

## A Religion With Sight

In the 17th Century, a French statistician named Blaise Pascal wrote a theory called "Pascal's Wager," in which he tried to debate the consequences of believing or disbelieving in a God that did or did not exist. Although Pascal was himself a religious person, he took as objective a stance as he could in dealing with this topic, trying to rationalize the best possible outcome for any individual that was "on the fence" about such an issue. His ultimate realization was that one should believe in God, regardless of whether or not He actually exists, as this faith will provide the most amount of benefits possible. He made the conclusion: "If you erroneously believe in God, you lose nothing, whereas if you believe in God, you gain everything. But if you correctly disbelieve in God, you gain nothing, whereas if you erroneously disbelieve in God, you lose everything" (Pensees).

While not regarding our lives and faith as some form of eternal gamble, the question must be, and usually is, asked: why do you believe what you believe? This question has spawned millions of religious discussions that have led to conversion or rejection, belief or disbelief, hope or hopelessness. Indecisiveness and a religion based on emotion has caused many well-meaning Christians to fall away when the wind of trickery spoke sweet sounds in their ear. Emotion is fleeting and feelings can confuse, but a knowledgeable understanding of reality can cement anyone's conviction.

Joshua, in that famous speech given before his death, challenged the Israelites to "Choose you this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). A conscious decision had to be made, based on logic and reason as to who they were going to follow, whether the gods that their fathers served, or the Lord God who made the heavens and the earth. Taking a look back at the end result of the choice their father's made, the crowd cheered that they would serve the one true God. Throughout the course of time, we have seen the end result of the decisions man has made, and no matter the goods they had on this earth, death would swallow up all. In Solomon's quest to find satisfaction in life outside of God in Ecclesiastes, he deals specifically with two people that seemingly have everything. Ecclesiastes 6:1-6 lists two men who have what man would regard as the highest honor and happiness this life could afford. But Solomon, in a fit of frustration, expresses his discontent with the futility of it all in a single question asked at the end of verse 6: "Do not all go to one place?" Death comes to us all, and that forces us to acknowledge the simple truth that there has to be something more.

It has recently struck me, as I read current periodicals and articles about the "latest research and discoveries," that the wisdom of this world is playing a game of "catch-up" with the wisdom that God has already given us. Great scientific truths are expressed in the Bible, such as the hydrothermal vents on the bottom of the ocean described in Genesis 7:11 and Job 38:16, only to be verified by science nearly 3,000 years later. Even from a purely philosophical standpoint, the statements by Jesus, if taken in a secular way, can still prove useful in everyday life. Jesus, in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-29), gave the example that those who would be faithful in a few things would be faithful over many. Today's modern business research confirms that one of the

most effective ways of getting promoted is to master the current position you are in, signaling to your superiors that you can handle more responsibility. Does your boss have a copy of the Bible in his bookshelf?

The rational and logical thing in any situation is not to follow what everyone else says, but to discover the truth for yourself and obey that. Jesus' admonition in Matthew 15:14 rings true for our own paths to righteousness: "Let them alone, they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch." The last thing I want to admit to God on the Day of Judgment, when asked about my faith, is that I did them "because I was told to." Rather my faith, and yours as well, should be grounded in an understanding of the will of God, a logical understanding of its power, and a realization of its purpose. You would not buy a car without doing research, would you? How much more would you wager your eternal soul on something you have not investigated yourself?

Pascal chose to use his understanding of math and statistics to confirm his belief in God. Others have looked to the majesty of the world around us to realize that it could not have happened by chance. I am proud to say that when someone asks me how I know there is a God, I tell them, "Because that is the only logical truth; the only one that makes perfect sense." Shaky answers for the "hope that is in us" (1 Peter 3:15) only leads to doubt and suspicion in the minds of those who ask us; we must be firm in our defense. You owe it to yourself to take an honest look at all the factors that are in play and decide who you will serve — and then give Him your whole heart.

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