

LIVING BY FAITH

Message 4

INTRO: Our subject is faith. Our text is, "The Just Shall Live By Faith." I am sorry, but you will have to think hard this morning. In the next message we will finally look at what faith is. We have only been laying the groundwork for an understanding of what faith is. Our major point we are looking at is, "The Purpose Of Creation." We have looked at how creation began. And we have seen that it began with the creation of angels. And it is probable that the very first angel created was Lucifer, as he is called the son of the morning (Is. 14:12). And we saw that angels are spiritual and personal beings, and they are free moral agents. They can choose beyond instinct. Animals and all the rest of creation besides man cannot do that. We looked at the reason why God created angels. God created angels to worship Him. They would learn who God is and praise and extol and exalt Him. They would recognize the goodness and perfection of the character of God and glorify Him.

Then in the second message we asked, was it not supremely selfish of God to create everything for His own glory? And we found that not only was it not selfish, but it gave opportunity for personal beings to exist and experience an absolute, complete, fulfilling existence by the mutual interaction between God and these beings.

And then we saw that sin entered the universe. We said that this is the saddest day of all creation. But yet, in a way, it seems to me, the fact that sin entered among free moral agents, that in the end, when all is said and done, God will have been able to use it to bring even greater glory to Himself, and all the good angels and all saved people will benefit from all that has taken place, and never again will any angel or human be tempted to pride or desire to sin.

Turn to Psalm 76. Now it is not certain, but scholars think the invasion of Israel by Senacherib of the Assyrian army in 701 BC is the background to this Psalm. Isaiah 36-37 records this. Assyria operated much like many of the nations of the Islamic world of today, that is by intimidation. Recently Iran said, "We could destroy Israel in minutes." But in the midst of very big intimidating talk they are very fearful of being destroyed in minutes. History makes them fearful, so they just speak big swelling words. (read verse 10).

Well, Senacharib wanted to defeat Israel. So he sent his Rabshakah to intimidate Israel. He said, "You trust Hezekiah? You trust in Egypt to help you? You trust your God? Give me a pledge and I will give you 2,000 horses, and I'll bet you can't even put riders on them all! How is it that you look to God? You tell Hezekiah, don't trust in your God. It won't help. Look at the gods of all the other nations, and where are their gods now? Bah. You haven't a hope. None of their gods have delivered them, and you won't be delivered either."

So the Rabshakeh sent this letter to Hezekiah and he went back home. Hezekiah took it and spread it out before God and told Him about his problem. And then he said, "Now therefore, O LORD God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD, You alone."

And the Lord sent Isaiah the prophet and basically said, "Don't worry about Senacharib. I will take care of him. You write him and tell him. Tell him, "Do you know whom you have reproached and blasphemed? It is the Holy One of Israel...Because your rage against Me and your tumult have come up to My ears, therefore I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back the way you came." Well, Hezekiah did not have to raise a hand against Senacharib, the Lord took care of it. Senacharib went home a defeated man, and as he worshipped his god in the place of worship, two of his own sons came and killed him with the sword.

And here is the point, in the midst of letting free moral agents be free moral agents, God will in the end be able to make all of that abound to His own glory. And so, I believe, it will be with Satan's sin and man's sin in the end.

And so, after the angels had sinned, it seems that God had to find a way to justly deal with Satan's sin, and leave the rest of the angels in such a way that their worship was still of their own free will and not out of fear. How would God accomplish that? And way back there, before the creation of the universe, God had a plan. He would create man, and prove Himself in free moral agents who chose to live for Him, and here is the key, they would have to choose to live for Him by faith.

B. The Creation Of Man

1. God's plan

Well, let us look at the evidence that God had a plan. In theological terminology we are talking about the decrees of God. The Apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:20, speaking of Jesus, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you..." The word foreordained is a word meaning to foreknow. God knew about Christ's coming, death, burial and resurrection before creation. Revelation 13:8 says, "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." God knew all in advance.

In Matthew 13 the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables. And Jesus explained and then verses 34-35 say this: *All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."* You see there were things hidden from the foundation of the world. They were there, they just had not been revealed, but God knew it all along. We won't take more time on this. It is clear in Scripture that God had a plan before creation.

2. The creation of the material realm

Well, in our messages we have come from before God created angels, to where He created angels, and finally to where some angels sinned. But as far as we know nothing material existed. And in the eternal plan of God, we now come to the next revealed step in God's plan. I want you to see it. Go to Genesis 1. Here is how the book of books begins, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." I do not know how many times I have read this, but the awe that comes over me every time I read it just keeps growing.

I want to take you now to one of the most incredible and spectacular moments of history. We are now about to consider the creation of the universe. And here is what is most amazing. The angels were created as spirit beings. We have already seen that. They are in the domain of God. They are in a sphere that is immaterial. Now I am going to ask you to do something. Put on your

thinking caps and think of something immaterial. And now describe the makeup of something immaterial. Now, you might say, this is a day of rest and I am not supposed to work on Sunday. I know, I can't do it either.

Now consider with me for just a moment how amazing Genesis 1:1 is. In all of eternity past, as far as revealed in Scripture, nothing material existed. Nothing with physical properties existed. What was there? We know only that God and angels existed as spirit beings the day before Genesis 1:1. And then, on day one of creation, in a matter of hours, there are the heavens and the earth. The heavens are empty, and the earth is formless and void. But there is matter, all kinds of it.

Well, the earth was without form and void, but God began to put things together. And by the end of day 5, there was the whole material universe. Every species of vegetation, every kind of stars, galaxies and planets was there. Every species of animals, of beasts, birds and fishes was there. And when God created the universe He created a brand new realm. It was a material realm. The earth; the stars, the planets, even the air with all its various kinds of gases, plants, animals, bugs and so on. My wife and I have watched many BBC video's and CD's. I understand that they know a very small percentage of what exists in the oceans so far, and what we have seen is absolutely amazing.

Then on day six God did His crowning act of creation. He made man. And He made man of material. So look at Genesis 1 (read 26-31). For more details, turn to chapter 2 to a most phenomenal verse (read 7). Now let me show you something here. God formed man of the dust of the ground. Now here is the material part of man. Then He breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and now we have something else. Here is one of the immaterial parts of man, the spirit. With the joining of those two; the material and the immaterial, a second immaterial part came into being. And it says that man became, not a living being, which literally a living soul as the KJV has it. And there we have a second immaterial part.

So, here is what we have. First, we have a material being. That separates man from God and angels as far as his makeup is concerned. But, on the other hand, we have a being that is created in the image of God. In this way he is like God. But this now separates man from all other animated beings. He is a personal being.

And what God did when He made man of matter, is that He locked him into that material realm. Man cannot know or experience or describe or understand the immaterial realm. He is locked out of it, and locked into the material realm. Nor can man know of the immaterial realm unless the immaterial is communicated to him by someone who knows the immaterial.

You see, doctors have learned a great deal about the material part of man. We do not know how much they don't know yet, but we do know he has learned a great deal. But it is all material. And what is amazing is that it is very clear that there is more to man than the material, but doctors know nothing about it: Nothing! After death occurs to a human being, doctors can find everything present in that body he could find before. But something is gone, and he has no idea what. The immaterial is so very obvious, but so undiscoverable. Why? Because it is immaterial.

You see, God made man incapable of knowing or understanding the immaterial sphere in which He, God exists. God locked man out of this realm and He locked him in the realm of the material. There is no way out of this material realm except by death. And after death, the dead cannot communicate what is on the other side, if anything at all. It is possible for God to take man out of this physical realm via the spirit, and transport him to heaven, but that is an area, as far as I know, only the Apostle Paul and John have any knowledge of. And Paul said he heard things that were not permissible for him to speak of. What I do know is that man is basically locked in this physical realm.

In British Columbia, where I grew up, we had a species of fish called landlocked salmon. They are Kokanee, which is a kind of fresh water sockeye salmon. Now they are called landlocked because, different from all other salmon, they are locked into land waters, or

freshwater. They do not go to the ocean. They are locked out of the ocean.

Now, man is not landlocked, he is a material locked being. And to explore and know this material world, he was given the five senses. We are locked so securely into the material that we have no way in which we can choose to travel to the immaterial and back. We are material locked. And God made this material realm for the purpose of being able to make His crown of creation to be locked into this realm. So this material realm has a very important purpose. In my understanding, it was created and made in this way, that through this God will defeat Satan, will be able to deal with Satan's sin, and leave the rest of the angels in such a way that they worship God of their own free will.

So once more, let me send your little computer, or if you have a big one, let me send it for a loop as well. It does not matter how big or how small your computer is, it will loop and it won't find rest. It will refuse to answer. So, here we go. Describe something from the immaterial realm to me. For example, what is the soul or of what is it made up? Or what is a spirit or the spirit of man made up of, or angels or God? Or describe something that does not have matter as to what it consists of. And when we try to go there, we are trying to go into a sphere outside of ours and we are locked out of it. We cannot go there. As a matter of fact, if the Bible did not tell us about that other realm, we would know nothing about it.

We are completely locked into the material. When we try to understand eternity, which is time without beginning and time without end, we have tried to enter a sphere we are locked out of. Our computer just loops. We cannot go there. Our mind refuses. We are in a sphere of three dimensions and much work has been done to try to add dimensions to our existence. But we are locked in one sphere, and out of the other. As long as we are in this body, we are locked in the material.

We do have a branch of study today that began to be developed in the 1800's that became known as metaphysics. The physics part is the material part of our existence. When what we call science, which really

only means knowledge, began to be developed, it kind of branched off into two different fields. That which became known as science dealt with the physical aspect of things.

But when you consider evolution, is it scientific? My conclusion is that it is not science but metaphysics. And what does metaphysics deal with if it does not deal with matter, the physical aspects of things? You see, metaphysics is after or beyond physics, which is the immaterial from a biblical perspective. Wikipedia says metaphysics deals with such questions as this: "What is the origin of the Universe? What is its first cause? Is its existence necessary? What are the ultimate material components of the Universe? What is the ultimate reason for the existence of the Universe? Does the cosmos have a purpose?" Now when you look at that, the teaching of evolution, as I see it, is not science at all; it is metaphysics and man cannot go there.

David Cloud, recently in his Friday Church News had an article on Dr. James Tour. He has written over 590 scientific research articles. He admits that science knows very little on the subject of where things come from. And if the unbelieving scientist were honest he would admit they know nothing about where things come from. And this scientist writes, "'With each added step difficulties are compounded by improbabilities so overwhelming (now listen to this) **that no other field of science would depend on such levels of faith,**' (emphasis mine) 'Those who think scientists understand the issues of prebiotic chemistry are wholly misinformed,' he continued. 'Nobody understands them. Maybe one day we will. But that day is far away today...the basis upon which we as scientists are relying is so shaky that we must openly state the situation for what it is: it is a mystery,' he concluded" (July 1, 2016).

Now in the first part this scientist speaks of where things come from. He calls it science, but admits it is faith; that is things they believe but can't prove scientifically. So it is not science. Then he speaks of their failure to understand prebiotics. First he was in the immaterial realm, dealing with where things come

from. That requires faith, not science. Now with prebiotics he is in the material realm, the realm of science, and he says, "Nobody understands them. Maybe one day we will. But that day is far away today...the basis upon which we as scientists are relying is so shaky that we must openly state the situation for what it is: it is a mystery..." If their understanding of the material is shaky, their understanding of where things come from is non-existent.

But back to Genesis 1:26-27, it says God created man in His own image. What the image of God in man is, creates a huge theological discussion. I won't take time for it other than to say that I believe it is Personhood. Man is a personal being. And as such, is also a free moral agent. And as such is also like the angels.

And so now, with the creation of man, we have the creation of a second personal, free moral agent. But the angels are in the non-material realm, and man is in the material realm. And he is locked into a world of matter. And the only way he can leave this sphere is by death. And if he dies and goes to that other realm, he can never re-enter this one until the resurrection.

And we must ask ourselves, why did God make man a physical being and lock him into that realm?

3. The purpose of the material universe

So, let us now delve further into this question: Why did God make man in a physical, material universe? We know why God made man. Man was to bring glory to God. But our question now is, why did He make man a physical being in a physical universe? We might ask, why did He not make Him like the angels, in a non-material realm?

Why did God make man a material being and shut him up in a material universe in which he can only go as far as his five senses allow him to go? And ultimately, here is the reason, as I see it. It was because such a realm was required in order that the just can live by faith! All of this is to make a life of faith possible! Only in a material universe, completely separated from the immaterial world, could man exercise faith. Why? Because if man was in the immaterial world, like the angels he would be able to see God, and once you see

God and you sin, salvation is no longer possible. Why? Because faith is not possible.

Now let me illustrate. I have put something into this little room off the stage here. Nobody knows what I put in there except I. Now, you could guess. But you cannot know. Unless you have a way of getting information in a way that nobody else has, you cannot know what is behind here. Now if I tell you what is behind here, will you know what is behind here? No, you will only be able to believe me or not believe me. Now if I told you there is a big Jet airplane, not a picture of it, but a real jet airplane, how many of you would say, "I know there is a jet airplane behind there?" How many would say, "I don't believe there is a big jet airplane"? Why don't you believe me? Factual data or evidence that you know because you have seen a big jet airplane tells you that my statement does not match what could possibly be true.

Now let us say that I tell you there is a pig in there, and it has been there for two weeks. How many would believe me? Why not? Factual data cannot be made to match my statement. It was not there last week, and you can't smell it, or hear it. It is more likely than the jet airplane proposition, but still there is too much evidence against it.

Now, let us say I tell you I put a hammer in there. How many would believe me? How many of you would say, "I know there is a hammer in there because Pastor Phil said so?" Could it be possible that I did not tell you the truth? That is possible. So you cannot say you know it is so, you can only say, "I believe that to be true." You have a bit of faith in what I said. But is what I told you possibly true as far as all factual data you know is concerned? Is it possible that there is a hammer in that room? Yes. So you cannot say you know there is a hammer in there, but you can say, "I believe it is true", or you can say, "I don't believe it is true."

So, now I am going to ask Hosea to come here. Here is an honest young man. I am going to let him look in the room to see if there is a hammer in there. Hosea, is there a hammer in there? (Now ask how many believe me

and how many believe Hosea.) Is both what I said and what he said within the realm of possibility? Yes. Whom do you believe, me or him? Do you believe him because he looks so convincing? Thanks Hosea. You are an honest young man.

Now if you would all come and look in that room, you would no longer believe there is a hammer in there, you would now know there is no hammer in there. I don't like playing the devil's advocate, but I didn't want to make Hosea do that either. You see, before you could look for yourselves you could only believe what you were told. But once you have seen for yourselves you know what is on the other side of the door. You no longer believe, you know it.

So, you see, we are on one side of the door in the material realm, and God is on the other in the immaterial. And here is the point. God closed the door between the material and the immaterial and He put us in the material. For all living people, this door has never been opened. We can only believe or disbelieve what we hear about the other side. For example, if a Muslim suicide bomber dies by killing Jews, he is told that on the other side of the door, 70 virtuous ladies await him. A Mormon is taught he or she can marry for eternity and so there are myriads of teachings, but nobody can say, "Come and see, I will show you the other side so that you will not only believe but know it is true." God made man like this in the material and locked him out of the immaterial, because He will accomplish His greatest accomplishment through the just who live by faith.

Consider the debate of the existence of the universe, and how it came into being. Here is a metaphysical explanation. They once said that everything came into existence so slowly that we couldn't see it happen. That didn't work out too well and now they say it came so quickly, nobody saw it. A big bang, and there it was. Now I ask you, is that in the realm of possibility? (By the way, Ken Ham recently took Bill Nigh, the un-science guy to see the replica of Noah's ark.) Now consider Genesis 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Is that within the

range of possibility? Yes, and yet we can only say we believe it, because we didn't see it happen.

Turn now to Exodus 33. You see, God can only reveal so much of Himself, and only in certain ways, otherwise faith is destroyed. When God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt Moses got cold feet. The task of leading a million plus people through the wilderness overwhelmed him. In chapter 33 God acknowledges the hard heartedness of these people, and we would have gotten cold feet as well.

For the sake of time we will begin in verse 12. But let us note what it says in verse 11:

11 So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

We will read shortly that no one can see God's face and live. And verse 11 says God and Moses spoke face to face. However, it does not say that Moses saw His face. Matthew Poole comments on verse 11 like this: "Face to face, or, mouth to mouth, as #Nu 12:8. Not that God hath face or mouth, or that Moses could behold it, which is denied, Ex 33:20. But the sense is, he spake with him freely and familiarly, and immediately, not by an angel in a dream or vision, as he did to other prophets. See De 34:10."

So we begin in verse 12:

12 ¶ Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.'

13 "Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people."

14 And He said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

15 Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.

16 "For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth."

17 So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."

18 And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."

19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

20 But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

Moses wanted some assurance that God would go with him as he led these people. And finally he said, "Show me Your glory." So God allowed Moses a glimpse of a part of Himself, but God said something most interesting in verse 20. He said, "You cannot see My face and live, for no man can see My face and live." Now it is in a person's face that you see the person. It is in the face that a person is revealed visibly.

Moses wanted the greatest assurance he could get that God was with him. But if God had shown himself to Moses visibly, as I see it, not only could Moses not have been the leader of Israel, but he would not have been able to be saved either. If he were to lead the children of Israel, it had to be by faith. So he could not see Gods face and live.

I used to think that man would not be able to see God and live because he would not be able to endure looking at God because of the radiance of His perfection and glory. That may be so, but I have come to see that we cannot see God and live because it would make faith impossible. Here is why angels cannot get saved. Listen to Matthew 18:10, "Take heed that you do not despise

one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." Why can they not get saved? Because they see God.

You see, once you see something, you can no longer exercise faith. You now know it by the greatest proof we have; seeing it. To exercise faith, one cannot see what it is or it is no longer faith. That is why, I believe, God created man in a physical universe.

CONCL: (Short) Well, let me just conclude by saying that in the next message we want to, finally, define what faith is.

(Longer if time). Well, we began with God's need to justly deal with Satan and the fallen angel's sin; while at the same time leaving the rest of the angels in such a way that they worship Him of their own free will, not fear of being sent to hell. We saw that God had a plan before He ever created the universe. And then He created the universe, and in five days, absolutely everything material had been created.

Then on day six He took some of the dust of the ground and from it formed man. And He breathed the spirit of life into man, and man became a living soul. So man is one part material and two parts immaterial. And God locked man out of the immaterial and locked him into the material. And if man is to know anything about the other side, the immaterial, it must be revealed to him and all he can do is believe or not believe it. He cannot scientifically prove anything of that at all. He is now left to faith of that which is on the other side.

And it is now that we are ready to consider the subject of faith itself. We want to spend the next message to consider what faith is in general.