

The Doctrine of Interaction Lesson #7

The Issue: What is it that to us constitutes authentic knowledge about the world in which we live? The answer to the question is of the highest importance because we will interact with the external world on whatever knowledge base that we think relevant. David sees the revealed word of God as exclusive in its claim on the doctrine of interaction.

Underlying Assumptions as Expressed in Everyday Terms:

- 1) Especially in times of great distress we must look to the Lord, but it is also incumbent upon us to remember that we live in a real world. We keep in mind, too, that this real world is not exactly the same as the past world of the Bible.
- 2) There is a place for scriptural knowledge, to be sure. But that place is circumscribed by the material realities that surround us. These physical facts and pressures are non-negotiable.
- 3) What I observe and have experienced is trustworthy, because I know that the best knowledge about how things “work” in this world comes from a source I can trust –me!

The Generalization: In continuation of the last lesson we must change our knowledge base. David assures us that there is a REVEALED EPISTEMOLOGY that codifies an entirely different doctrine of interaction with the world of matter and energy.

The Scripture Passage: Psalm 25:4-5

The Lesson:

- 1) David faces, as we all do, a choice of how to interact with the world of matter and energy predicated upon either a) learned human wisdom or b) the revealed wisdom of God. This psalm shows that David has made his choice.
- 2) If God shows, teaches, guides, then THE WAYS and THE FORMS of interaction are taken out of human hands! The personal will of the believer is given a position of subordination.
- 3) This presents an issue-- or at the least a question-- WILL THIS SORT OF INTERACTION WITH MATTER AND ENERGY LEAD TO PERSONAL CATASTROPHE? There are other ways of articulating the issue. For instance, is David’s choice of the way to interact merely foolish? Or we might ask in modern discourse, has David “gone off the deep end”?
- 4) David is making much more than just a mere suggestion in these verses. He tells us that contemporary human intelligence-- as the expression of knowers, knowing, and

knowledge -- are to be displaced! Of course, this is a daunting idea. David teaches us that all we would naturally think of as “knowledge” must be displaced in favor of a revealed epistemology.

5) David is looking for a specific path to follow through his troubles. He is looking for a path that shows him, teaches him, guides him in his interactions with all aspects of the material world he lives in.

6) From what we can see here in this psalm David believes that this path is not discovered; rather, it must be revealed to him. He says that such a path is not of this world but from the world that we cannot see, from the Lord Himself. This is a revealed path and therefore not natural. Nor is this path a mere procedural path. It is much more than that because it turns out to be a representational path.

7) David wants to be different and to feel different. He does not want to join the world; instead, he wants a closer walk with God. So by means of the doctrine of interaction with the world of matter and energy, he chooses to turn away from the world and turns to God.

8) The path is TO TRUST IN GOD. The writer of the psalm has isolated the key issue: Trust in the Lord. Of course David faced the same concern that we all face. We can either put trust in God or we can deal with self. After that, then we attempt to deal with the situation.

9) But here's the practical aspect of the problem. Trust in God can seem very remote from the material realities that bother or threaten us. Sometimes the “ways of God” are seemingly remote from the situation at hand. This is especially acute when we think that we ourselves appear to be more proximate to the situation than is the Lord. After all, “I am closer to the problem,” one wants to say. But David makes a telling statement in v.5: “my hope is in you all day long”.

10) This means that David is not interested in how proximate his intelligence is to the situation. No. David is concerned with his own proximity to the word of God. He believes that is his responsibility and that the Lord is sufficiently proximate to the concrete situation to handle it for him.

11) We use two terms to extend our thinking here. Something that is removed and at a distance we call “distal.” That which is close at hand we refer to as “proximal.”

12) Now let's ask a critical question: HOW DO I KNOW THAT I REALLY TRUST IN GOD? The answer is determined by evaluating what is “distal” and what is “proximal”. The answer is YES if God and His word are proximal, and self and the situation are distal. But the answer is NO if God and His word are distal and self and the situation are proximal. This is an objective standard in that the word of God and the eternal regions are external to the self and to the situation.

13) This poses a very big question: Are we willing to interact with the world of matter

and energy based on a completely revealed-- and therefore non-natural --knowledge base?

Discussion Questions

- 1) Is it really necessary to choose between learned human wisdom and revealed wisdom? Support your answer from Scripture. Is this the issue in James 1:2-8?
- 2) For most people, what role does human will play in assessing the value of human wisdom?
- 3) David was a king, a father, a husband, an administrator of geopolitical matters. Why would someone have said that his approach to how to obtain knowledge was “off the deep end”? How do you think he would have responded to such a criticism (support your answer from Scripture.)
- 4) What does this mean? “The path to wisdom is neither discoverable nor procedural.”
- 5) How can it be said that the revealed path of which we are speaking is a representational one?
- 6) Think of a recent dilemma you faced, one in which you needed to make a decision. Respond to these questions:
 - a. At the time, did the ways of God seem near or distant to you as you struggled with the dilemma?
 - b. What seemed most proximate? What seemed most distal?
 - c. To what extent did your use of the wisdom of God as proximate make a difference (if at all)?
 - d. What steps can you take to prepare yourself for similar dilemmas and/or decisions in the future?