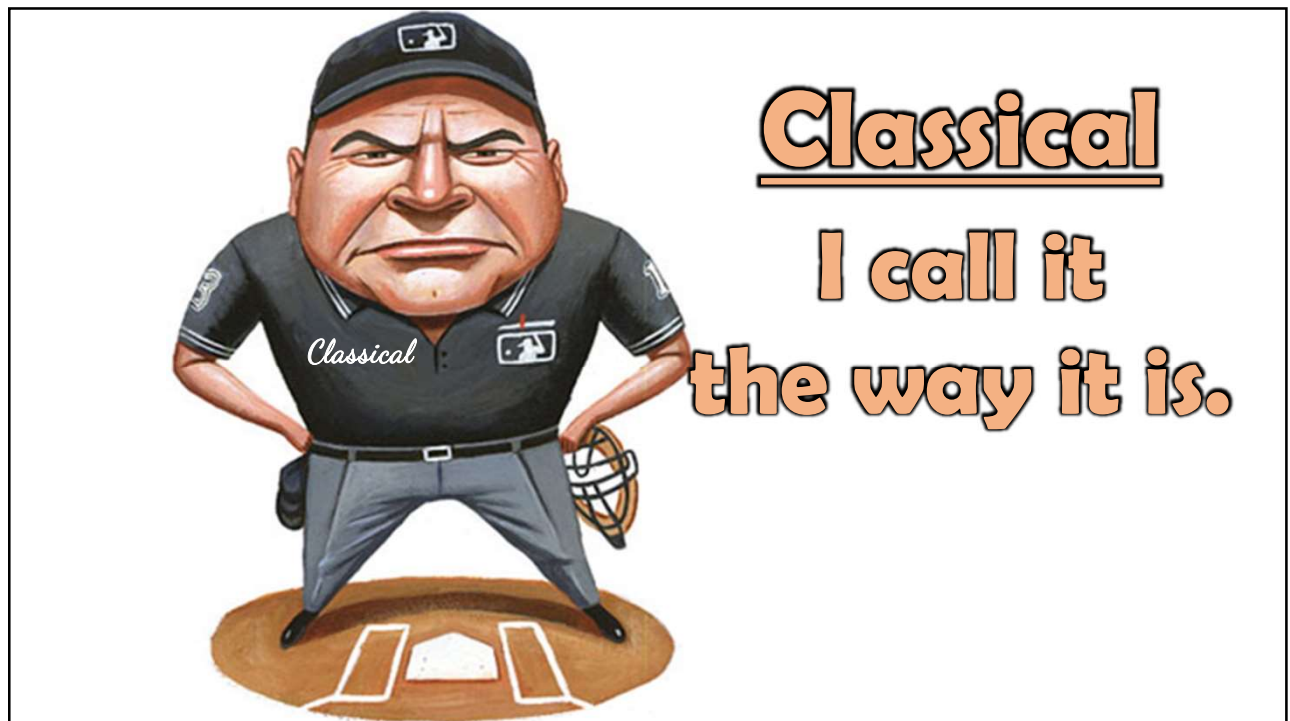
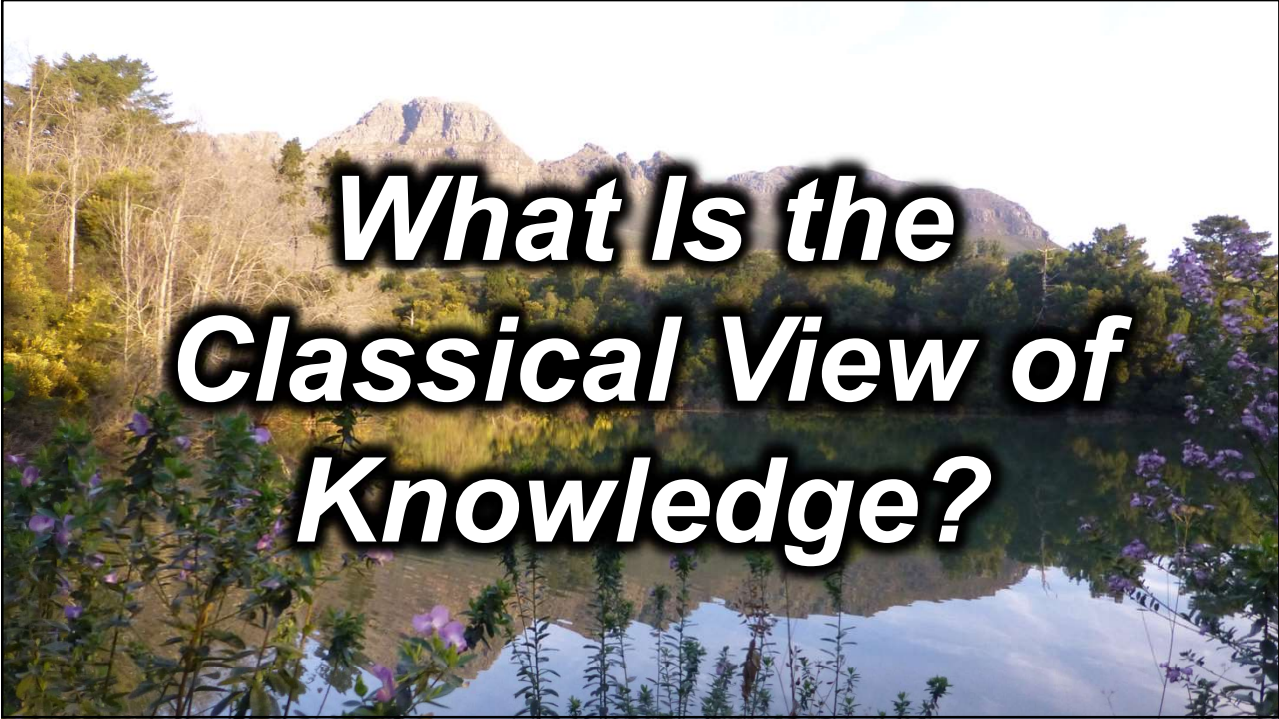


# Relativism and Knowledge, Pt. 2: The Classical View of Knowledge





# *What Is the Classical View of Knowledge?*

*The philosophical doctrine that knowing is grounded in some important way in the senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling) is known as*  
***EMPIRICISM.***

*Empiricism stands in contrast to **Rationalism** which maintains that reason (apart from the senses) is the primary if not the sole basis for knowledge.*

**Classical Empiricism**  
vs.  
**Modern & Contemporary Empiricism**



# Modern Empiricism

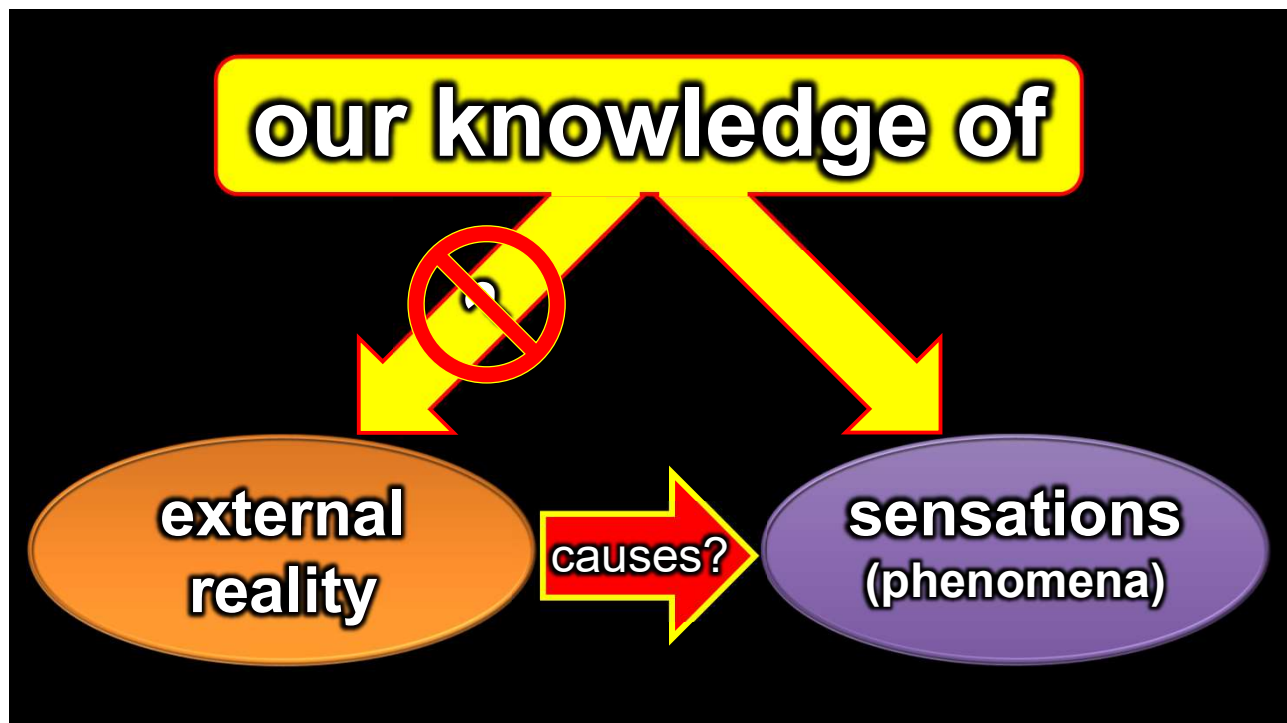


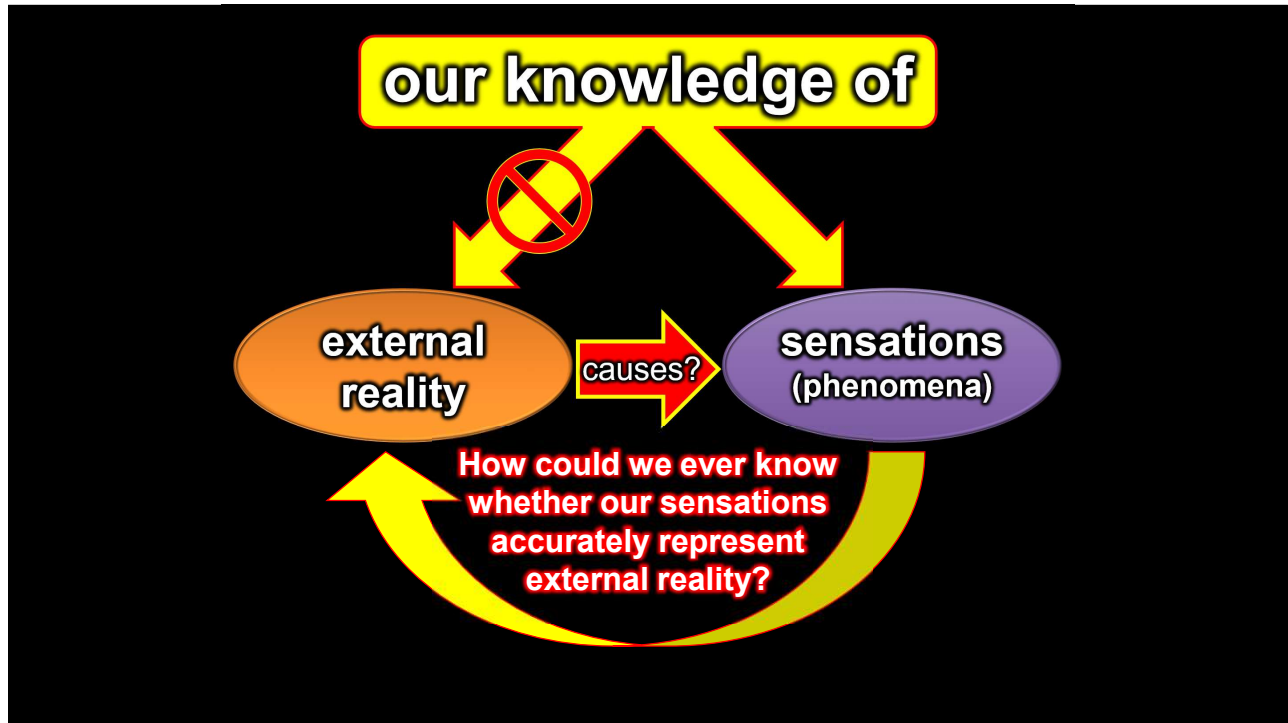
***Modern empiricism concerned itself largely with the knowing of:***

- ***"qualities" or "properties" (Locke), or***
- ***"ideas" and "perceiving" (Berkeley), or***
- ***impressions" or "sensations" or "phenomena" (Hume).***

***Early on, modern empiricism was committed to the notion that such sensations were "caused" by external objects or by "substances," though such objects or substances were themselves ultimately inexplicable or unaccounted for by the wider philosophy of these Modern Empiricists.***

***Later, Empiricists such as Hume began to realize the implications of such a divorce between knowing sensations (also called "phenomena") on the one hand and reality antecedent to (and supposedly the "cause of") these sensations on the other.***

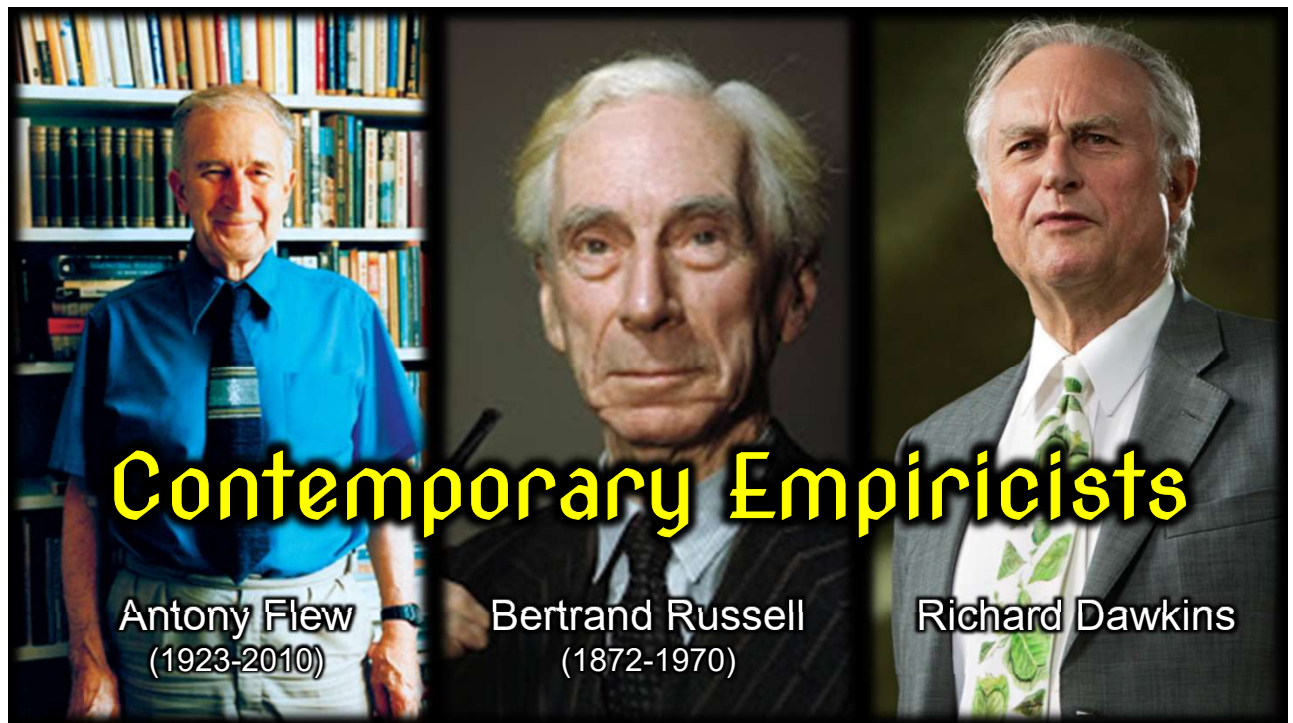
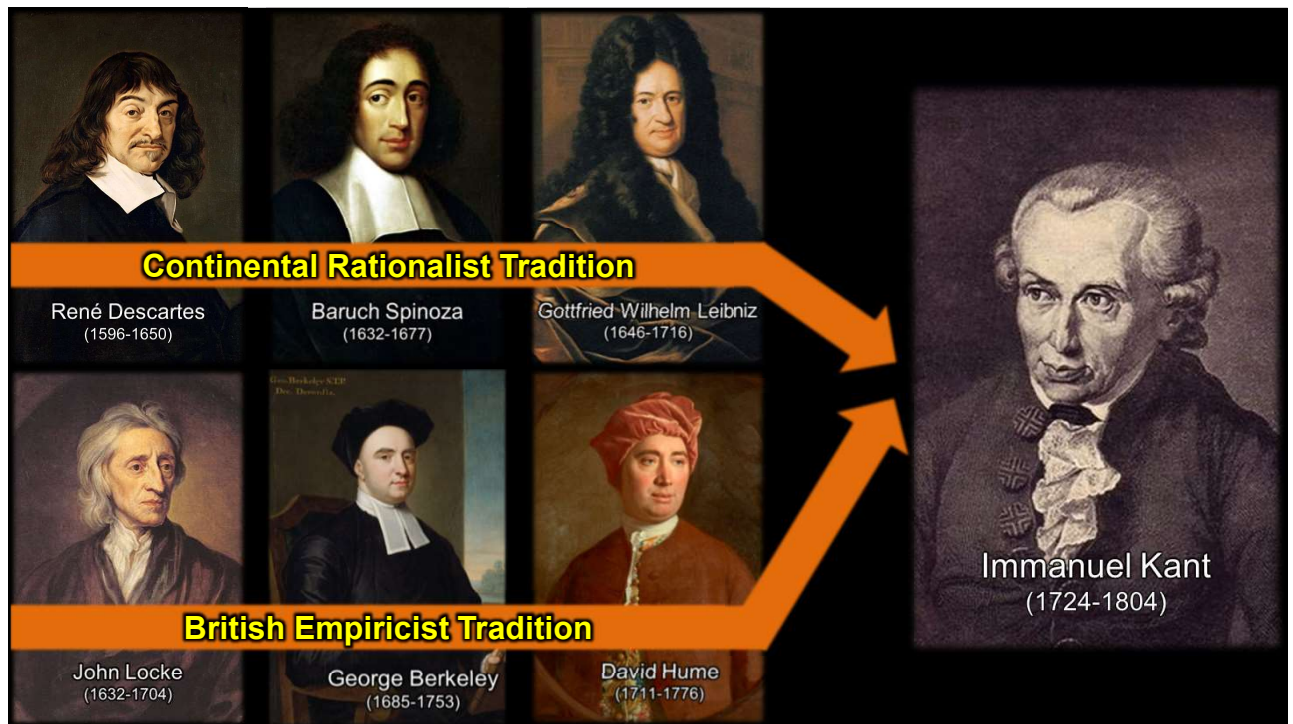




*Modern Empiricism has continued to influence Western philosophy and has developed into what can be called **Contemporary Empiricism.***

*With the transition from Modern Empiricism into Contemporary Empiricism, philosophers have less and less sought to understand human knowing along the categories of Classical metaphysics.*







# Classical Empiricism

***The term 'classical' generally refers to ways of thinking that track the contours of the philosophy of the ancient Greeks.***

***There are two great  
philosophical traditions in  
Western thought that have  
endured since the ancient  
Greeks.***





**There are two great philosophical/theological traditions in Christian thought that have tracked these two Greek philosophical traditions.**



**Augustine**  
(354-430)

**Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



**John  
Locke**  
(1623-1704)

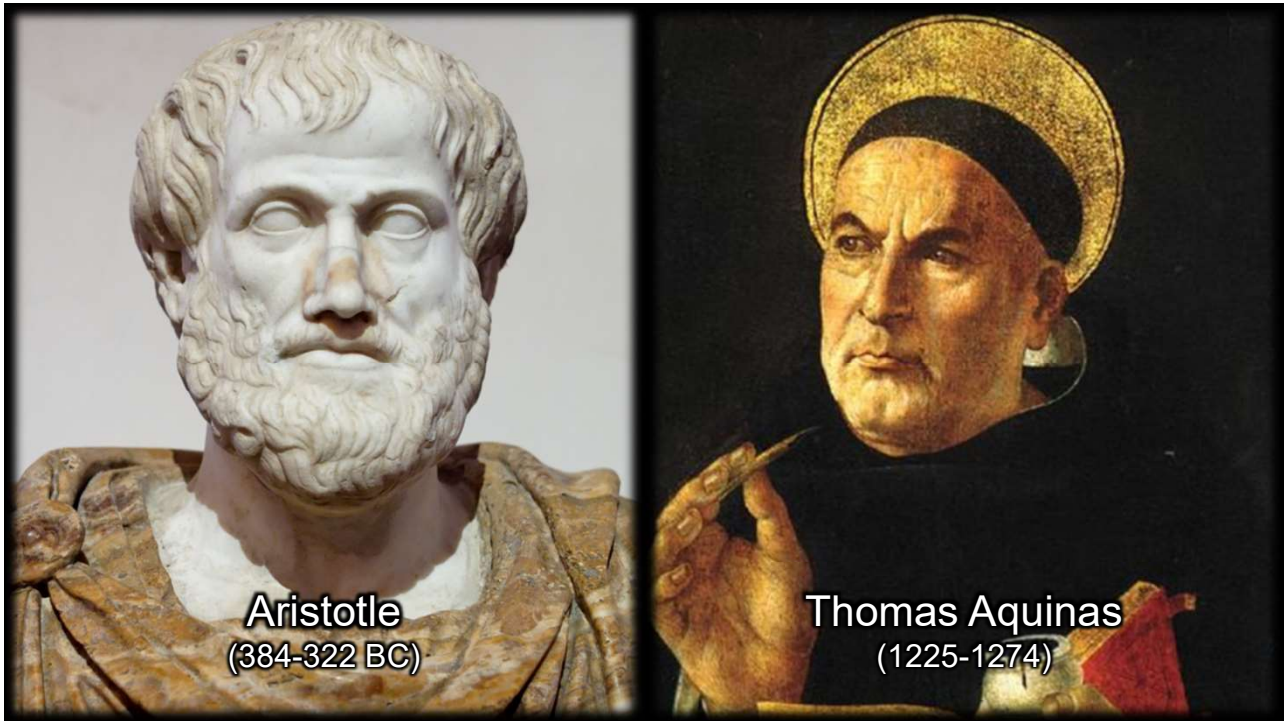
**George  
Berkeley**  
(1685-1753)

**David  
Hume**  
(1711-1776)

**Antony  
Flew**  
(1923-2010)

**Bertrand  
Russell**  
(1872-1970)

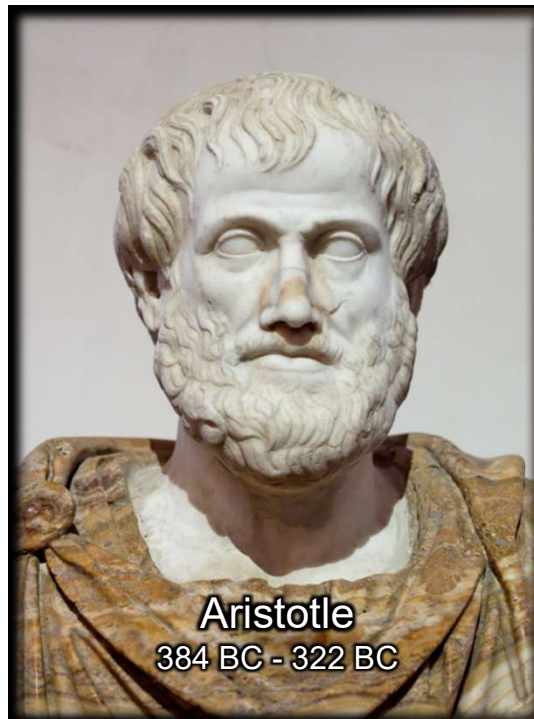
**Richard  
Dawkins**



Aristotle  
(384-322 BC)

Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***Classical empiricism  
maintains that all knowledge  
begins in the senses, but is  
completed in the intellect.***



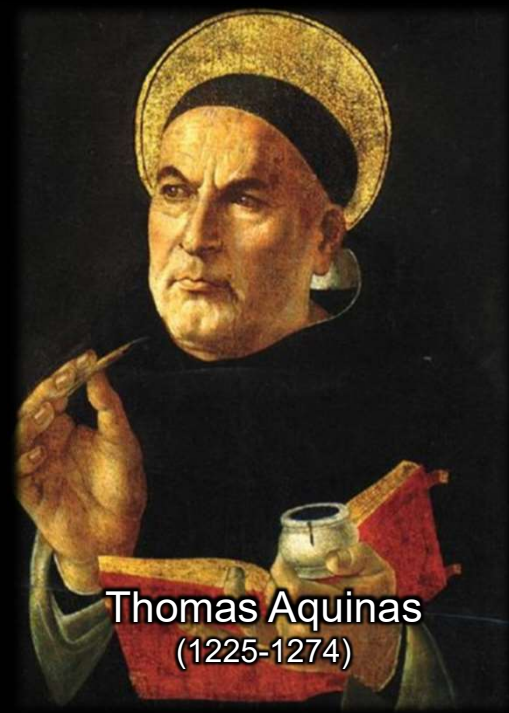
**Aristotle**  
384 BC - 322 BC

*"From experience again . . . originate  
the skill of the craftsman and the  
knowledge of the man of science,  
skill in the sphere of coming to be  
and science in the sphere of beings.  
We conclude that these states of  
knowledge are neither innate in a  
determinate form, nor developed  
from other higher states of  
knowledge, but from sense-  
perception."*

[*Posterior Analytics* II, 19, 100a7-11, trans. G. R. G. Mure in Richard McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 185]

***"Our knowledge, taking its start from things, proceeds in this order. First, it begins in sense; second, it is completed in the intellect."***

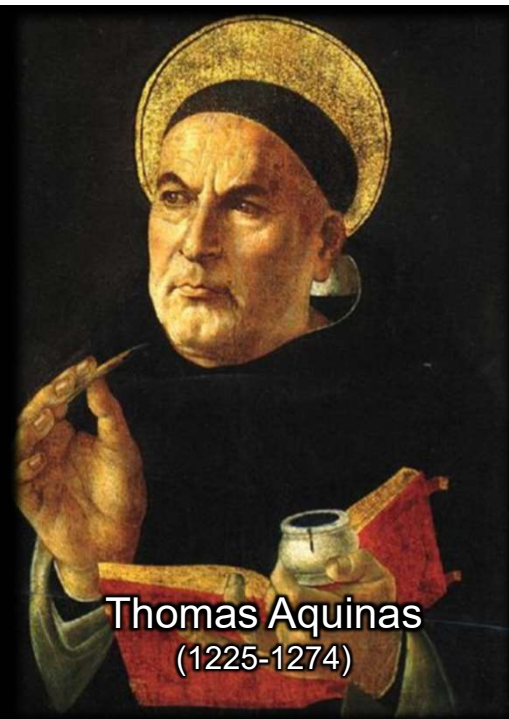
[Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, I, 11, trans. Mulligan, 48, in *Truth* (3 vols), vol. 1 trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952); vol. 2 trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953); vol. 3. trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954). The three volumes were reprinted as *Truth* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

***"Sensible things [are that] from which human reason takes the origin of its knowledge."***

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 9, §2. Trans. Anton C. Pegis. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I, 77]

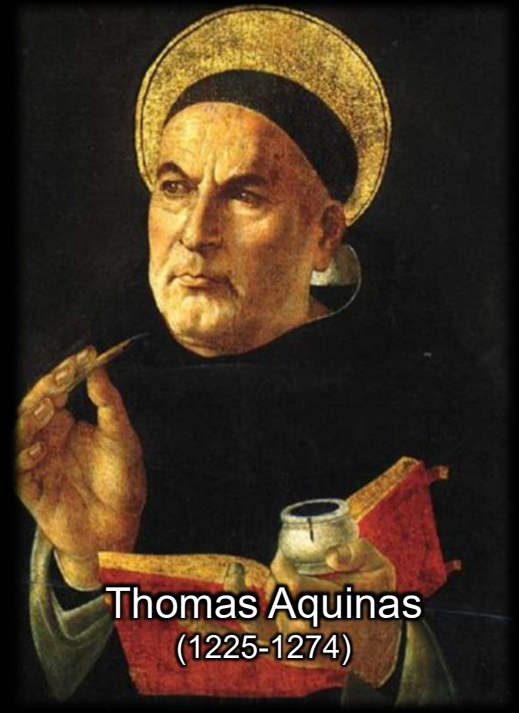


**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



***"According to its manner of knowing in the present life, the intellect depends on the sense for the origin of knowledge; and so those things that do not fall under the senses cannot be grasp by the human intellect except in so far as the knowledge of them is gathered from sensible things."***

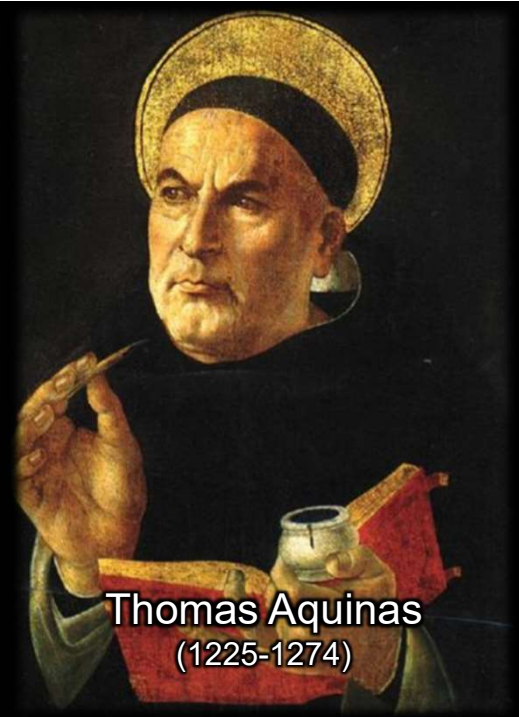
[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 3, §3. Trans. Anton C. Pegis. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I, 64]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

***"Our knowledge of principles themselves is derived from sensible things."***

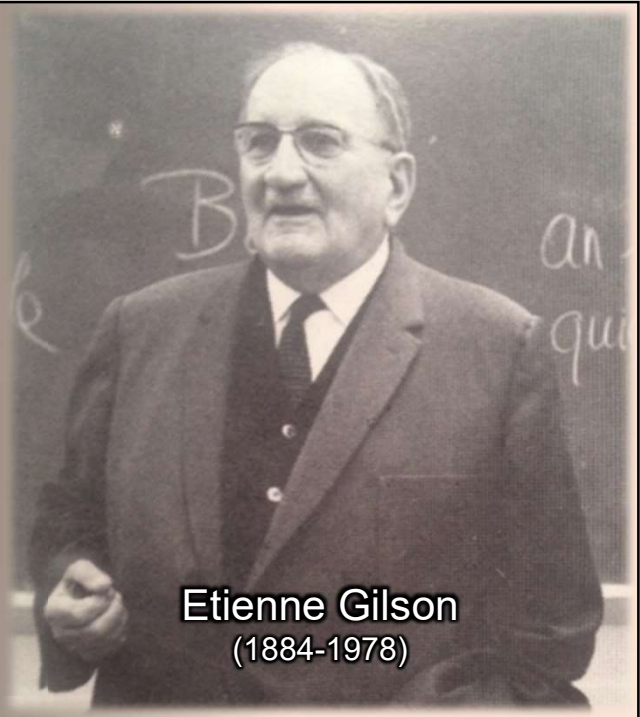
[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 83, §32. Trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), II, 282]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

***"The senses are only the bearers of a message which they are incapable of reading, for only the intellect can decipher it."***

[Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 199. While in context Gilson was referring to the act of existing, I believe this point can be extended to other metaphysical aspects of things.]



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

## **Surrendering the Epistemological Turf to the Modernists and Post Modernists**

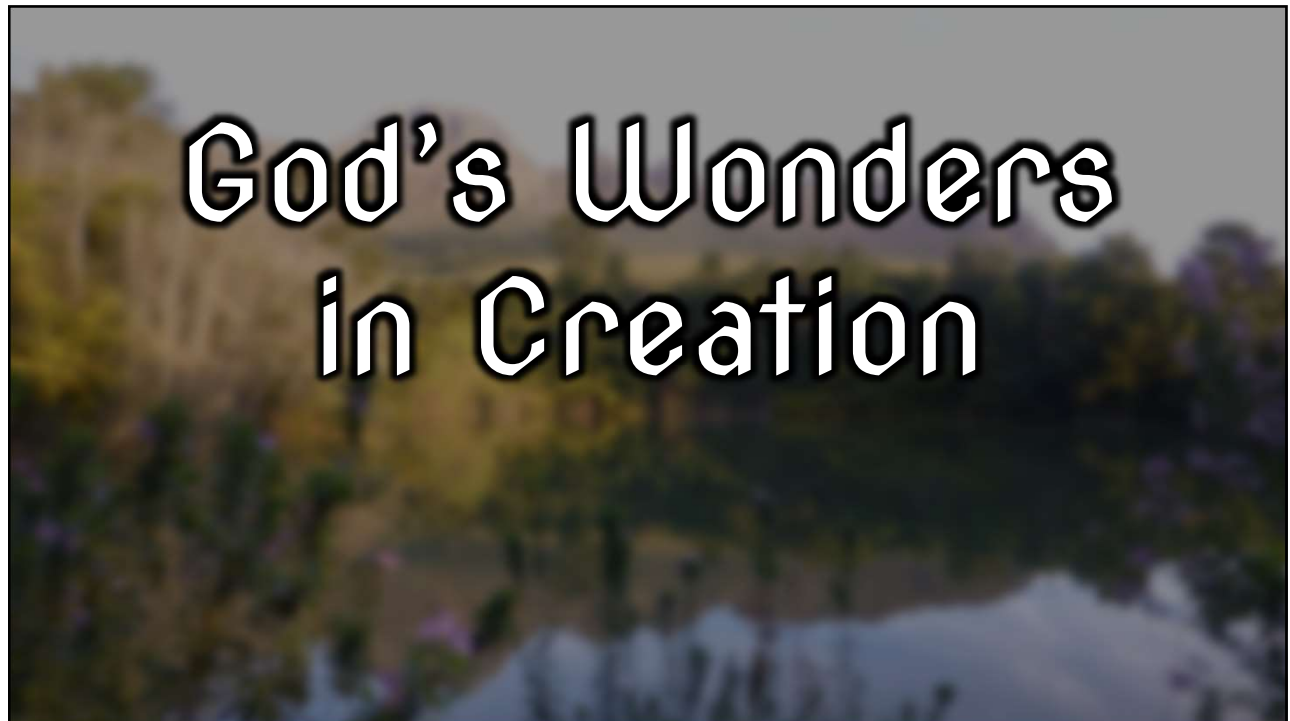


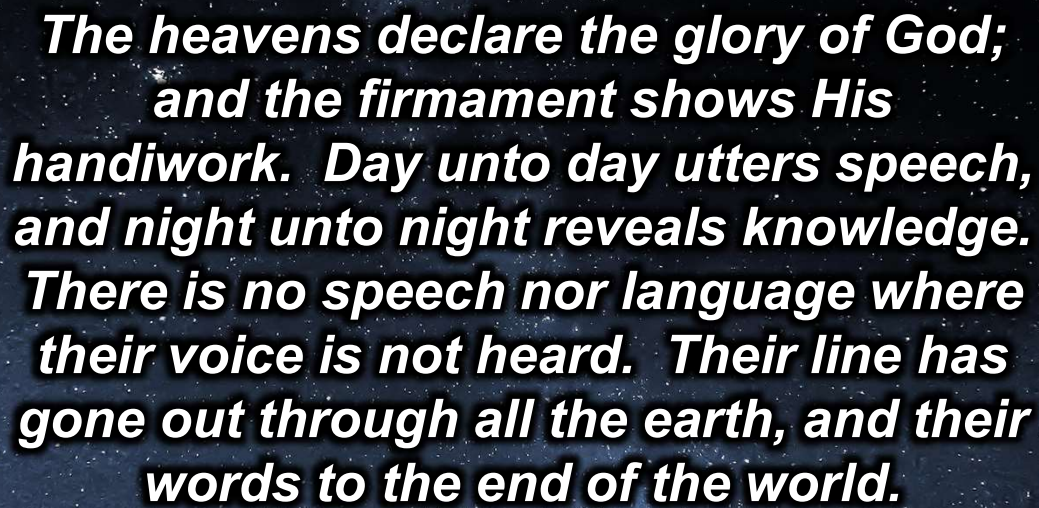
*Too many Christians have more or less surrendered the territory of empirical knowledge to the Logical Positivists and to "scientism" (e.g., Richard Dawkins).*

*They have erroneously let contemporary scientists set the agenda when these scientists claim that all knowledge is constrained to the boundaries of the physical world.*

*These Christians have lost sight of the fact that, while all knowledge begins in experience, that is not the end of the matter.*

*According to classical empiricism, all knowledge **begins** in experience and is **completed in the intellect**.*





***The heavens declare the glory of God;  
and the firmament shows His  
handiwork. Day unto day utters speech,  
and night unto night reveals knowledge.  
There is no speech nor language where  
their voice is not heard. Their line has  
gone out through all the earth, and their  
words to the end of the world.***

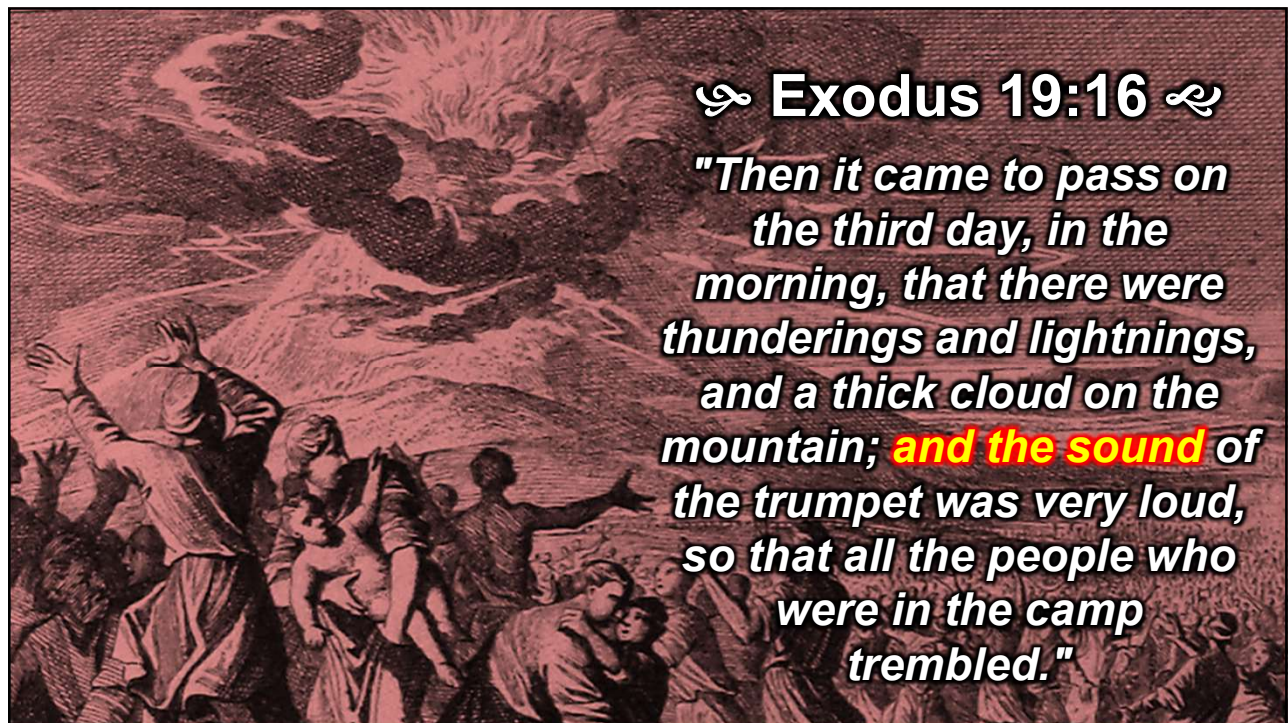
Psalm 19:1



***The heavens declare  
His righteousness,  
And all the peoples  
see His glory.***

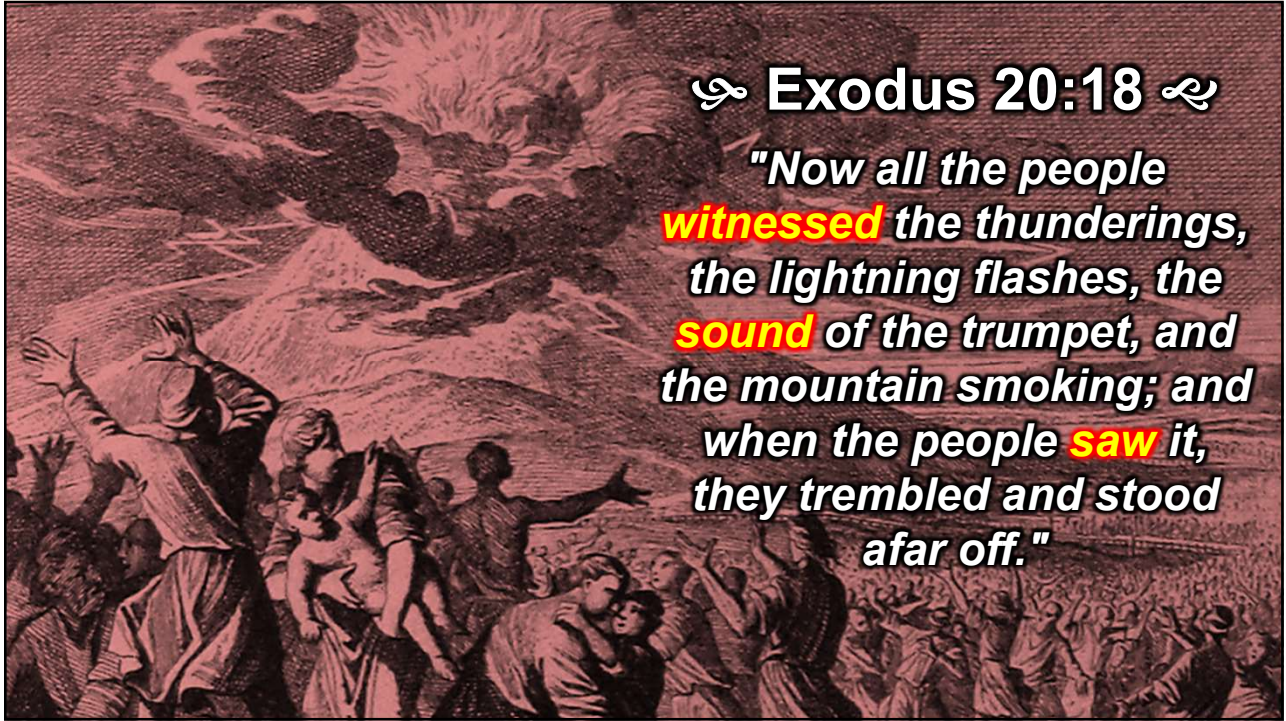
Psalm 97:6

# God's Wonders before the Nation Israel



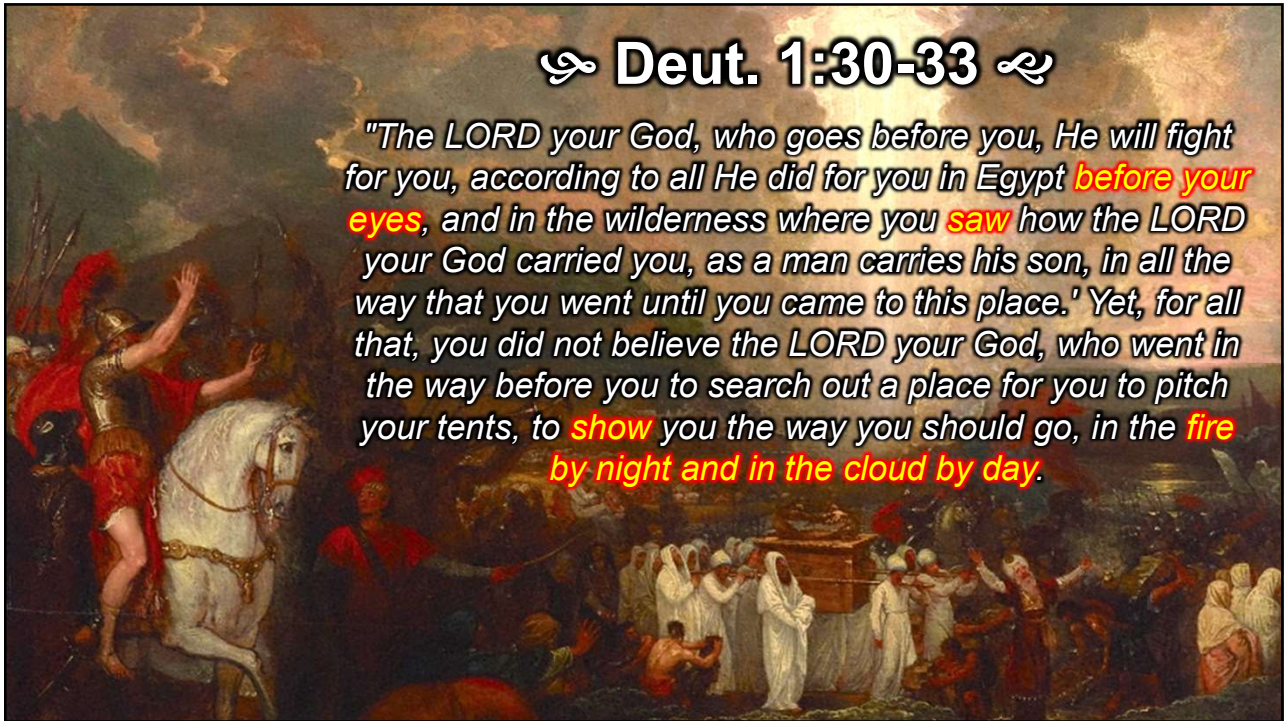
✧ Exodus 19:16 ✧

*"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; **and the sound** of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled."*



Exodus 20:18

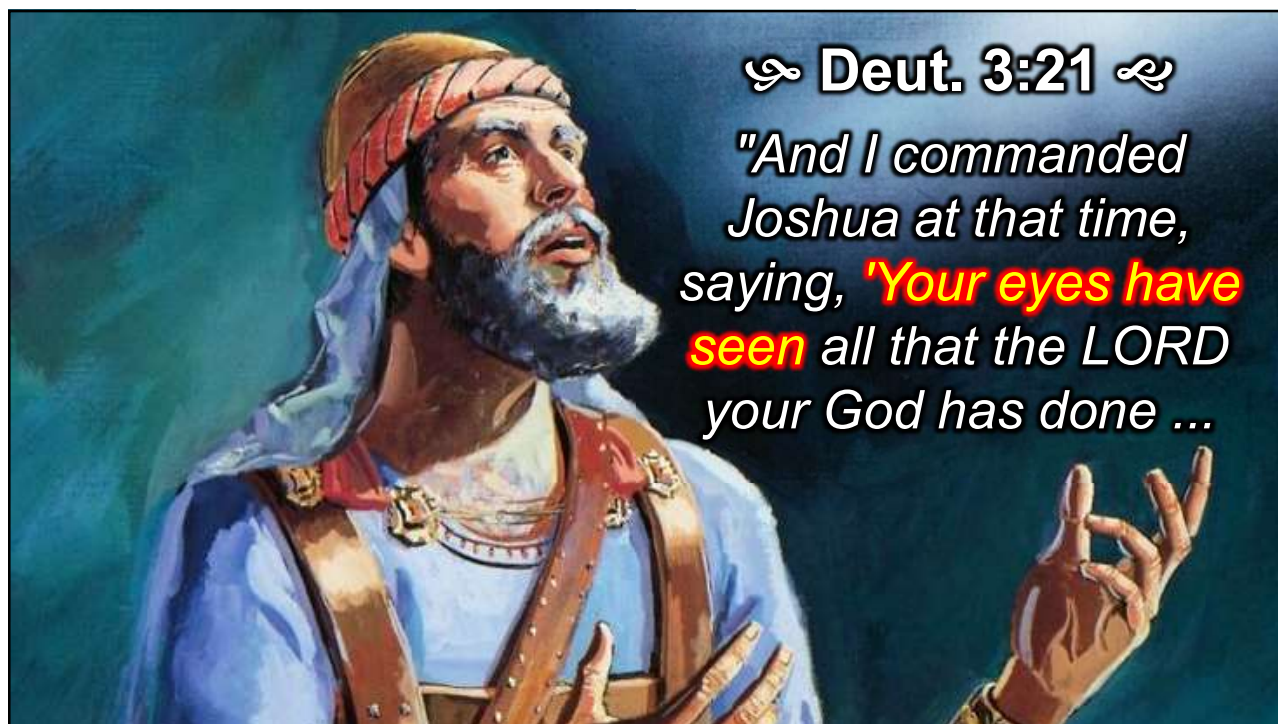
"Now all the people **witnessed** the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the **sound** of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people **saw** it, they trembled and stood afar off."



Deut. 1:30-33

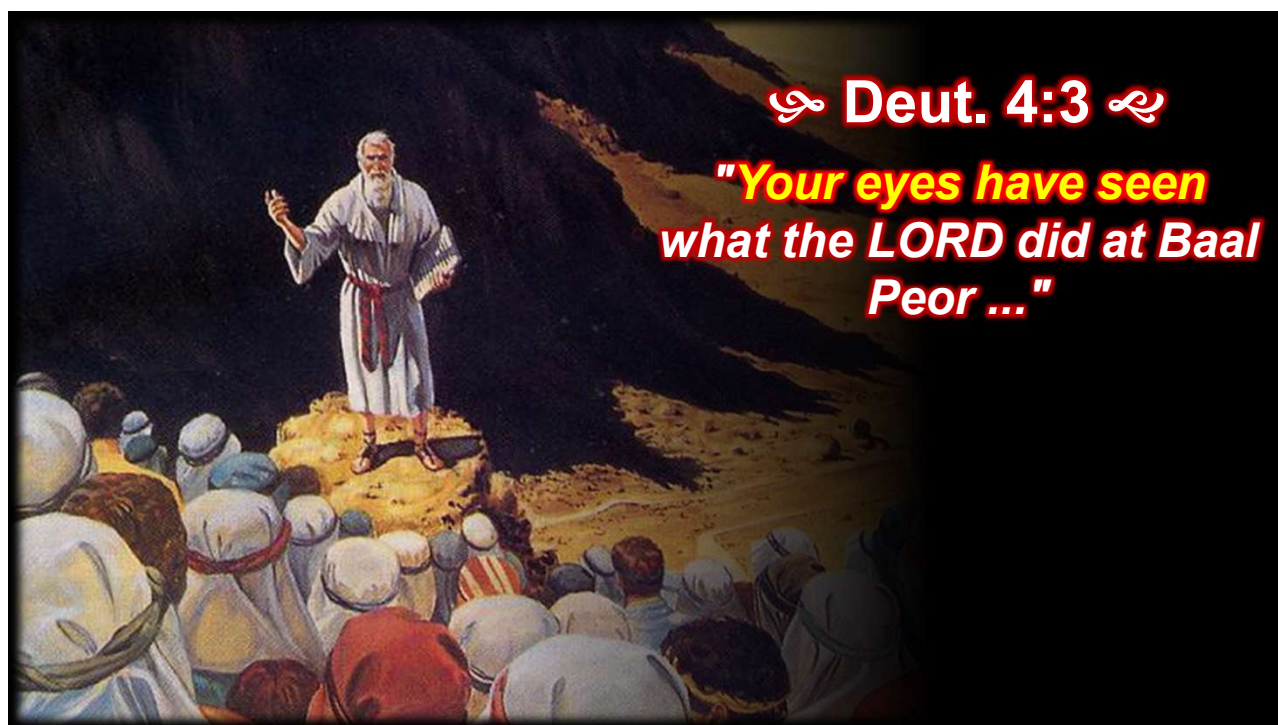
"The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt **before your eyes**, and in the wilderness where you **saw** how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.' Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to **show** you the way you should go, in the **fire** by night and in the cloud by day.





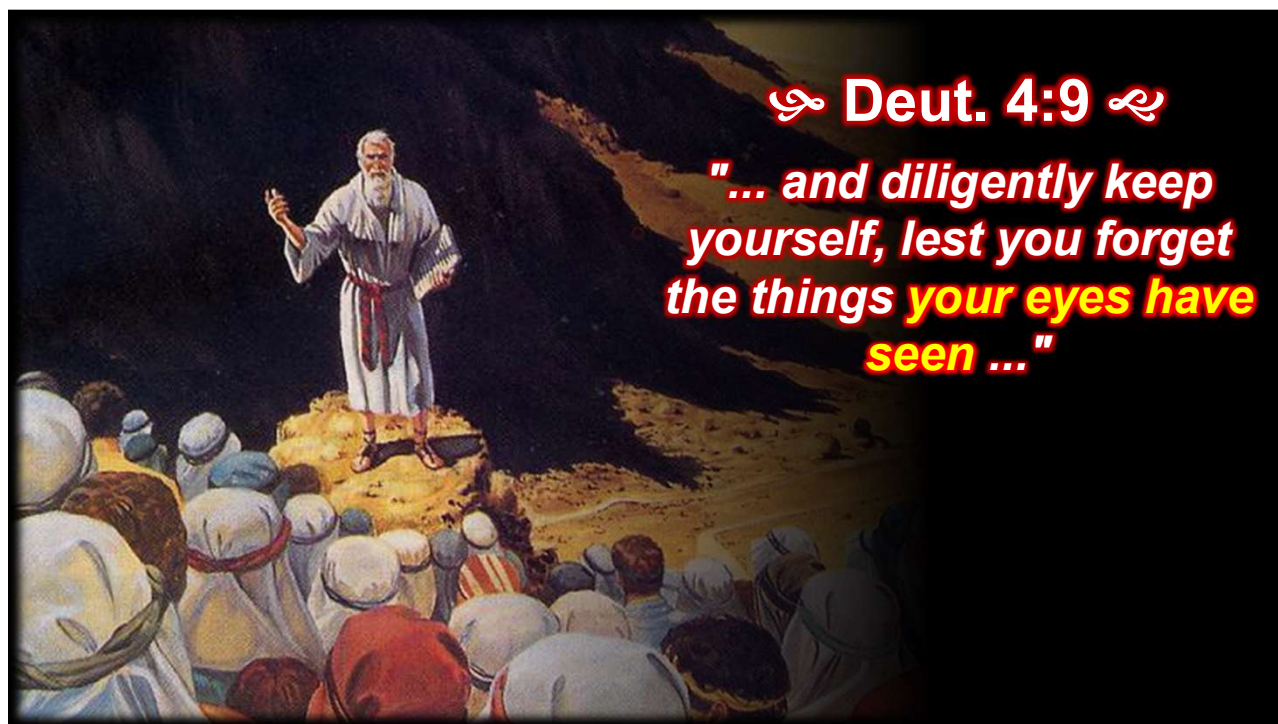
∞ Deut. 3:21 ∞

"And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, **Your eyes have seen** all that the LORD your God has done ...



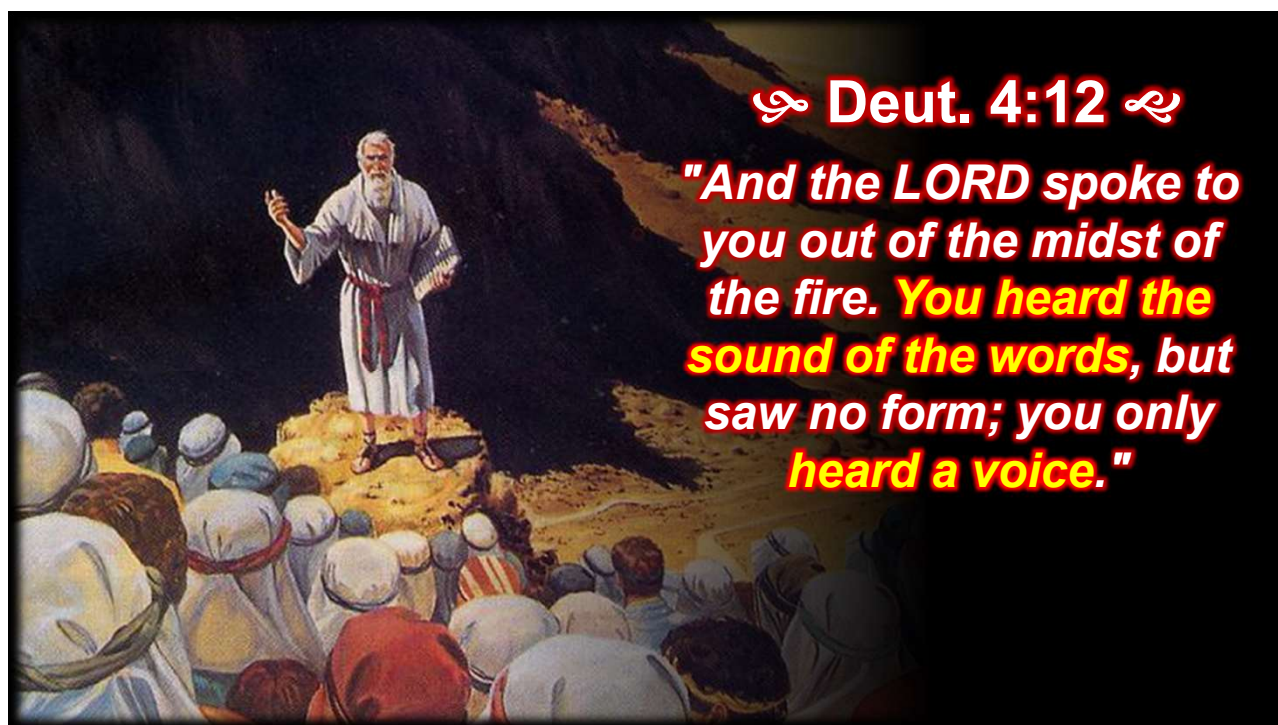
∞ Deut. 4:3 ∞

**"Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor ..."**



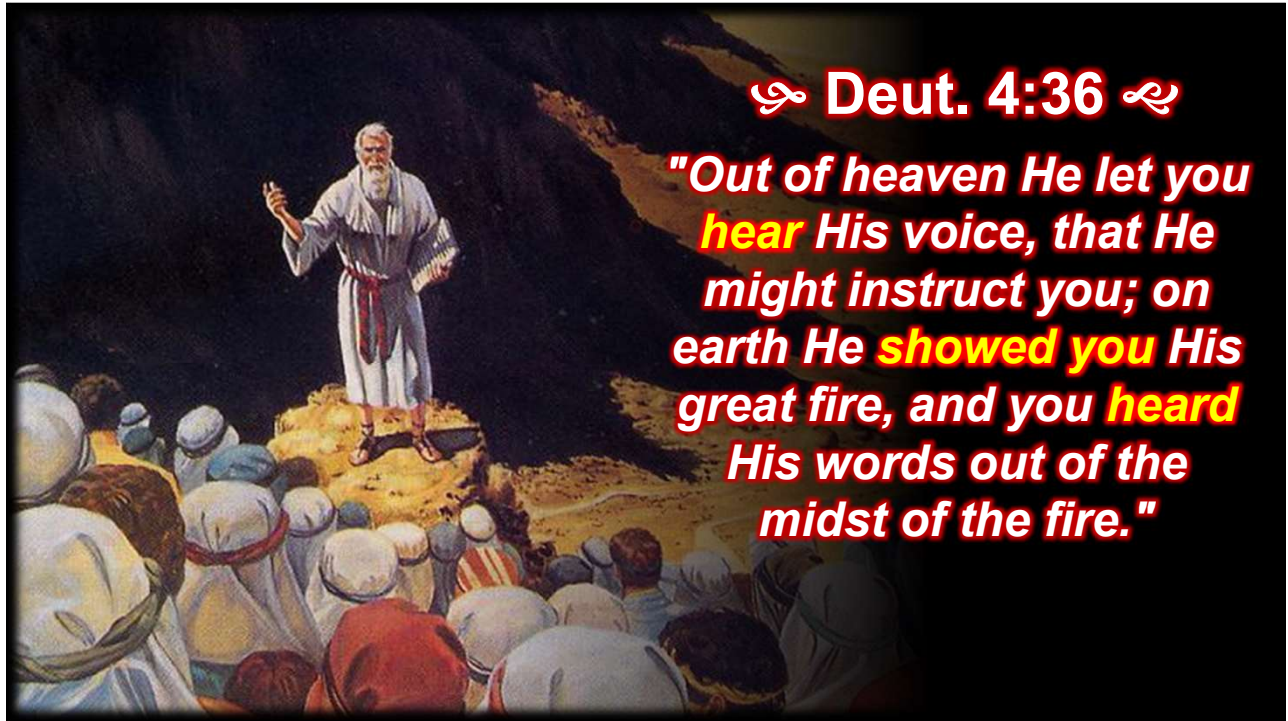
🌀 Deut. 4:9 🌀

*"... and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things **your eyes have seen ...**"*



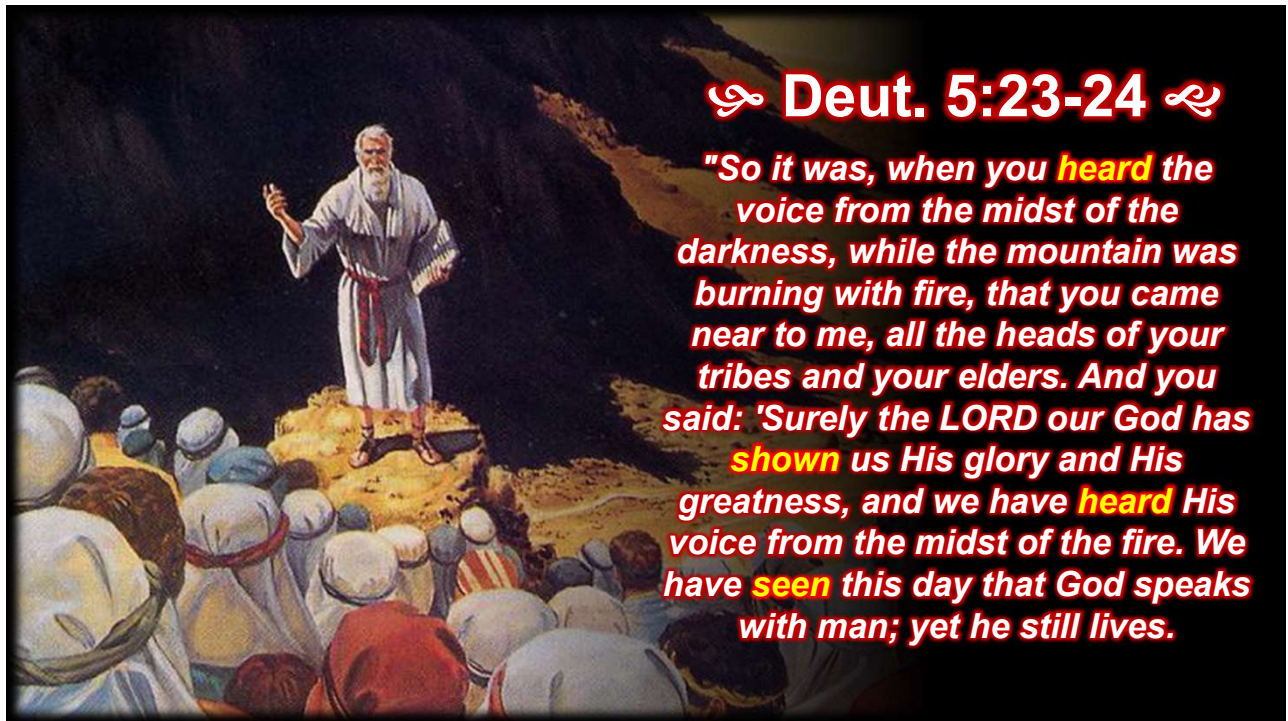
🌀 Deut. 4:12 🌀

*"And the **LORD** spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. **You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.**"*



🌀 Deut. 4:36 🌀

"Out of heaven He let you **hear** His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He **showed** you His great fire, and you **heard** His words out of the midst of the fire."



🌀 Deut. 5:23-24 🌀

"So it was, when you **heard** the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said: 'Surely the LORD our God has **shown** us His glory and His greatness, and we have **heard** His voice from the midst of the fire. We have **seen** this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives.'

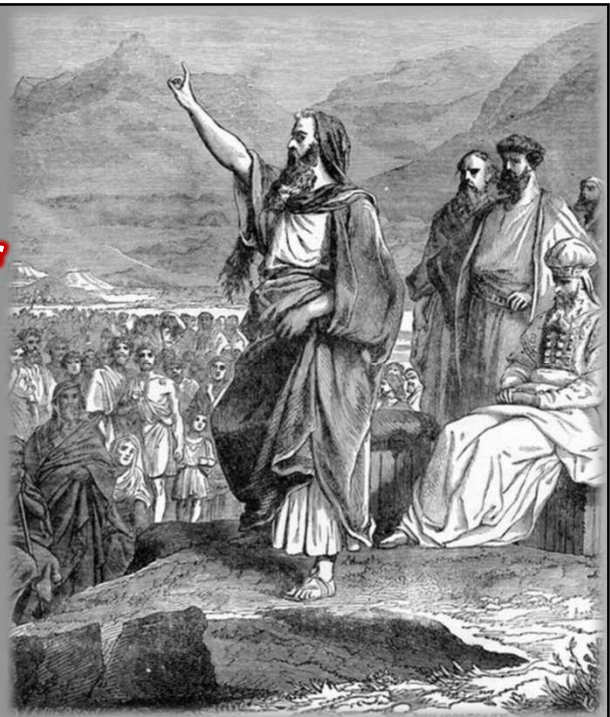
Deut. 10:21


*"He is your praise,  
and He is your God,  
who has done for you  
these great and  
awesome things  
which your eyes have  
seen."*



Deut. 11:7

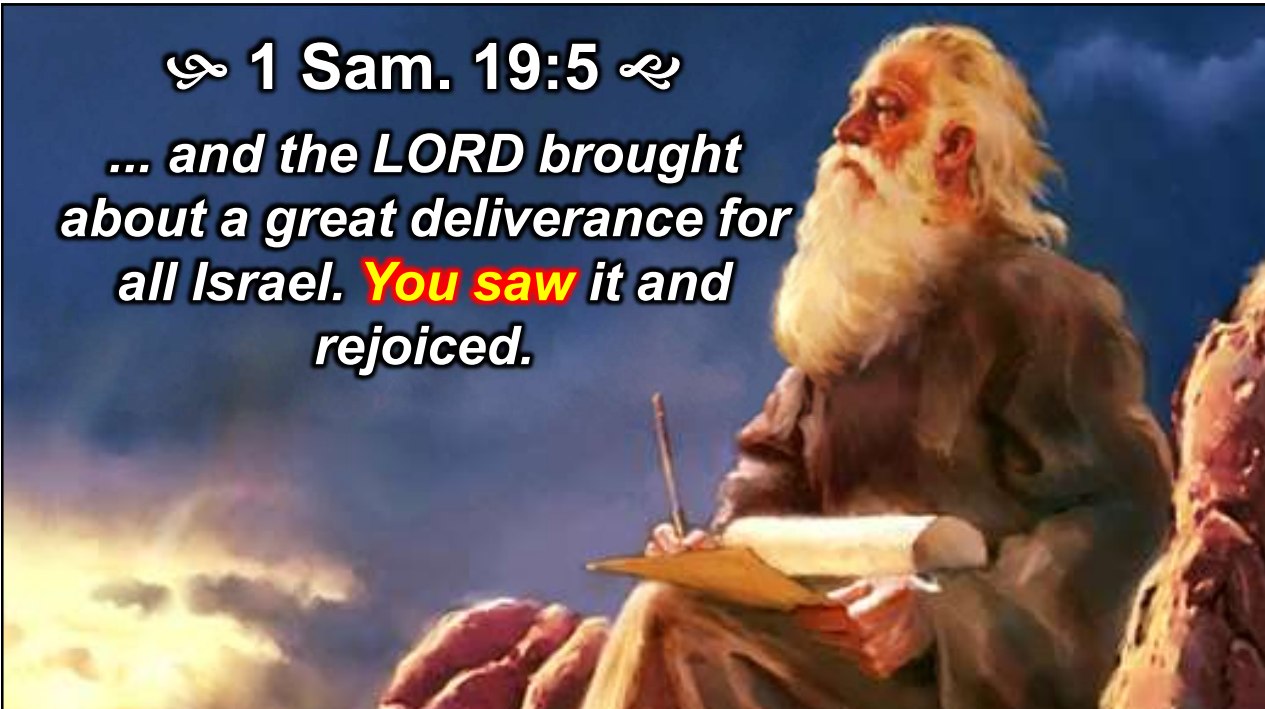
*"... but your eyes have  
seen every great act of  
the LORD which He  
did."*



An illustration of Moses, an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing a red and white robe. He is pointing his right hand upwards towards the sky. In the background, a large crowd of people is visible, and the setting appears to be a desert landscape with mountains in the distance.

**Deut. 29:1-3**

These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. {2} Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "**You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes** in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land— {3} the great trials **which your eyes have seen**, the signs, and those great wonders.

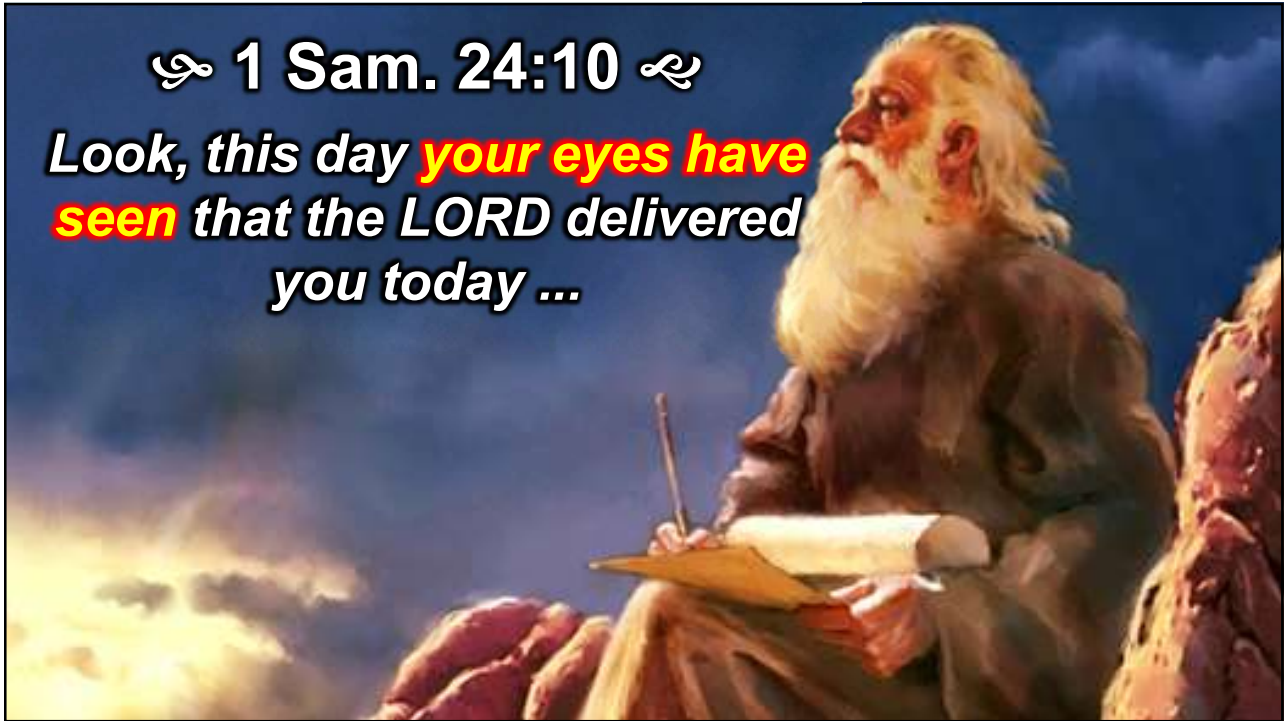
An illustration of an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing a dark brown robe. He is sitting on a rock, holding a scroll in his left hand and a quill pen in his right hand, as if writing. The background shows a dramatic sky with a bright sun or moon setting or rising behind clouds, and a rocky landscape.

**1 Sam. 19:5**

*... and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel. **You saw** it and rejoiced.*

☞ 1 Sam. 24:10 ☞

Look, this day **your eyes have seen** that the LORD delivered you today ...



☞ 1 Sam. 7:10 ☞

But **the LORD thundered with a loud thunder** ...



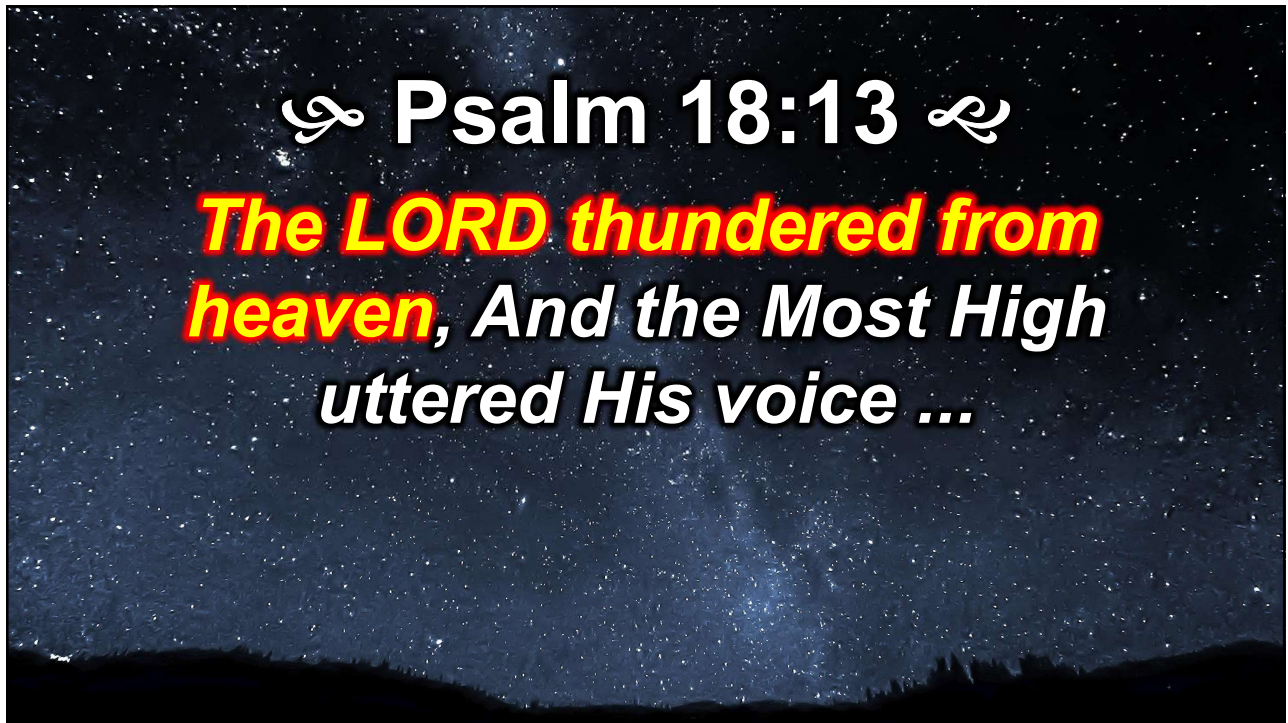
☞ 2 Sam. 22:14 ☞

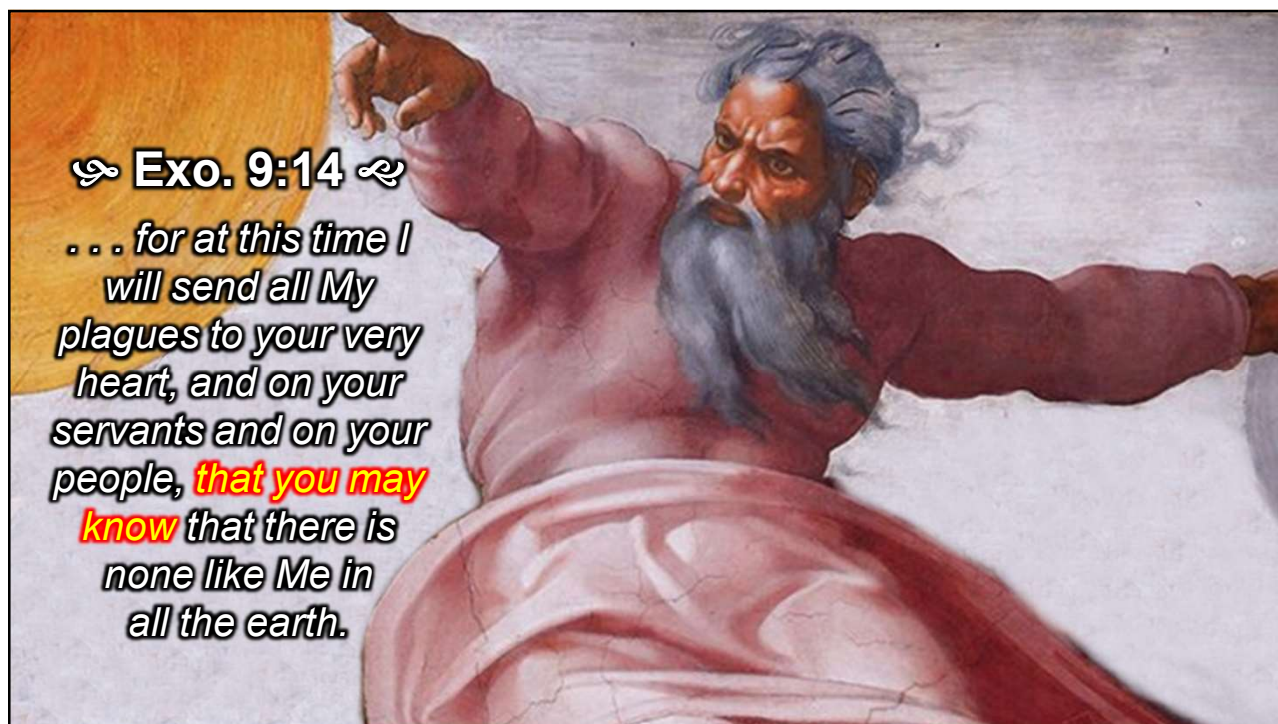
**"The LORD thundered from  
heaven, and the Most High  
uttered His voice.**



☞ Psalm 18:13 ☞

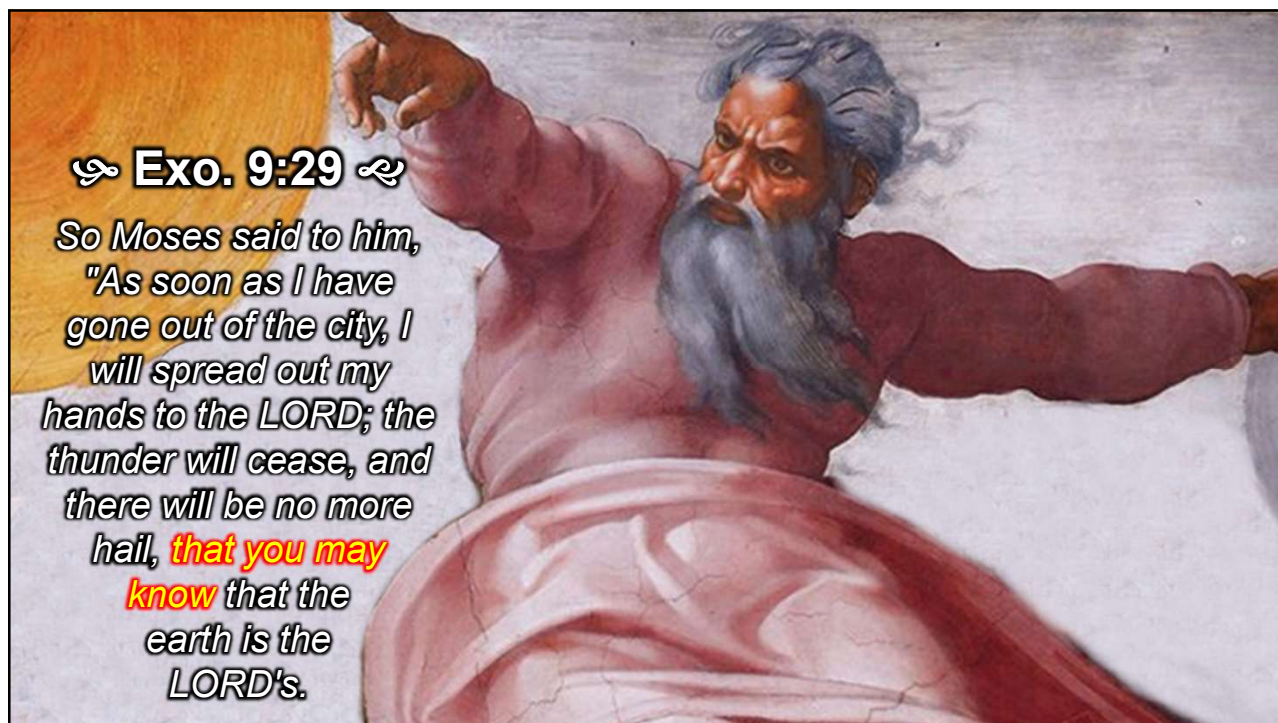
**The LORD thundered from  
heaven, And the Most High  
uttered His voice ...**





☞ **Exo. 9:14** ☞

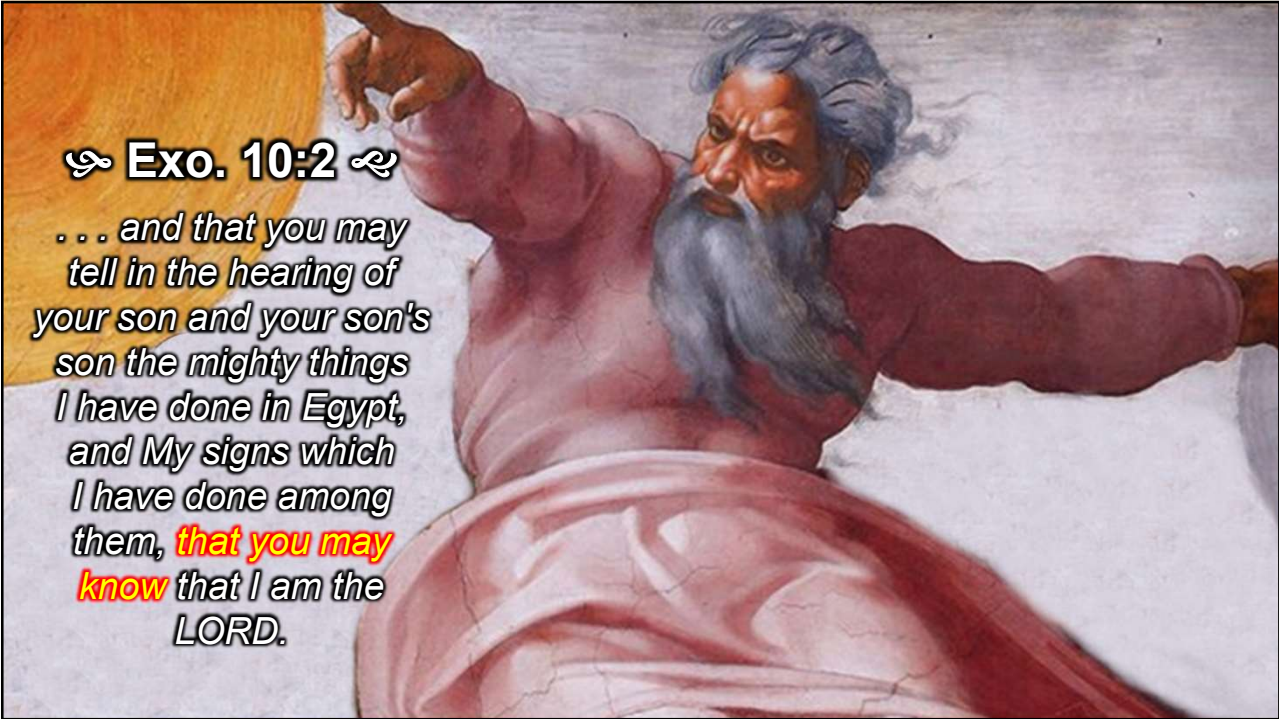
*... for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, **that you may know** that there is none like Me in all the earth.*



☞ **Exo. 9:29** ☞

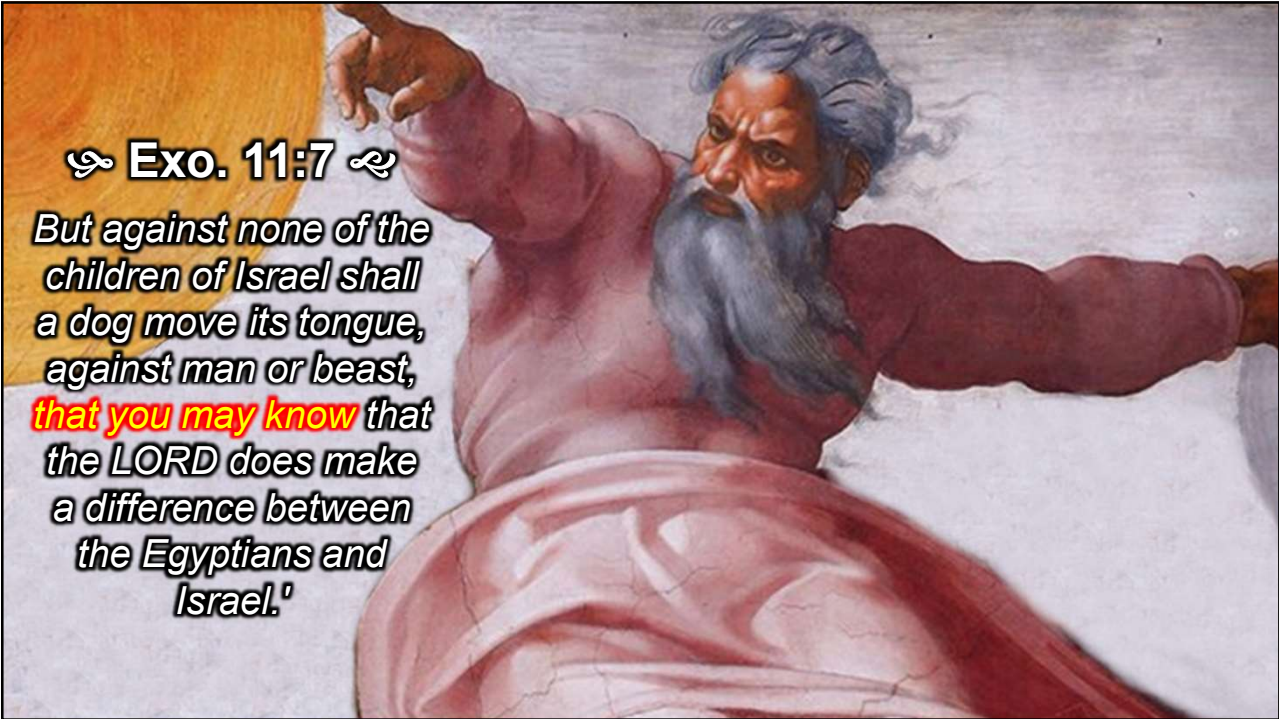
*So Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, **that you may know** that the earth is the LORD's.*





☞ **Exo. 10:2** ☞

*... and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, **that you may know** that I am the LORD.*

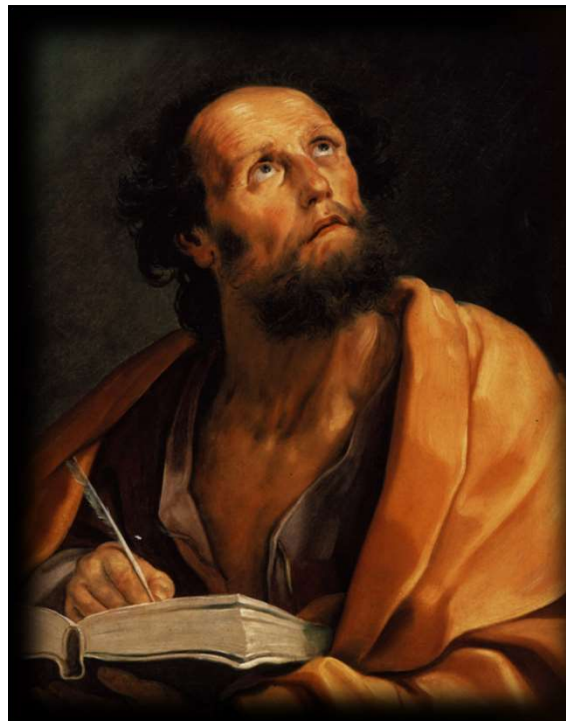


☞ **Exo. 11:7** ☞

*But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, **that you may know** that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.'*



# Empiricism in the New Testament



☞ Luke 1:1-4 ☞

*"Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses** and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."*

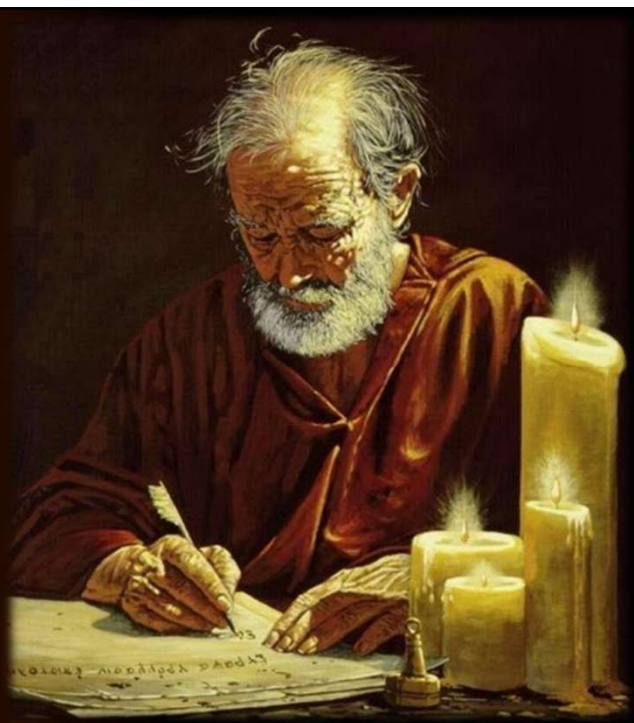
🌀 Acts 10:37-41 🌀

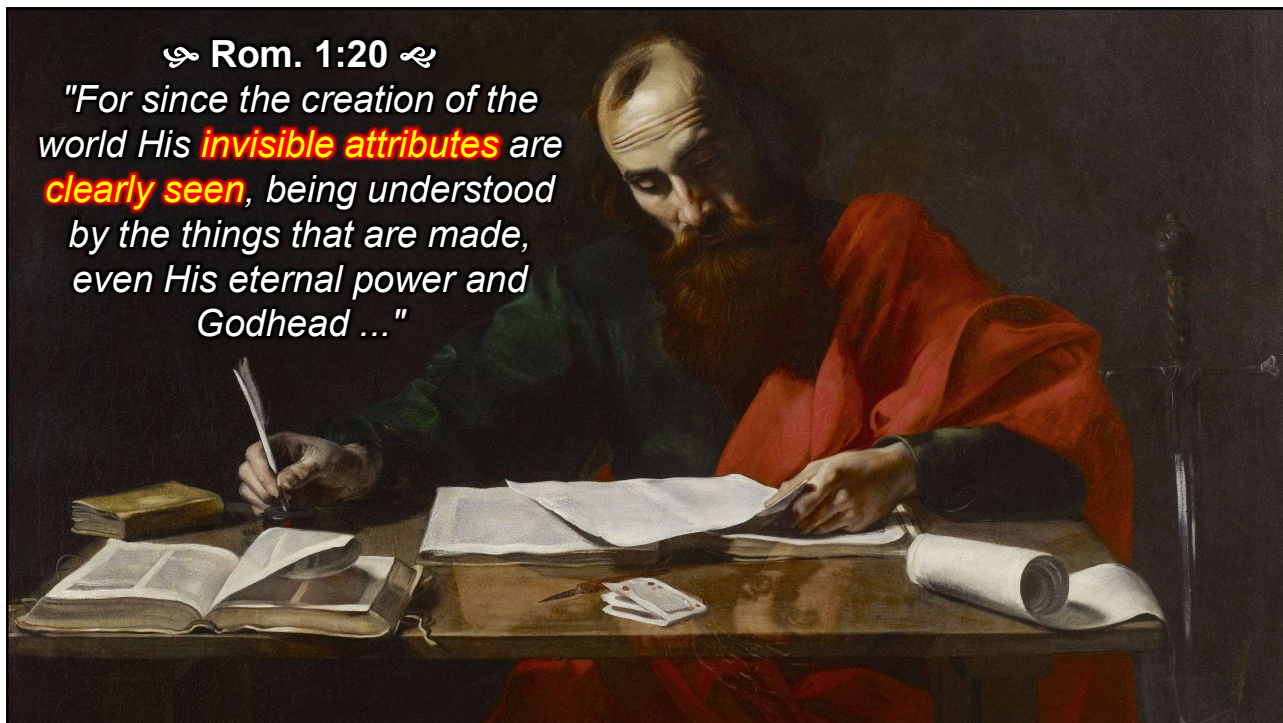
"And we are **witnesses** of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and **showed Him openly**, not to all the people, but to **witnesses** chosen before by God, even to us who **ate and drank with Him** after He arose from the dead."

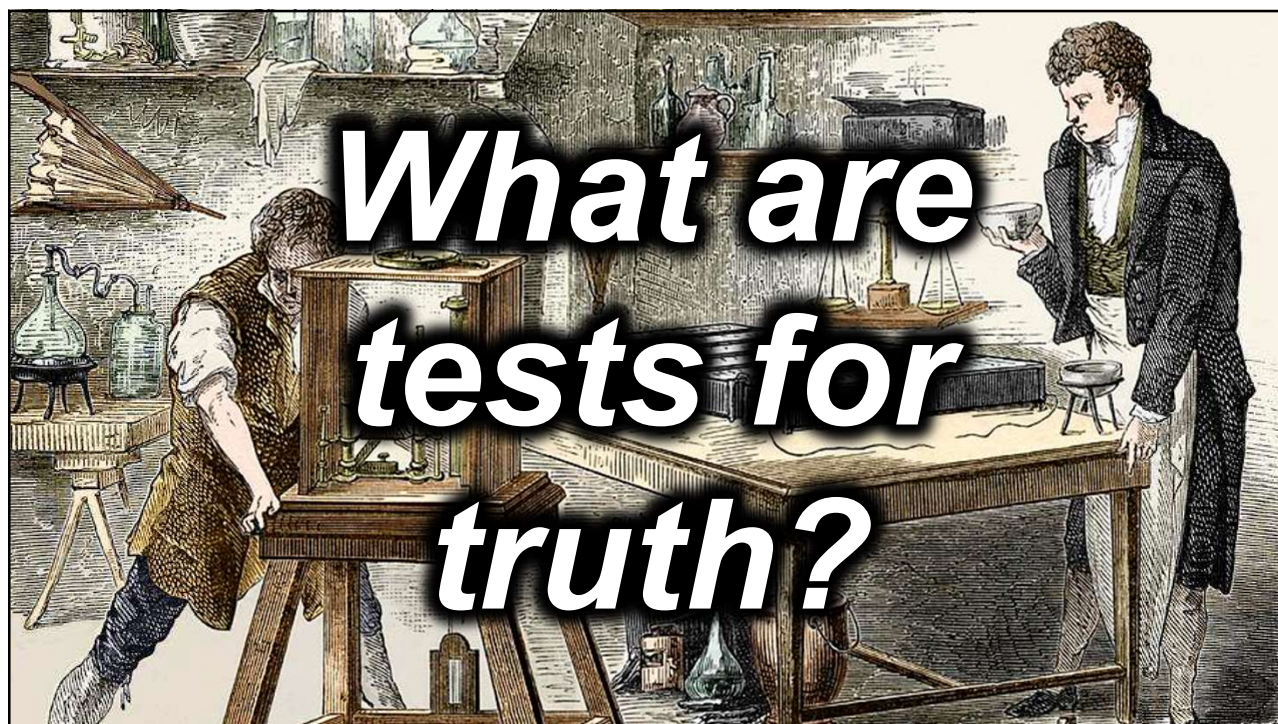


🌀 1 John 1:1-3 🌀

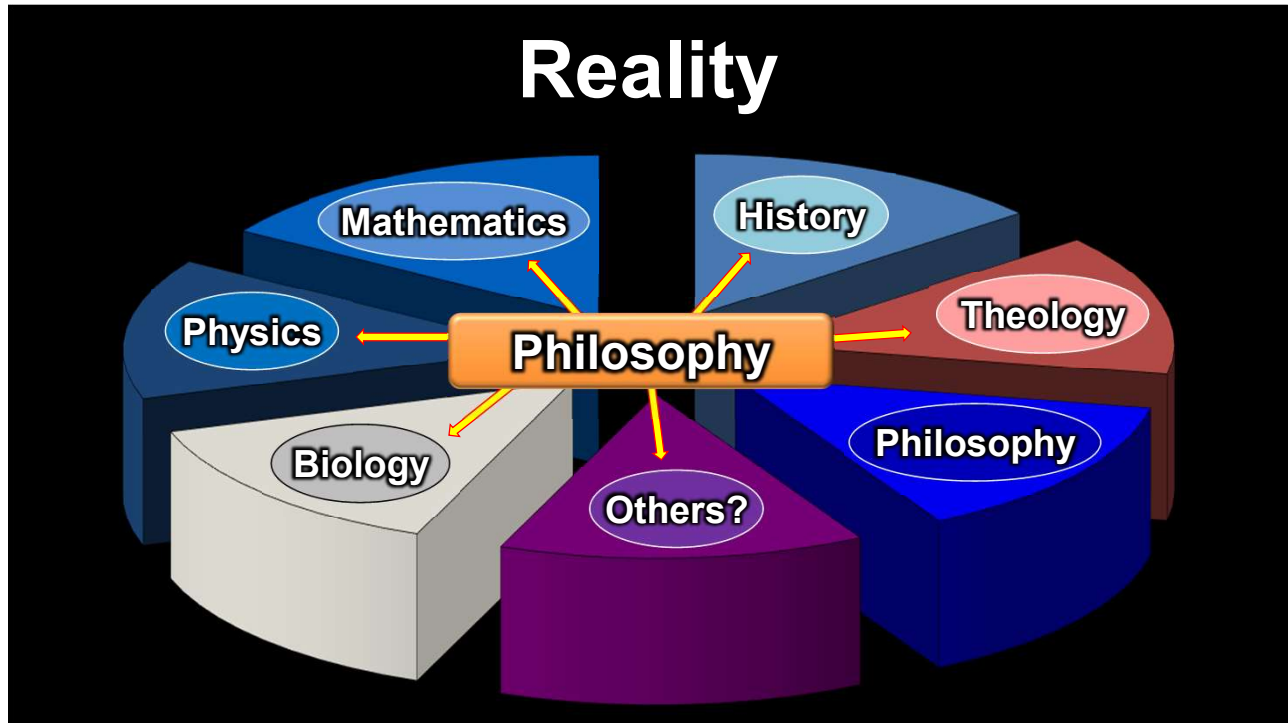
"That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen with our eyes**, which we have **looked upon**, and **our hands have handled**, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have **seen**, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have **seen and heard** we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."



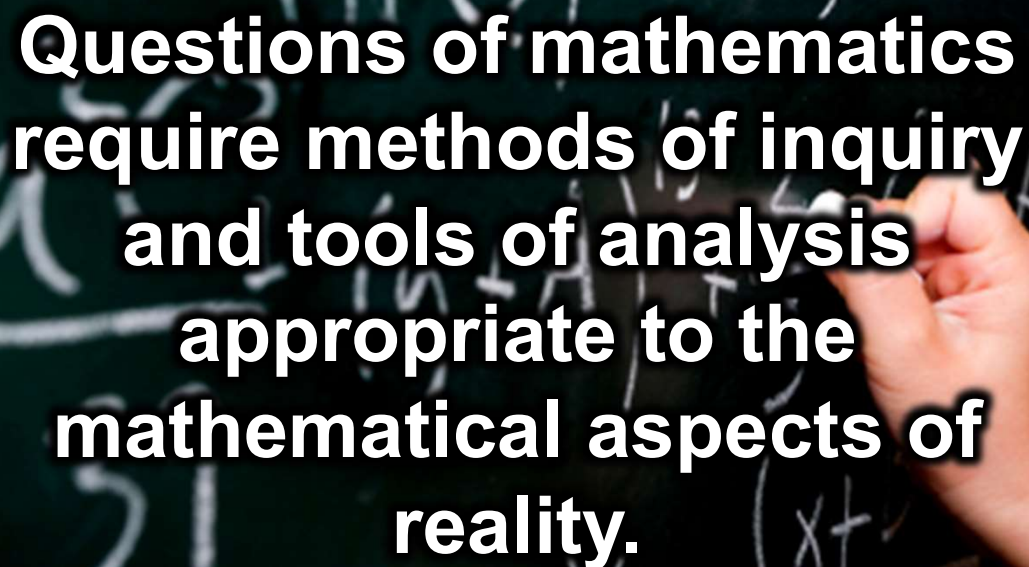




***In many instances, the test for truth will differ according to the kind of thing about which the statement is made.***



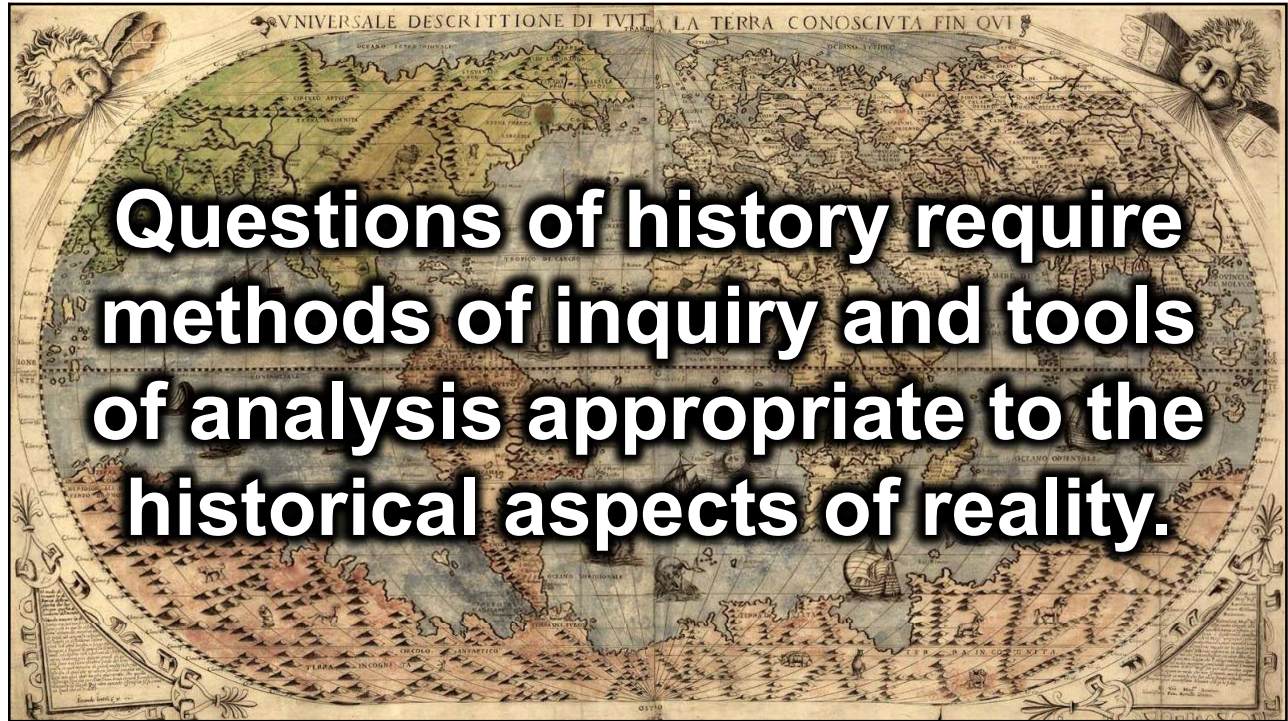
***Different aspects of reality  
require different methods of  
inquiry and tools of analysis.***

A hand is shown writing on a chalkboard. The board is covered with various mathematical equations and symbols, including  $(x+y)$ ,  $(x+y)^2$ , and  $(x+y)^3$ . The text is overlaid on the board in a large, white, bold font.

**Questions of mathematics  
require methods of inquiry  
and tools of analysis  
appropriate to the  
mathematical aspects of  
reality.**

A close-up of a microscope is shown against a solid blue background. The microscope is positioned diagonally, with the eyepiece at the top left and the objective lens pointing towards the bottom right. The text is overlaid on the image in a large, white, bold font.

**Questions of natural science  
require methods of inquiry and  
tools of analysis appropriate to  
the physical aspects of reality.**



## ∞ Two Philosophical Mistakes ∞

### The Lesser

*taking the methods of inquiry and tools of analysis  
for one aspect of reality and illicitly using them  
for another aspect of reality*





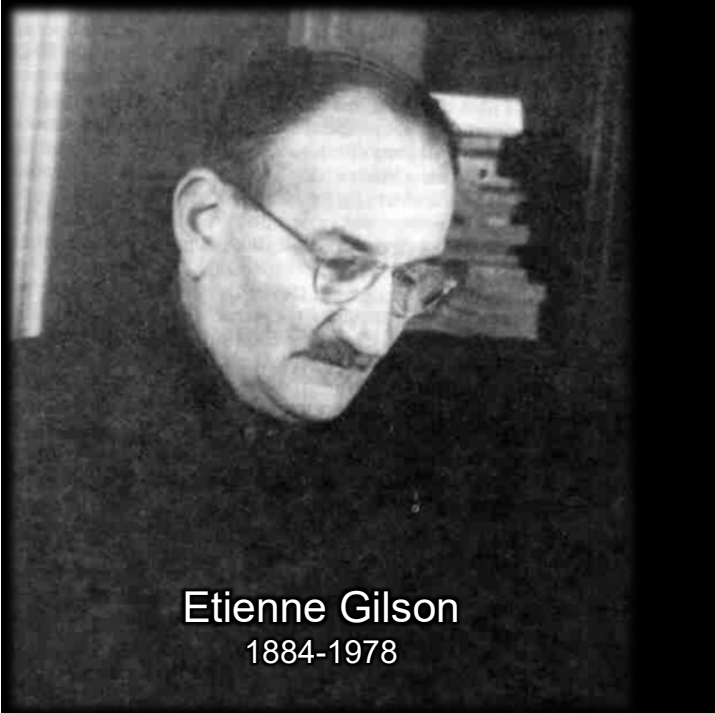
## ∞ Two Philosophical Mistakes ∞

### **The Lesser**

*taking the methods of inquiry and tools of analysis  
for one aspect of reality and illicitly using them  
for another aspect of reality*

### **The Greater**

*taking the methods of inquiry and tools of analysis  
for one aspect of reality and illicitly using  
for reality as a whole*



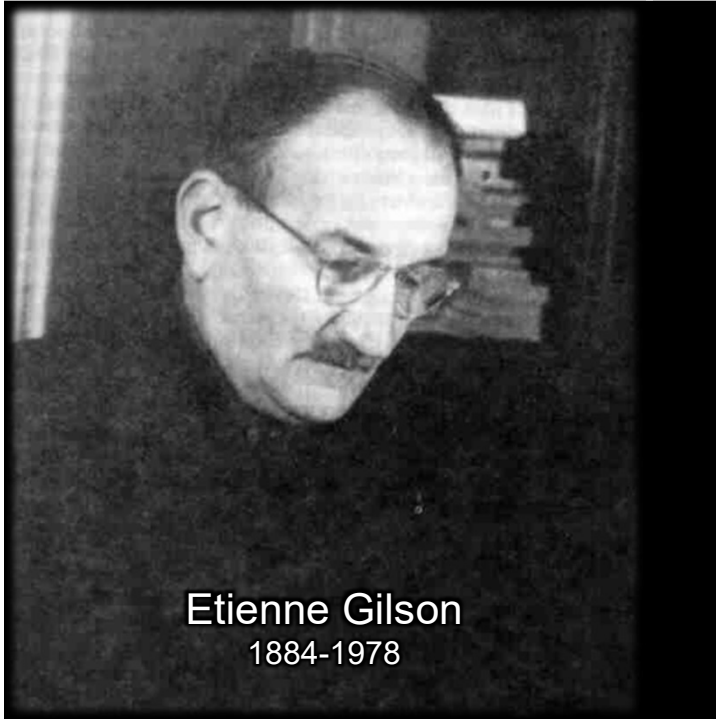
Etienne Gilson  
1884-1978

Etienne Gilson

**THE  
UNITY OF  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
EXPERIENCE**

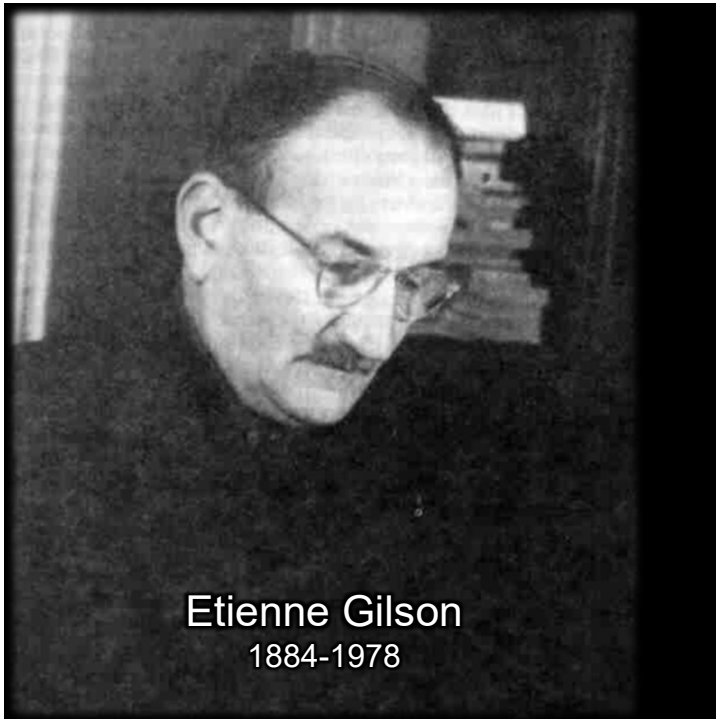
*The Medieval Experiment  
The Cartesian Experiment  
The Modern Experiment*

IGNATIUS



Etienne Gilson  
1884-1978

"Metaphysical adventures are doomed to fail when their authors substitute the fundamental concepts of any particular science for those of metaphysics. Theology, logic, physics, biology, psychology, sociology, economics are fully competent to solve their own problems by their own methods;



Etienne Gilson  
1884-1978

"on the other hand ... as metaphysics aims at transcending all particular knowledge, no particular science is competent either to solve metaphysical problems, or to judge their metaphysical solutions."

(Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, pp. 309-310).



## *To Be Sure ...*

- ✓ Our sensory faculties are not omniscient.
- ✓ Our sensory faculties are not infallible.
- ✓ Our sensory faculties are affected by the Fall.

## *To Be Sure ...*

- ✓ We as human beings are not omniscient.
- ✓ We as human beings are not infallible.
- ✓ We as human beings are affected by the Fall.

## *You hear concerns like ...*

- Empiricism can't give you logic.*
- Empiricism can't give you metaphysics.*
- Empiricism can't give you morality.*
- Empiricism can't give you God.*

## Then the concerns go ...

### Either ...

- ✓ *Empiricism can't justify induction (inductive reasoning).*
- ✓ *Empiricism shows that deduction (deductive reasoning) is nothing more than circular reasoning.*
- ✓ *Because of this, Empiricism cannot give us any knowledge at all.*
- ✓ *Thus, some other means is necessary for human knowing.*

### Or ...

- ✓ *Because empiricism can't give logic, metaphysics, morality or God, then empiricism proves none of those disciplines are true.*
- ✓ *Thus, empiricism is just another way of saying that science is the only way to truth.*

## Then the concerns go ...

### Either ...

- ✓ *Empiricism can't justify induction (inductive reasoning).*
- ✓ *Empiricism shows that deduction (deductive reasoning) is nothing more than circular reasoning.*
- ✓ *Because of this, Empiricism cannot give us any knowledge at all.*
- ✓ *Thus, some other means is necessary for human knowing.*

### Or ...

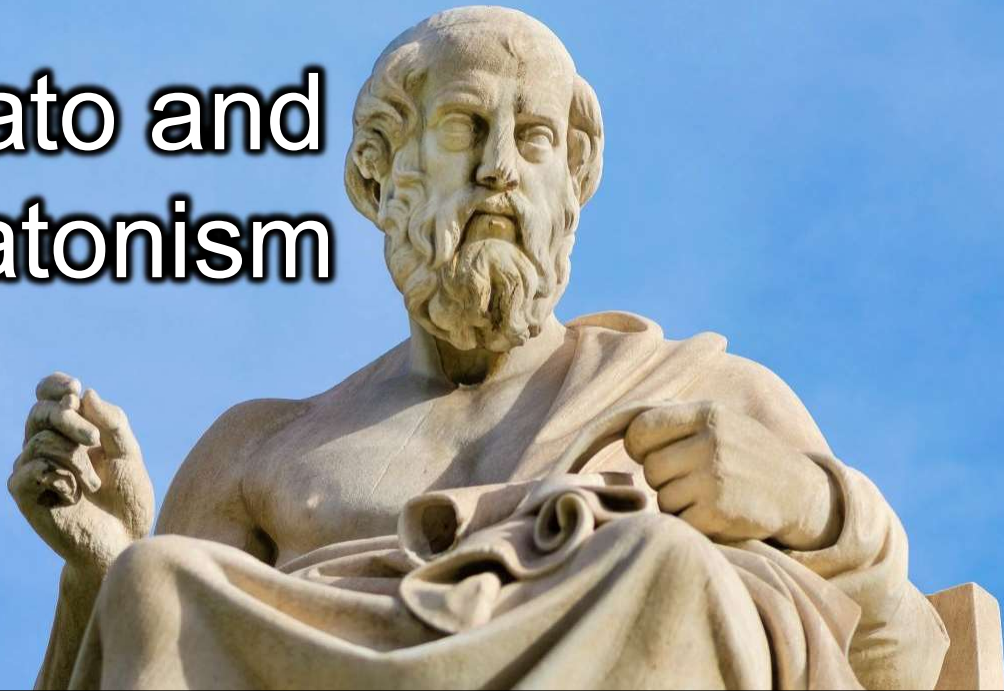
- ✓ *Because empiricism can't give logic, metaphysics, morality or God, then empiricism proves none of those disciplines are true.*
- ✓ *Thus, empiricism is just another way of saying that science is the only way to truth.*

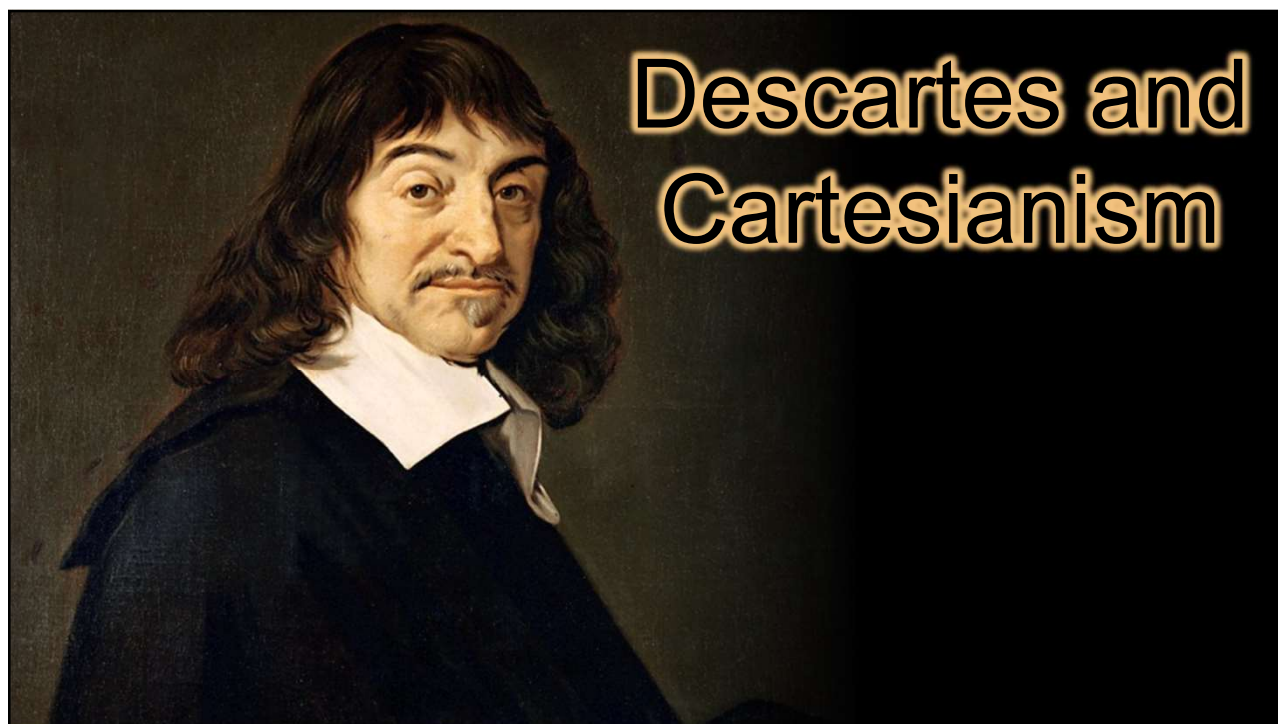
**SELF-REFUTING!**

# *Challenges to Empiricism:*

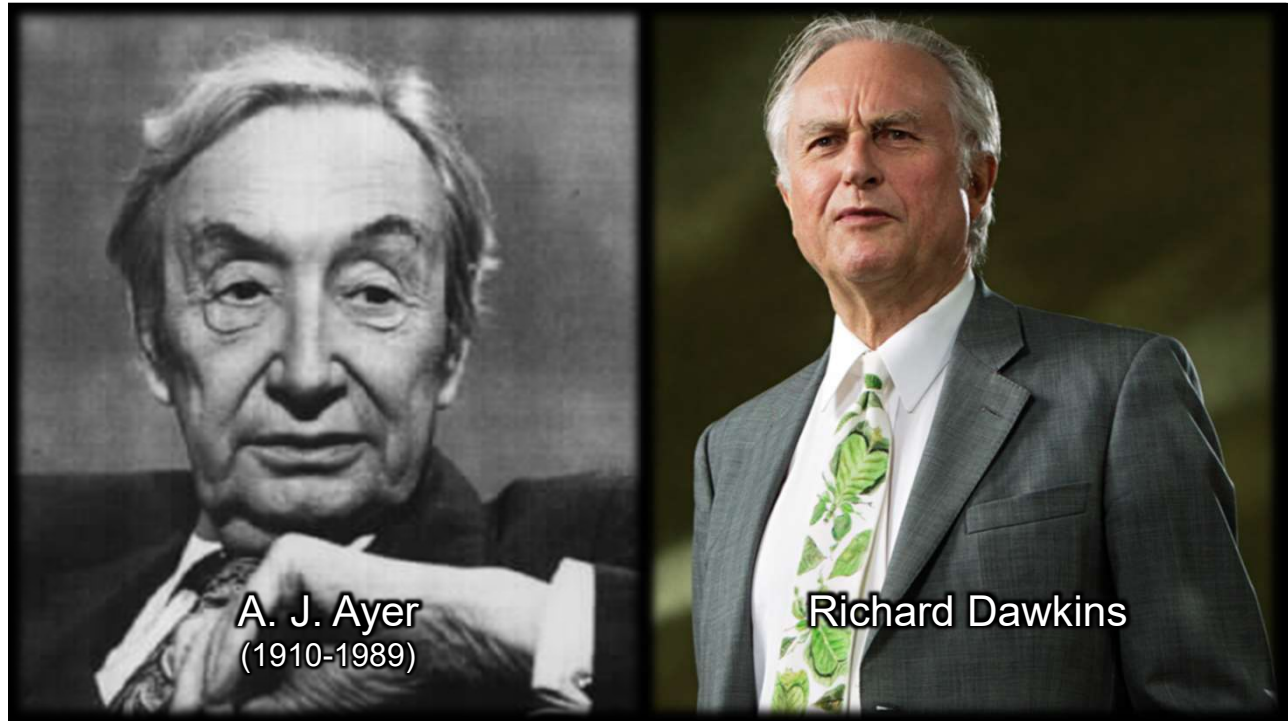
*The Challenge of Rationalism*

**Plato and  
Platonism**





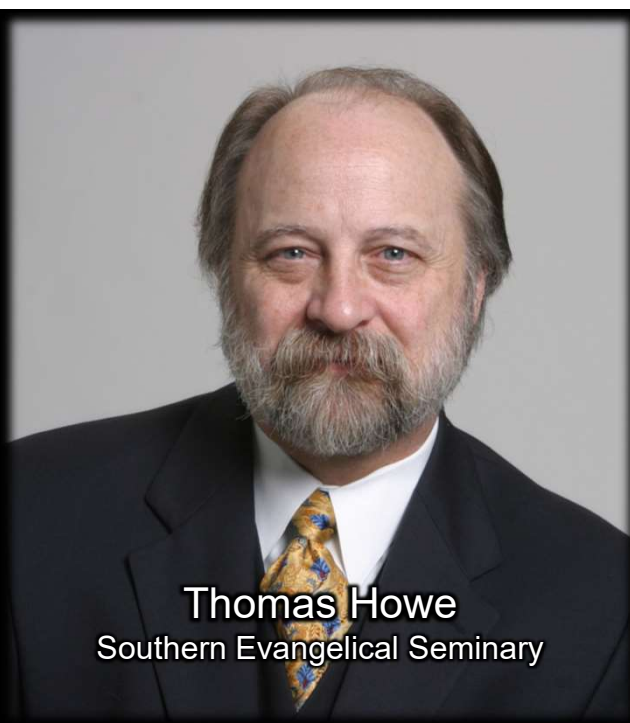
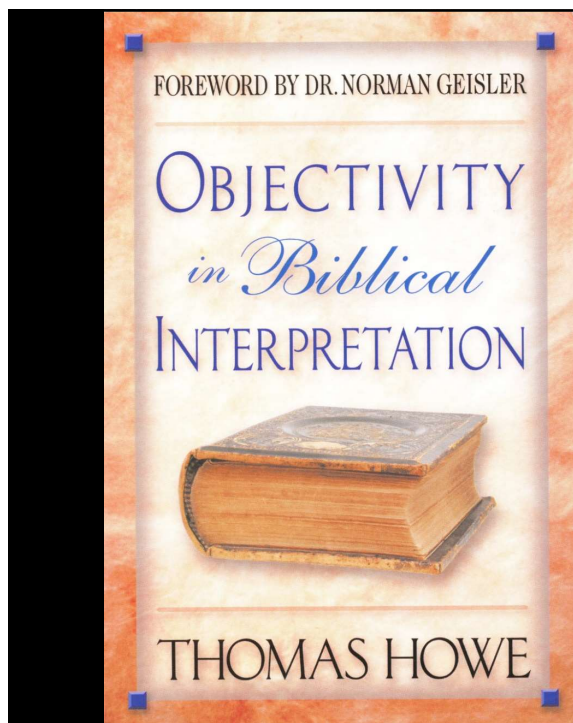




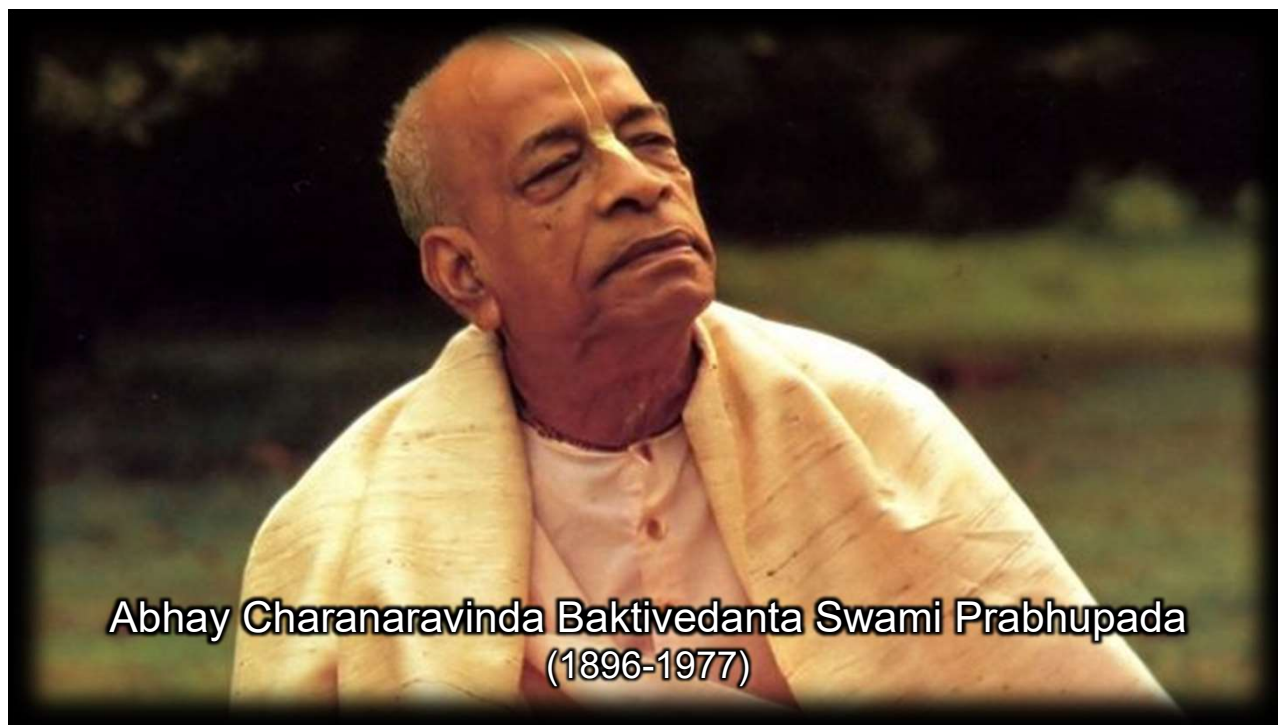
A. J. Ayer  
(1910-1989)

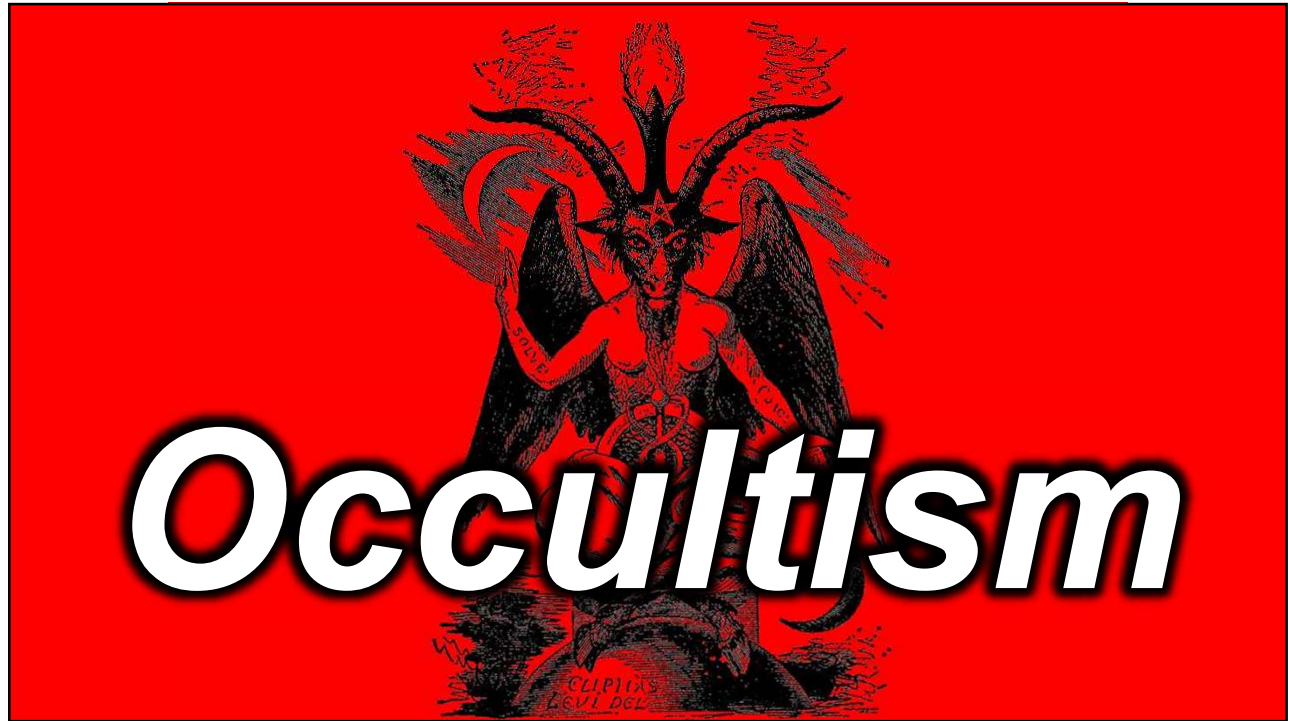
Richard Dawkins

*Challenges to  
Empiricism:  
The Challenge of Postmodernism*



Thomas Howe  
Southern Evangelical Seminary





*Responding to the  
Concerns about and  
Challenges to  
Empiricism*

## *Inadequate responses ...*


*Some Christians mistakenly think that our fallenness prevents humans from knowing truth through our senses so some sort of Presuppositional apologetic method is required.*



## *Inadequate responses ...*

*Other Christians mistakenly think that what is needed is some sort of "balanced" apologetic in terms of which the methods of empiricism are supplemented by other means of "knowing," often drawing elements from **Scripture**, Rationalism or Intuitionism.*

**Both/And:**  
A Balanced  
Apologetic



Ronald B. Mayers

Foreword by Kenneth Kantzer

## *Inadequate responses ...*

*Some Christians mistakenly think that Special Revelation (the Scriptures) are somehow given by God as a remedy to the failings of our senses.*

## *Inadequate responses ...*

*We will deal more directly with this last point when we cover Faith and Reason.*



# Conclusion

***God has created us as humans to be able to know the physical world through our senses.***



***It is no wonder that the enemy would not want us to trust our senses since:***

- ❖ *It is by our senses that we see that the heavens declare the handiwork of God. (Ps. 19:1)*
- ❖ *It is by our senses that the invisible attributes of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. (Rom. 1:20)*
- ❖ *It is by our senses that the Christian is able to "make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (1 Pet. 3:15)*