

The Face of God



Matthew Warner, tells of two precocious babies together in a mothers womb. One asks, “Do you believe in life after delivery?” The other asserts that this must be a time of preparation, while the first renounces that thought and declare all that absurd saying, “There is no life after delivery”. Baby number two tries to describe some of the activities that could happen and how the environment could be different but baby number one rejects all those concepts saying, “No one has ever come back from there. Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery it is nothing but darkness and anxiety and it takes us nowhere.” Baby number two is unshaken and asserts, “Certainly we will see mother and she will take care of us.” To which baby number one says, “If you believe in mother where is she now, I don't see her?” In response baby number two says, “Sometimes when you're silent you can hear her, you can sense her. I believe there is a reality after delivery and we're here to prepare ourselves for that reality.”

Trying to grasp at life after death is just like this. Our modern snobbishness and worship of our own intellect has trapped us in a self-imposed prison of reason. Never have our egos been so big and imaginations so small. *“The eye has not seen, and the ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him.” (1 Corinth 2:9)*

This story high lights the “Human Problem”, that being, “How can a mortal have an interconnection with a being that is immortal, transcendent and invisible”. This pursuit is emphasized through out all of humanity by the over 4,000 religions present in this world. The difficulty is in having any relationship with an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent and perfect being.

The first step is “Insurrection”, “Take the course of least resistance”, “When the going gets tough, take a different route. Exodus 32:1 tells us of the Israelite's impatience and their response to Moses's prolonged absence. It seems strange that they had followed God from Egypt all the way to Mt. Horeb, observing “Multiple Miracles” and now Moses's delay caused them to “Abandon Ship”, a new god is needed and out of the fire comes “The Calf” (Apis the bull was an Egyptian god of strength). No matter what the motivation was, this suddenly makes them “Law Breakers” but wait, don't we do that today? Invisibility makes God difficult to associate with but when you create the image that God said not to, you limit the voluminous characteristics of God to only the ones you choose to address. Consequently, we build images of the Jesus that proclaimed the God we worship and yearn for His return. Doesn't that sound familiar. Isaiah 40:18-31 tells us of God, it's a must read, that is why Jesus' very first “Beatitude” was “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”, but isn't that all of us?

Most are reluctant to the point of allergy to itemize their poverty, but Isaiah 64:6 takes issue with our so called “Righteous Deeds” and reminds us that we are not as “Good” as we think we are. Returning to Exodus 32, in verse 31, Moses returns to God and on behalf of the Israelites, detailed their sin and implored Him to pardon their sin. Then he showed his mettle by presenting his position in God's book as a sacrifice.

This is the second step “Regret or Anguish”, it isn't ever easy to identify the activities that abuse or violate God's Will or His commands, primarily because we often do it unaware. When Moses revealed to the people what they had done and what he had done, they realized their deviant nature and “Mourned” in a public display of remorse by the removal of their “Ornaments” (Jewelry and such). This is what Jesus is describing in His second Beatitude, “Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted”. Activities that wound or upset God should cause us to “Mourn”, knowing that God has given Jesus as an atonement should give us comfort but the simple act of “Mourning” is painful enough to make us avoid the activities that produce that result and even though we can't always be successful it shouldn't prevent us from trying.

Step three is defined as “Appetite or Craving” and displays itself as an energetic pursuit of growth in

the knowledge of God's ways, the doing of God's will and a personal knowledge of Him and who He is. Where we are in step three is, I realize that I am a sin riddled soul and have identified at least some of that sinful nature and I am sorrowful for them to the point of mourning them. Exodus 32:30-33:6 gives some insight to God's feeling around sin and even though Moses tried to negotiate a lighter sentence there would be punishment.

True penitence will bring you to this "Third Stage" as Jesus described it, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."* In Exodus 33:15-16 Moses said something profound, *"If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"* That is the same question asked today by Secularists and Non-Christians around how to distinguish Christians from every one else. God's response was intriguing but one you should take to heart, *"I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."* He was pleased with Moses and that pleasure spilled over on to the rest of the Israelites but that is not "Good News" for them because Moses is the object of God's "Good Pleasure" not them.

The history of the Israelite Nation is characterized by this statement. God found individuals that sought after Him and blessed them with success and those blessings flowed over to the rest of the population but once the blessed individual was no longer the benefits were depleted. Does that happen today? You'll have to make that assessment yourself, but I would suggest that it is better to get the blessings directly from God than relying on "Second Hand Blessings"

In Exodus 33:18, Moses asks to see God's Glory (Something we all might wish to see), God's response was a "Bible Study", *"I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."* Moses wasn't wrong to want to see God's face, but he couldn't do it at that time. However, Jesus sent the same message when He said in Mathew 6:33 that our first priority should be seeking God and His Righteousness and what better way than through rigorous Bible Study and Persistent Prayer