

Firm Foundations: Faith, Science, and the Creator

Lesson 3: The Faith of Early Scientists

Overview

Many pioneers of modern science believed they were studying a world created, ordered, and sustained by God. Their faith did not prevent serious investigation. It gave them reason to expect that creation would display order, consistency, and intelligibility.

This is a stark contrast from what we see today, and directly challenges the now popular idea that science can only advance if belief in God is pushed aside. The deeper divide is not science versus faith, but the worldview a person brings to the study of creation.

Key Truths

- Because God created and sustains all things, we can expect order, consistency, and patterns that can be discovered.
- Creation is not random; it was made by a wise and faithful God.
- Because people are made in God's image, we can meaningfully observe and reason about the world He made.
- Many early scientists saw scientific investigation as the study of God's workmanship.
- Natural laws describe the regular order of creation; they do not explain God away.
- The history of science does not support the claim that serious scientific thought belongs only to unbelief.

Key Scriptures

- Colossians 1:16-17
- Psalm 111:2
- Proverbs 25:2
- Romans 1:20

A Brief history of Science and Faith

Some modern voices present faith as the enemy of science, but that claim reflects a worldview rather than reality. Two examples: (*new atheists*) Christopher Hutchins and Richard Dawkins.

Voices From Today

- "God ceased to exist when the microscope was invented." - *Hitchins*
- "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." - *Dawkins*
- "The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference" - *Dawkins*

Earlier Scientists

Kepler

- "O Lord Creator, Who hast delighted me with Thy makings."
- "The wisdom of the Lord is infinite, as are also His glory and His power. Ye heavens, sing His praises."

Galileo

- "God has endowed us with senses, reason, and intellect, and has not intended us to forgo their use"

- "For the Holy Scripture and nature both equally derive from the divine Word, the former as the dictation of the Holy Spirit, the latter as the most obedient executrix of God's commands. "

Isaac Newton

- "This Being governs all things...as Lord over all."
- "There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history"
- "He who thinks half-heartedly will not believe in God; but he who really thinks has to believe in God."

Geocentric vs Heliocentric views of the Earth moving through space

- The true origin of the geocentric idea

Early scientists who were believers:

- **Johannes Kepler** expected mathematical order in the heavens and discovered that planets move in elliptical orbits.
- **Galileo Galilei** believed in God, directly observed Venus orbiting the sun through his own inventions. His full story cannot ***honestly*** be reduced to "science versus religion."
- **Isaac Newton** in what he himself called "heavenly motion", described laws in creation without treating them as replacements for God.

The broader pattern, look at: Robert Boyle, Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, Gregor Mendel, Nicolaus Steno, and Louis Pasteur. This clearly shows that **serious science has not belonged only to unbelievers.**

Questions to Consider

1. How does belief in a wise Creator support the expectation that nature is orderly, understandable, and worthy of scientific investigation?
2. Why should the Galileo story be handled more carefully than the slogan "science versus religion" suggests?
3. How should this history affect the confidence of Christians who study the created world today?