

Having Faith in God



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The question we have for discussion on the subject of faith is contained in a letter, which reads:

“Dear Friends: I have read in the Bible that ‘without faith it is impossible to please God.’ I want to be pleasing to God, but I find it difficult at times to exercise as much faith in him as I would like. Can you suggest ways by which I may increase my faith? Any help you can give me will be appreciated.”

The desire here expressed for a more vital faith in God reflects the heart’s desire of many. Just how can one’s faith in God and in his Word, the Bible, be strengthened?

First, we quote the entire text, which is given only in part by the questioner. It is found in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, and reads, “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”(vs. 6) There are two essential aspects of faith mentioned in this text. First one must believe that God is, that he actually exists; and the other is that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek

him—in other words, that he will fulfill the many promises contained in his written Word, the Bible.

How can one's faith be strengthened in the fact that there is a supreme, intelligent Creator of the universe, and that he really takes an interest in us, his earthly creatures?

Dr. Michael Behe, a noted biochemist who startled the evolutionist world with "Darwin's Black Box," found himself compelled to conclude, "The simplicity that was once expected to be the foundation of life has proven to be a phantom; instead, systems of horrendous, irreducible complexity inhabit the cell. The resulting realization that life was designed by an intelligence is a shock to us in the twentieth century who have gotten used to thinking of life as the result of simple natural laws."

Going from the microscope to the telescope, looking into the sky with a telescope, or even with the natural eye, to see the immensity of creation, its symmetry, beauty, order, harmony, and diversity should do much to strengthen one's faith in the existence of an intelligent Creator.

Many years ago, a noted physicist, Dr. Michael Pupin, was quoted as saying in an interview that "wherever science has

explored the universe it has found it to be a manifestation of a coordinating principle. That coordinating principle I call Divine Intelligence." He explained that there is no escape from the conclusion that back of everything there is a definite, guiding principle which leads from chaos to cosmos.

The great genius of the twentieth century, Dr. Albert Einstein, gave testimony that the intelligence revealed in creation caused him to realize the existence of God. His words were, "My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable Superior Spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail minds."

The prophets of old, including David, were overcome with awe as they beheld the glory of God displayed in the heavens. David said:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard; yet their voice gets out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a

strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and there is nothing hid from its heat." (Ps. 19:1-6) David saw the glory of God displayed in the heavens. Reverently considering the vast universe should increase our faith.

When one sees the stars, each moving in its own pathway, or observes a seed growing into a tree after a definite plan, or watches a baby develop into a full grown, self-directing human individual, it is difficult to conceive of it all taking place as a result of chance. Dr. Pupin said that there is nothing which science has ever found to contradict the thought of a supreme Creator. He said that the more science penetrates into the laws of the universe, the more it leads to a belief in an intelligent divinity, as has been said, "only God can make a tree"!

Another thing which impresses us in connection with God's creative works, is the occasional exception to what some refer to as the laws of nature. For example, the general rule is that objects expand when heated, and contract with the cold. An exception to this occurs in the freezing of water, in which it expands. If water were to contract when freezing, the ice becoming heavier than water would sink to the

bottom of our rivers and lakes. Thus the rivers' flow would cease, and the deep springs which feed the lakes would be stopped by the ice so formed. Thus the earth's circulatory system of water, upon which life is dependent, would not be possible. If what we call the laws of nature are simply haphazard, with no intelligence directing them, did this most necessary exception just happen to occur? That would be hard to believe. Turning to the Bible, can it be suggested in the way of internal evidence that the Bible is the Word of God? It seems that having faith in the Bible as being the Word of God is very essential to enjoy the Lord's blessings. That is very true, and there is much in the Bible which proves it to be the Word of God. It was written over a period of sixteen hundred years by many different writers, yet being harmonious is one of the best proofs of its authenticity. The fact that it has withstood all the attacks of its enemies throughout the centuries and yet surviving, is today the world's best seller, indicating beyond a doubt that it has had divine protection. Perhaps one of the most convincing proofs of the divine inspiration of the Bible is the accurate manner in which its prophecies have been fulfilled. The Old Testament prophecies foretold the birth, ministry,

death, and resurrection of Jesus as well as foretelling the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The discoveries of archeologists are almost continually confirming the reliability of the Bible. And then, of course, there are many other prophecies of the Bible which history testifies as having been fulfilled. There are many prophecies in the Bible referring to cities, dynasties, and kingdoms which, for one reason or another, were destroyed. No one can now point to a single one of these that has survived the divine pronouncement of doom by any of the prophets of the Bible. One of the very interesting examples of this is in the New Testament. Jesus reproached certain unworthy cities of his day, saying, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."—Matt. 11:21,23

Up to that time the Galilian cities which Jesus condemned had been very highly favored, even by nature. There seemed no reason on earth why these cities should pass away. Yet they did. Two of them are marked by desolate heaps of ruins, while

the third has disappeared so completely that now its exact site cannot be located.

Significantly on the other hand, the neighboring city of Tiberias, on which no doom was pronounced, was not destroyed but continues to this day. Prophecies of the Bible do come true, and very accurately so, which should give great faith to everyone who place their trust in them. Regarding Jesus' prophecy concerning the destruction of Capernaum and other cities of Galilee, we read the prophecy which Jesus foretold that those cities would be brought down to hell. This seems like strange language because of the traditional misunderstanding many have concerning what the Bible means by the word hell. In this prophecy the Greek word translated hell is "hades." This the Greek counterpart of the Old Testament Hebrew word "sheol." It is a word, which, in its ultimate meaning, denotes a state of non-existence, or oblivion. Throughout the Bible it is used to describe the state of death. This word "hades," therefore, very properly describes the state of oblivion to which those ancient cities were doomed by Jesus prophecy.

While the Greek word "hades" itself denotes the state of death, or of oblivion, the Lord has promised that humans will be

restored from death. This is described in Revelation as hell giving up its dead. (Rev. 20:13) Many may have wondered how whole cities could be brought down to hell. Since God has promised to restore dead humans to life, thus bringing them back from “hades,” or hell, there are certainly some promises and prophecies of the Bible which have not yet been fulfilled. But when the time does come in the divine plan for God to restore the dead to life, no one will need to ask another what he might do to increase his faith.

The Bible assures us of a time when “the knowledge of the LORD” shall fill the earth “as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9) Let us now examine some of what we might call the long-range prophecies of the Bible, and note how wonderful they have been and are being fulfilled. We particularly have in mind a prophecy recorded in the second chapter of Daniel. It is based upon a dream in which King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon saw a human-like image having a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet and toes of iron and clay mixed. In his dream the king saw a stone cut out of the mountain without hands which smote the image on its feet, causing it to crumble and fall. Then the stone became a great mountain which filled the whole earth.

The Prophet Daniel revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him, and explained what it meant. We read what Daniel said to the king.

"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.

"Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall rise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. . . . And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand

for ever. . . . The great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.”—Dan. 2:37-45

In this remarkable dream Daniel said to the king, “Thou art this head of gold,” meaning that the head of gold on the image, which the king saw in his dream, represented himself as the head of the Babylonian Empire. Daniel said three other kingdoms would also follow. Realizing the accuracy with which the prophecies were fulfilled should do much to increase our faith in the Bible as the Word of God. History records the fact that Babylon, as represented in the head of gold, was succeeded by the Medo-Persian Empire, which was pictured by the breast and arms of silver. Then came the Grecian world power, which was depicted by the thighs of brass. The Grecian Empire, in turn, was overthrown and succeeded by the Roman Empire, shown by the legs of iron.

And it is interesting to note how the prophecy emphasizes the great strength of the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, by calling special attention to the iron legs which foreshadowed it. Daniel said that “the fourth kingdom,” which was Rome,

“shall be strong as iron.” In its heyday of glory, Rome was noted for its great military strength. That surely is a very fine detail of prophecy which has been accurately fulfilled.

Another point of accuracy in this prophecy is the fact that the Roman Empire is not represented as being succeeded by another world power, but as disintegrating and dividing. And this is exactly what happened. As we know, it was divided, represented in the various states of Europe, until 1914, or until those states themselves, governed by church-state rulers, began to fall apart as a result of the first World War. In World War II one of Mussolini's ambitions was to restore the glory of the old Roman Empire, but the prophecies of the Bible were against him and he could not succeed. But there is still another part of this wonderful prophecy of Daniel. He spoke of a “stone” cut out of the mountain without hands. This stone smote the image on its feet, breaking it to pieces, and then this stone became a great mountain which filled the whole earth. The meaning of this was described by Daniel, which was represented by the feet and the toes of the image—the remnants of the old Roman Empire.

“In the days of these kings,” Daniel said, “shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”—Dan. 2:44

This points out to us that in the days of the divided Roman Empire, as represented in the various states of Europe just prior to the first World War, would be the time for the God of heaven to prepare for the setting up of his long-promised kingdom in the earth. This means that it would not be possible for any dictator or nation again to set up a rulership over the earth such as history records concerning Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. It means that the next world government would be the kingdom of the Lord.

To grasp the reality of this prophecy, and the manner in which it is being fulfilled in our very day, should do more than almost anything else to increase our faith. We know that the remnants of the old Roman Empire have just about all disappeared. We know that the world has been in a state of chaos ever since they began to be destroyed. We are now being told by many that the world is doomed unless God steps in and does something to save

man from his own folly and selfishness. Daniel's prophecy explains this very situation, and assures us that the Lord is stepping in to do something about it, that the long-promised kingdom of Christ will soon be established and manifested for the joy and blessing of all nations.

In view of the wonderful manner in which the prophecies of the Bible pertaining to the setting up of Christ's kingdom are fulfilled by the fast-moving events of our day, students of prophecy often remark that actually we are now almost walking by sight, rather than by faith. This, of course, is true to a degree. Certainly we are living in a period leading into the manifestation of the kingdom of Christ in all its glory and power. But we do not know how much longer it will be until Jesus Christ is recognized as the supreme Ruler of the earth. This and other prophecies of the Bible are being fulfilled. Think of the accuracy with which Daniel's prophecy covering a period of more than twenty-five hundred years in human history has already been fulfilled. How that should strengthen our faith! There is another point in Daniel's prophecy which has not been touched upon. It speaks of the "stone" which smote the image as being cut out of the mountain

without hands. This emphasizes the fact that here is something the Lord is doing. It is not the work of man.

The prophecy states that this stone became a great mountain which "filled the whole earth. As Daniel explained, this "stone" foreshadowed the Lord's kingdom. The fact that it became a great mountain which filled the whole earth, emphasizes what the prophecies of the Bible reveal over and over again; namely that Christ's kingdom is to exercise its authority over the entire earth and that through its laws, blessings of peace and happiness will be extended to all mankind. The universal and harmonious testimony of the Bible on this point is faith-strengthening.

The Prophet Isaiah, in a comprehensive prophecy of Christ's kingdom, also refers to it as the "mountain of the Lord," and he assures that many people and all nations shall flow into this kingdom; that they will learn the Lord's ways, and as a result, "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks." He tells us that the nations will not even learn war anymore.—Isa. 2:2-4

In another of Isaiah's prophecies in which he forecasts the blessings of Christ's kingdom, he tells us that in this "mountain," or kingdom, the Lord will "swallow

up death in victory,” and that he will wipe away tears from off all faces. (Isa. 25:6-9) in the Book of Revelation we are told of that same time, that there shall “be no more death.” (Rev. 21:1-5) The prophecies of the Bible surely hold out a wonderful prospect. All we need to do is to believe them. If we do, we can enjoy a wonderful peace of mind and heart, regardless of the turmoil with which we are surrounded in the world.

HOPE FOR THE FAITHLESS

There are those who say they are unable to exercise faith in God and in the Bible; they can believe only those things which they can see. These seem very sincere, and are usually good people. Will they be raised from the dead, and if they are raised from the dead, what will be God’s attitude toward them? The Apostle Paul wrote, “All men have not faith.” (II Thess. 3:2) Our first parents were created perfect and in the image of God. It was doubtless natural for them to exercise faith in God, their Creator. Even after they transgressed God’s law and were sentenced to death they continued to believe that divine providences overshadowed their lives. When Cain was born, Eve observed, “I have gotten a man from the LORD.”—Gen. 4:1

Man's fall into sin and death has resulted in the loss of perfection, as well as a blurring of the various characteristics of the divine image which accompanied perfection. The "fall" has affected some of the human race in one way, and some in another. With many it has led to a loss of faith in the Supreme Being. These simply are unable to exercise faith in anything in the spiritual realm which goes beyond their ability to see, to handle, and to comprehend.

In addition to this handicap to faith, there are also the multitudes of confusing theories concerning deity which tend to destroy faith in the minds of thinking people who do not understand the glorious harmony of the Bible, the Word of God. The distorted teachings of the Dark Ages concerning eternal torture for the wicked also helps to destroy faith in God, for thinking people reason that a God worthy of worship would not eternally torture those who could not believe in him. Without question the loving and understanding God of the Bible takes all these points into consideration, and will deal mercifully with all unbelievers when they are awakened from the sleep of death, for the Apostle Paul informs us "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."—Acts 24:15

Speaking to Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill, the Apostle Paul explained that God had appointed a day “in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained,” even Jesus Christ, and that he “hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—Acts 17:31

The “judgment day” in the plan of God has been designed for the express purpose of enlightening those who have died unworthy of life, and giving them an opportunity to respond in obedience to the knowledge given to them of Christ and of God, and of thus proving worthy of eternal life. Concerning those of the Jewish nation who did not accept Christ at his first advent, Paul wrote that God had “concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”—Rom. 11:32

In John 3:16,17, we read “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

There is nothing in this passage of Scripture to indicate that the opportunity to believe in Jesus and receive everlasting

life is limited to the present brief span of life.

Paul wrote that it is God's will to have "all men to be saved" from death and "come unto the knowledge of the truth; for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2:4-6) This indicates that for many, the first real opportunity to believe in Christ will be after they are awakened from the sleep of death.

Millions have died outside of Christ because they had no knowledge of him at all. Others have died in unbelief because, while they had heard the name of Jesus, their minds could not accept confusing theories about him. The Lord will take all these circumstances into consideration, including those of heredity and environment, and will deal mercifully with all. A true knowledge of the Lord will then fill the earth, and there will be no possibility of anyone failing to understand the divine requirements of belief in Christ and obedience to the laws of the Messianic kingdom which will then be in force. Under those favorable circumstances we doubt not that the vast majority of those who are now unable to believe in God and in Christ, will

then believe and obey, and as a result, will gain everlasting life.—Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:29

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