

Coach House Church

BEACONS

FAITH

11TH NOVEMBER 2020

Recently I briefly watched an article on Facebook giving people's reactions to being asked about faith in God. All the respondents appeared to be against it, and one woman replied that only an idiot would have faith in God. I didn't bother watching any more of it. I should also add that the article was American, and that it claimed that America is now post-Christian. I think that applies to Britain too. And most likely also to Europe. After all, who needs God when you've got the EU!

The Bible asks us to have faith in God. Hebrews 11:1 even defines what faith is. All the great heroes of Scripture had faith in God, not that their faith didn't wobble at times. Faith appears for the first time, that I can see, in Genesis 15:6, when Abram believes God's promise to him, and that act of belief was credited to him as righteousness. Abram was demonstrating faith in God that He would keep His promise to him. Of course, Abram had faith in God from the start when God told him to leave Chaldea. Abram promptly obeyed Him and upped sticks, to wander up and down in Canaan. But Genesis 15:6 is special because Abram chose to trust God for something he couldn't see any possibility of happening and couldn't bring to pass in his own strength – having a son in his old age with his elderly and barren wife- the son of God's promise.

[Trusting in God leads us to behave in ways that those who don't trust in Him don't](#)

Centuries later we have the people of Israel, Abraham's descendants, wandering around the Sinai wilderness. Did they have faith? Well let's see: They had been miraculously delivered from over 400 years of slavery in Egypt; they had seen the Red Sea supernaturally opened so they could cross it on dry land. (Pharaoh's army tried this too-but that's another story.) They were led by the LORD, who was present in a column of cloud by day and fire by night to Mount Horeb (Sinai), where

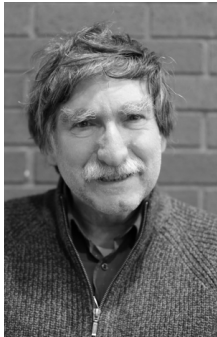
after a little wait, they saw the LORD descend in fire and smoke and storm to the summit of Sinai. They saw the mountain shake (and no doubt felt the tremors where they stood). Also, there was the accompanying blast of the heavenly shofar (trumpets) that grew louder and louder and louder, and they heard the thunder of the voice of YHWH. This was all very physical and objective – if only they'd had camcorders! (Some liberal theologians of the 19th and early 20th centuries tried to explain all this away by claiming that Mount Horeb is a volcano! But it isn't). So, did they have faith? Surely, if seeing is believing, they had certainly been given a lot to see (and hear!) Well, unfortunately, no they didn't. Later, when they had received the good, and the bad news, about the Promised Land (the bad news was that there were giants of the fee fie foe fum kind living there), they definitely didn't have any faith in the God who had led them from Egypt and who had so perceptibly descended to Sinai, that He could defeat those giants. Unfortunately, they were sentenced to 40 years of wilderness wanderings until most of that faithless generation had died out. Seeing is not necessarily believing, it would seem! They had decided not to trust God.

Do you really think that if God were to suddenly appear (people ask why He doesn't do this) and tap-dance across the sky, in full top-hat and tails, with a cane, and with a lively song and dance routine similar to one of the old Hollywood musicals, that people would trust in Him? This is what it means to believe in Him: you put your trust in Him. It isn't about believing in His objective reality when you don't see Him. It's about believing (trusting) He is there, and that He is trustworthy. (Of course, there is evidence for His existence, but I'm not going into that here.) So, let's be clear: when we talk about "believing in God" we're talking not so much as to whether we believe in His objective existence but in TRUSTING Him. Trusting in His character, His faithfulness, His mercy, and loving-kindness. These are some of God's traits that are recorded in the Bible. It's faith that brings you to God even if you aren't convinced of His existence. In Hebrews 11 we're told that this is how we please God – by faith. Because faith is the evidence of what is in our hearts. Seeing God doesn't necessarily produce love for Him, or trust in Him, or a desire to serve Him. Seeing God at Sinai did not bring these things about for that generation of Israelites. It pleases Him when we seek without seeing when we seek Him in faith. The Bible assures the sincere seeker that God will draw near to them.

Trusting in God leads us to behave in ways that those who don't trust in Him don't. God is interested in developing His Son's character in our hearts and lives. This is the fruit of faith in Him.

So, let's please Him by trusting in Him and developing a Christ centred relationship with Him.

Amen.



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