dangerous and perhaps irresponsible thing to categorize our interactions with matter and energy as essentially “spiritual.” To consider that such things are best understood as spiritual, instead of more down-to-earth, is to simply ignore the material reality altogether. We need-- and must have-- balance!

*The Generalization:* To correctly interact with matter and energy we must surrender to THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE LORD’S CORRECTION.

*The Scripture Passage:* Psalm 25:8-11

*The Lesson:*

- 1) In these verses the place of man in the universe is not diminished. On the contrary, it is changed in a significant way.
- 2) Man is not the center of the universe, nor of history, nor of life. It turns out that the center has been moved.
- 3) It is not that man is less important, for he has always been important. The point here is that **importance** is not equal to **assigned place**. These verses amount to a **consideration of place**.
- 4) So, just what is the place of man in the universe, in history, in life and in relation to matter and energy?
- 5) The Place, we discover from reading this psalm, is: to be instructed (verse 8); to be guided (verse 9); to be humble (verse 9); to be taught (verse 9); to be obedient to the word of the Lord v.10); to be forgiven (verse 11). This set of elements comprise a place

of dependency. Therefore, man is not the starting point.

6) This leads us to think in terms of “regime.” The term is useful because a regime refers us to a way of governing. Our interaction with God and with the field of matter and energy is structured; that is to say, it is structured in a certain way.

7) So there are the Lord’s ways, and there are human/personal ways. These are different one from another.

8) This must be true, because that structure demonstrates why the Lord’s instruction (verse 8), the Lord’s guidance (verse 9), our humility (verse 9), the Lord’s teaching (verse 9), our obedience (verse 10), and the Lord’s forgiveness (verse 11) have importance for us.

9) Such categories tell us about the nature of the structure, or the nature of the regime.

10) If we consult this list of requirements for the place of man we notice that they are composed of two major dimensions. First there is the ABSOLUTE PART. This is composed of “instruction,” “guidance,” “teaching,” and “forgiveness.” All of this is the work of the Lord. We need this kind of advantage when relating to matter and energy. In dealing with the material dimension we stand in need of wisdom from above. This is something differentiated from human ways of interacting with matter and energy.

11) The second part is the HUMAN part of man’s place. Notice the aspects of humility and obedience. These terms refer to the obligations of man in his relation to God. Humility indicates a recognition of a higher order of reality, and obedience points to a subordination to revelation.

12) The text under consideration reveals that there has to be a MERGER of these two streams of the absolute and the human. Once the absolute and the human are merged in just this way, then that becomes the general profile of the way that David himself was convicted that he must interact with the world of matter and energy.

13) Of course these two streams are not co-equal. THIS IS THE REGIME FOR INTERACTION. All of this assumes that mind is not the same as brain. While we acknowledge that the brain is a physical object, mind is not a part of matter and energy.

14) Furthermore, all of this assumes A STRUCTURED HUMAN INTELLIGENCE! Obedience, humility, and submission structure the intelligence of the believer relative to the absolute; not relative to the reality of matter and energy.

15) That tells us that “obedience” (verse 10) goes far beyond the minimalism of certain doctrinal points. Here it is aimed at interaction. Psalm 25 depicts obedience as a type of interaction with matter and energy.

16) WE ARE TO REMEMBER THAT INTERACTION BETWEEN OUR MINDS

AND MATTER AND ENERGY IS PLACED UNDER A REGIME BY THE LORD HIMSELF!

*Questions for Discussion*

- 1) What do you recall from the lesson and from Psalm 25 that demonstrate man's place in the universe?
- 2) "Apparently man's place in the universe is more passive than active when dealing with God and with the material realm." Agree or disagree? Support your answer.
- 3) What elements of man's "place" can be considered active, if any?
- 4) How would you respond to someone who believes that, except for accepting salvation, correction and forgiveness, our role in relating to Him should be proactive?
- 5) Explain this statement: "There are the Lord's ways and there are human ways." What is meant by "the absolute part"? The "human part"?
- 6) In representational thinking, we speak of the "agent/patient relationship," in which one element or component is active and produces an effect (the agent), and the other element is passive, receiving the action (the patient.) Apply the concept of the agent/patient relationship to all of Psalm 25, pointing out specific terms. Make a simple chart of what you find.
- 7) Using the idea of agent/patient, or "absolute/human," describe a situation you're dealing with. Does your activity in this situation mirror the merger of the two streams we've seen in this lesson? How might you improve? Make a list of ways in which you can better demonstrate a correctly structured intelligence in this situation?
- 8) From a Biblical perspective, what is the difference, if any, between human intelligence and human personality?
- 9) What did you learn from this lesson that will prepare you for a future situation of conflict or distress? How would you explain what you've learned to a teenager or new Christian?