



Back to God Hour

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**MEET
THE
CREATOR**

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MEET THE CREATOR

All things were made through him. . . .

John 1:3

It has been said that a self-respecting atheist should be very, very careful, for there are many influences around that could make him lose his faith. That is entirely true.

Mao Tse-Tung, formerly the leader of the Chinese nation, was a man dedicated to promoting Marxism, a thoroughly atheistic point of view. However, near the end of his life, Mao Tse-Tung talked of going to "meet God." It is hard to know just exactly what he meant by that phrase, but whatever he meant he apparently thought that the word *God* had some usefulness when he had to describe what was going to happen to him after death.

It seems practically impossible for reasonably alert human beings to deny the existence of God. One medical doctor who wrote me several months ago said that he was an agnostic, adding that of course, he couldn't possibly be an atheist, for that would be foolish. An agnostic, as you know, is a person who says that there is a god, but that it is impossible for people like us to know anything for certain about Him. There are many agnostics around, but apparently few atheists.

One of the main reasons that reasonably alert human beings cannot deny the existence of God is that the scientific knowledge which has grown so rapidly over the last several years has tended to confirm that there has to be a God of some kind. While the development of science has suggested to some that traditional Christian beliefs are not true, science has not succeeded in destroying belief in God altogether. In fact, I sense that the mass of knowledge we are assembling about the universe and about the structure of matter is having the opposite effect. Those who find themselves on the frontiers of scientific investigation find themselves in the presence of a reality that seems divine.

It is fascinating, for example, to notice that nowadays articles appearing in the secular press

of it anywhere in the world. But I do know that there are materials in the Bible that indicate that one of these days Israel is going to have peace. The Bible tells that this will happen, and it also tells how it will happen.

Let me tell you about something I found in the book of Micah, one of the Old Testament prophets, that speaks about this very subject. It's a very fascinating and encouraging prophecy. Here are some sentences from it, taken from a rather new translation of the Bible, a translation that in this instance makes very clear what the original Hebrew means.

The Lord says, "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times."

So the Lord will abandon his people to their enemies until the one who is to give birth has her son. Then his fellow countrymen who are in exile will be reunited with their own people. When he comes, he will rule his people with the strength that comes from the Lord and with the majesty of the Lord God himself. His people will live in safety because people all over the earth will acknowledge his greatness, and he will bring peace (Micah 5:2-5).

Now, that material found in Micah 5:2-5 talks about a specific person who will bring peace to the people of Israel because He will rule them, and everyone else in the world will acknowledge His greatness. In other words, Israel and Israel's enemies will be united under one supreme ruler, and since all will be under the same ruler there will be peace. Wouldn't you agree that kind of person would be worthy of receiving the ultimate peace prize? Anyone who would be able to unite Israel, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia under himself would be a very remarkable person. And, indeed, if that part of the world became one large country, all united under one great ruler, all the problems that have plagued that region for centuries would be solved.

The man who wrote these words was very worried

we have boldly sent our curious explorers along the edge of Jupiter's moons. When Psalm 19 was written man's response to nature was more simple, even naive. Now we can respond to nature in terms of a knowledge that is immense and intricate. And we have found that all the new knowledge we are amassing has not made the idea of God less important, but even more so.

The question that arises is this: Have we now come to the point where we can declare that atheism is dead? Have we now come to the point where all men would be willing to call the universe a *creation* and, doing so, would be willing also to concede that creation demands a creator? To be sure, there will be many different representations of God, and there will be many disagreements regarding His nature, but at least could we not now stand together in the common confession that there is a God? And some might still want to be agnostics—people who claim they can know nothing about Him—that's their business. But even so couldn't we all be united now in the great common confession that God exists? Is it really progress that so many people are willing now to talk about the universe as a creation and about some kind of a God as the creator? Is this kind of faith good? Is it good enough?

Well, let me try to answer that question on the basis of the Bible. If I read the Bible correctly I believe I would have to say that the fact that many people now tend to believe that there is a God of some kind or another is a good thing. It's good for a very practical reason. If a person denies the very existence of God there is reason to question his competence.

There are a couple of places in the Bible stating that it is foolish to say there is no God. The impression is that the evidence for the existence of God is so strongly given in our environment that those who deliberately deny God's existence make us question their general competence. Surely, there must be some divine being of some kind that transcends all other beings. Surely, there must be something, if not someone, that is superior in every way to ordinary reality. To deny the very existence of God, then, puts a per-

holiday is Ascension Day. Maybe you have never heard of it, but it used to be very prominent on the Christian calendar. Nowadays it has fallen into disuse. Some churches remember Jesus' ascension on the Sunday before the Thursday it should be celebrated. And there are still some churches that actually have special services on Ascension Day itself. It's good to have such special services because the ascension of Jesus is an extremely important event. In fact, for our understanding of Him and His meaning for us Ascension Day is the most important. It's the last thing the resurrected Jesus did on earth in His physical body. The next thing He will do in the flesh is to come again.

But now look at Micah 5 once again. He talks about a ruler whom everyone is going to honor. We read: "People all over the earth will acknowledge his greatness." The ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven is the great fact that tells that someday that is exactly what is going to happen to Jesus. The ascension of Jesus is God's great proof that Jesus Christ is the victorious conqueror, and it is proof that the day will come when everyone will acknowledge that.

Before going any further, read the record of Jesus' ascension into heaven as it is found in the book of Acts in the New Testament. This is the way it went:

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:6-11).

faith so very difficult and so very wonderful at the same time. The people of the Old Testament era almost seemed to gloat about the fact that all the nations around them were worshiping false gods, but they were worshiping the God who made all things. They said,

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols; but the Lord made the heavens (Psalm 96:4,5).

Throughout the Old Testament the central religious fact was that the God of the people of Israel was the creator. The opening verses of the Bible begin with the staunch declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and everything else in the Old Testament was built on that foundation.

So the Old Testament always recognized, as we have seen in Psalm 19, that God has revealed Himself in nature, just as people recognize that today; but the Old Testament also recognized that the God who is revealed in nature has also revealed Himself in the spoken word. Psalm 19, for example, which speaks so glowingly about the wonder of God revealed in creation, concludes by calling attention to the law of God. After speaking about the brilliant sun that strides through the heaven like a bridegroom coming out of the bridal suite, our attention is turned away from the sun lest we become worshipers of nature, and the psalm writer talks about the brilliance of the law of God, the word of God, the revelation of God that had been written down by Moses and the prophets. He says:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

With these words we see that God has not only created the world but He has come into His peoples' lives with a revelation that takes the form of law,

testimony, precepts, commandments, and ordinances. Each one of these terms underscores that God has not only created, but He has also spoken.

So, you see, agnosticism is not good enough so far as the Bible is concerned. So far as the Bible is concerned we are not only called to confess that there is a God, but we are invited to recognize that God has spoken. He has verbalized His revelation. And this is important; we would all agree about that, wouldn't we?

In our ordinary lives we depend directly on verbalization for understanding one another. A husband and wife may find their marriage languishing simply because they are not talking to one another. How can the one marriage partner really know what is on the other's heart if the other does not verbalize his or her feelings? At some point words must make explicit what may have been suspected all along. So, too, with God. As we examine the universe and call it His creation we are still in the dark about what God is really like unless He speaks to us. And the beautiful fact the Bible announces is that God does speak. He speaks directly to us.

This, as we have seen, was the faith of the people of Israel down through the centuries: The Creator God is the one who has revealed Himself to Moses and the prophets, and He is the God who comes to us in the written Word that we have available in the Bible. But the complete message of the Bible is considerably more fascinating. The complete message of the Bible is that the God who has created all things has actually come to live with us in the person of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

As I continue to talk about the way the great Creator God has revealed Himself, I am well aware that I am moving further and further away from our earlier discussion. Remember, we were talking together about the fact that the more we are learning about the universe the more inclined people are becoming to talk about creation and about the God who is the creator. At that point many of us are united: We marvel at the work of the great creator. But now we have moved beyond that. First I have talked with you about the fact that the Creator God

triumphed over the powers of sin and death.

Through His triumph at Calvary, Jesus Christ created a situation in which Israel and all of Israel's enemies could finally be united. That's exactly what Micah talks about. In the book of Ephesians in the New Testament the apostle Paul speaks about the hostility that existed between Jews and Gentiles and says:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. . . . And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father (2:13,14,17,18).

With this, the Bible talks about the fact that through the cross Jews and Gentiles are united beneath the glorious peace-giving rule of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was successful at Calvary where He died: He created a situation in which nations could have peace as they are united in obedience to Him. The ascension of Jesus which happened so surely is the great proof of Jesus' success.

But there is more: When Jesus ascended into heaven, if you recall what you read a few moments ago, He told the apostles that He was going to send them the Holy Spirit so that they could become His witnesses to the end of the earth. Several times before Jesus had told His disciples that He had to go away so that the Holy Spirit could be poured out on the church.

Jesus said, It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. . . . (John 16:7-10).

Once Jesus left, the Holy Spirit came into the church, and the Holy Spirit became the great Spirit

by stating very clearly that Jesus is the origin of all created reality. It says:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him (1:15,16).

Now, it is possible that over the years you may have missed the fact that the Christian religion is a religion that insists that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is related to creation—He is in fact the creator. I say that you may have missed this because it is very easy to get the impression that Jesus was a fine young prophet who impressed many people with His teachings, and that He is worthy of our attention because of His noble teaching, and that is the end of His story. And with this, the impression can easily be given that of course there is no connection between Jesus and His teachings and the great facts about the universe that are being discovered these days by scientists, that Jesus and Einstein have nothing whatever to do with one another. I say that is the impression often given. But that impression is utterly false. Jesus and the great laws of nature that Einstein developed and that modern physics is carefully testing even now have everything to do with each other. Einstein didn't make any of these laws. God did. We can be even more specific: Jesus made them. Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, is the person of whom the Bible says, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

As we learn more and more about God's marvelous universe, those of us who believe in Jesus and who know that He was involved in the creation of all things are filled with an increasing wonder and awe as we think of this great person. Everyone knows there is a God, we've seen that that is so; but now we know that we can go beyond this idea, and now everyone can personally know the God who has made everything. What good does a God do me who is not interested in me and who isn't really interested in the affairs of humankind? What good is a God

herd of His sheep: He is the great king of the world. And if we talk about peace prizes, He is the one who must certainly be given the ultimate peace prize. It belongs to Him because through what He has done a peace will flow over the world that will touch the lives of all people, of all kinds of people. There is no greater person. There is no greater peace.

What do you think of Him? Jesus is the ascended Savior. He has revealed Himself to you again today. He wants you to bow down before Him. He wants you to confess that you are a sinner and that you need His salvation desperately. He wants you to admit that you need the power of His great victory. Come to Him right now, and receive His peace. Stand in the ranks of those who are united beneath the peace-bringing rule of Jesus, the ascended Lord.

PRAYER

Exalted Jesus Christ, we bring our praise and our adoration before you. We confess that you are the risen and ascended Savior, and we rejoice that we may be absolutely certain that what you accomplished on Calvary's cross was enough to bring restoration into our lives and into our world. We are overwhelmed by the magnificence of your great victory.

Peace-bringing Jesus, look upon the nations of the world in this day of turmoil and fear, and grant that many people from all the nations may turn to you and be saved. Make the day come soon when the peace that the Bible speaks about so much will actually be established before our very eyes.

And Lord, through your Spirit, make it true that many people will believe in you in this day because of this message about your great ascension. Amen.

tant about God. You can know God. When you know Jesus you know God. Then you know the Creator. And when you read the Bible you discover that the great Creator of all has died on Calvary to pay for our sins.

Oh, the creation is breathtaking and awe-inspiring! Marvel at it. And then look at Jesus. He made it all. And He died so that people like you could have life eternal in His new creation. Don't be an agnostic. Believe in Jesus and be saved.

PRAYER

Lord, today we see so much of your great creation, and we are overwhelmed by how intricate it is and by how immense it is. We have learned so much about it, the very answers we have received have confused us. Now, Lord, don't let us be confused about you. Don't let us be satisfied with vague statements about you that sound like faith but are not really faith. Help us submit ourselves fully to Jesus, believing that He has made all this.

Lord, we are grateful that we may be certain that you not only made all things, but that you love your creation. We know that is true because you gave your dear Son on Calvary so that salvation could be a reality. Now, when so many are more deeply impressed with your creation than ever before, grant that many may be moved by your Holy Spirit so that they may believe in your Son who was present when all things were made. Especially shake up the agnostics. Don't let them be satisfied with ignorance. Bring many of them into the kingdom of Jesus. In His name, Amen.

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