

The Pearl



Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is the “Upotasis” of things hoped for, the “Elengkos” of things not seen. Depending on the Bible version you are reading those two Greek words can be translated as, Upotasis = “Assurance/Confidence” or “Substance/Reality” and Elengkos = “Conviction” or “Evidence”. Each Biblical definition has some differences but based on what other parts of the Bible says “Faith” really is only one thing.

Genesis 15:6 says, “Abram believed the Lord and he credited it to him as righteousness”. This was after God had dragged Abram from Ur to Canaan, promised him a son “from his own body” and described the number of his offspring. At this point Abram had no real reason to believe that God would follow through on any of this and even when Abram sliced and diced the animals, it wasn’t a sure thing but this is what Faith is about.

The flipside of the coin was in Exodus starting at the 3rd chapter and extending to the end of Exodus. This is the account of Moses and the Israelites in Egypt, leaving Egypt and crossing the desert. You will notice a couple of things as you read this narrative.

First “The Plagues”, ten different events occurred, each of which, doubtlessly devastated the Egyptian population and culminated in death that affected every Egyptian family. While Moses was attempting to convince Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt, these developments had to have convinced everyone involved that a Higher Power had a hand in them.

Second “The Miracles”, it wasn’t long after the Israelites left Egypt that they came to an insurmountable obstacle, “The Red Sea”. Depending on which perspective you have, (Sea of Reeds/Red Sea) a miracle occurred here, the water was too deep to traverse and the entire Egyptian Army was drowned in the episode. This wasn’t the only miracle they experienced, they were fed and watered.

As a side note, science has an explanation for all of these occurrences (Even though there wasn’t one at that time) and if Modern Day Scientists had accompanied Moses, they could have advised him without bothering God. Maybe they could even have resolved the Israelites grousing and bolstered their spirits. Although, I’m reasonably confident they wouldn’t have fortified their faith. God assessed their faith as inadequate to enter “The Promised Land” and conducted them around “The Wilderness” until those complainers expired.

We have to read past Hebrews 11:1 to see the reality of what faith really is. No matter what your position is as to how your faith is imputed, once there it is your responsibility to use that faith in a way that “Glorifies the God Who Warrants It”. The rest of Hebrews 11 illustrates the exceptional characters of the Bible and outlines how their faith motivated them to act in a manner devoted to God. Not necessarily because they expected to be rewarded, even though many of them were but because they saw God as something greater in all ways than themselves and chose to exalt Him to the level He deserved.

Which now brings us to that esteemed “Pearl”. Have you ever seen something that “You Just Have to Have”? Maybe a new house, a new car, a phone or other technology, a piece of jewelry, an outfit, sometimes you read about someone who finds an antique or classic car in a barn or garage and just has to have it and the list goes on. Well Jesus can identify with that emotion.

In Matthew 13:45-46, Jesus explains how “The Kingdom of Heaven” is like a “Pearl of Great Value” and when the person locates it, they are willing to liquidate their assets to acquire the capital to purchase this treasure. So, in the words of Martin Luther, “What Does This Mean?”. Well, my understanding is that it can go two ways.

Way number one is, Jesus saw humanity even in its highly flawed condition as a “Pearl of Great Value” and found himself willing to sacrifice All, even His Life to acquire that treasure. That would be consistent with the narrative of the Bible.

However, the second and equally valid description would be. Jesus is recounting this concept to others and as a prescription to them, He describes this person who when they find access to “The Kingdom of Heaven” they are also willing to sacrifice what ever they have to gain that access. That too is consistent with the narrative of the Bible.

In Matthew 6:24 and again in Luke 16:13 Jesus describes the dichotomy between living in the World and gaining access to the “Heavenly Kingdom”, He says that while as humans we are confined to this “Worldly Environment”, unless we pledge our allegiance to the God that we are expecting to join in Eternity and serve Him no matter what, we will be in trouble.

As the “Pearl” scenario depicts, if we are unwilling to employ that faith that we have been blessed with and seek after that object the goal could become elusive but by acquiring “The Pearl” we can experience God and His Grace right here without waiting for Heaven.