

CARTHAGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

JANUARY 12, 2020

Founded by Christ---Grounded in His Word---Committed to His Love

Seeing God “Face to Face” by Eric Lyons

In the Kyle Butt/Dan Barker debate, Dan Barker alleged that He “knows” the God of the Bible cannot exist because “there are mutually incompatible properties/characteristics of the God that’s in this book [the Bible—EL] that rule out the possibility of His existence” (2009). One of the supposed contradictions that Barker mentioned was that God claims invisibility, yet has been seen. (His assertion is found 10 minutes and 55 seconds into his first speech.) Since biblical passages such as Exodus 33:20-23, John 1:18, and 1 John 4:12 teach that God cannot be seen, while other scriptures indicate that man has seen God and spoken to him “face to face” (Exodus 33:11; Genesis 32:30), allegedly “the God of the Bible does not exist.”

Although in modern times words are regularly used in many different senses (e.g., hot and cold, good and bad), Barker, like so many Bible critics, has dismissed the possibility that the terms in the aforementioned passages were used in different senses. Throughout Scripture, however, words are often used in various ways. In James 2:5, the term “poor” refers to material wealth, whereas the term “rich” has to do with a person’s spiritual well-being. In Philippians 3:12,15, Paul used the term “perfect” (NASB) in different senses. Although Paul had attained spiritual maturity (“perfection”) in Christ (vs. 15), he had not yet attained the perfect “final thing, the victor’s prize of the heavenly calling in Christ Jesus” (Schippers, 1971, 2:62; cf. Philippians 3:9-11). Similarly, in one sense man has seen God, but in another sense he has not.

Consider the first chapter of John where we learn that in the beginning Jesus was with God and “was God” (1:1; cf. 14,17). Though John wrote that Jesus “became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14), he indicated only four sentences later that “no one has seen God at any time” (1:18; 1 John 4:12). Was Jesus God? Yes. Did man see Jesus? Yes. So in what sense has man not seen God? No human has ever seen Jesus in His true image (i.e., as a spirit Being—John 4:24—in all of His fullness, glory, and splendor). When God, the Word, appeared on Earth 2,000 years ago, He came in a veiled form. In his letter to the church at Philippi, the apostle Paul mentioned that Christ—Who had existed in heaven “in the form of God”—“made Himself of no reputation,” and took on the “likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-7). Mankind saw an embodiment of deity as Jesus dwelt on Earth in the form of a man. Men saw “the Word” that “became flesh.” Likewise, when Jacob “struggled with God” (Genesis 32:28), He saw only a form of God, not the spiritual, invisible, omnipresent God Who fills heaven and Earth (Jeremiah 23:23-24).

But what about those statements which indicate that man saw or spoke to God “face to face”? Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face” (Genesis 32:30). Gideon proclaimed: “I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face” (Judges 6:22). Exodus 33:11 affirms that “the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” First, although these men witnessed great and awesome things, they still only saw manifestations of God and a part of His glory (cf. Exodus 33:18-23). Second, the words “face” and “face to face” are used in different senses in Scripture. Though Exodus 33:11 reveals that God spoke to Moses “face to face,” only nine verses later God told Moses, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (33:20). Are we to believe (as Barker and other critics assert) that the author of Exodus was so misguided that he wrote contradictory statements within only nine verses of each other? Certainly not! What then does the Bible mean when it says that God “knew” (Deuteronomy 34:10) or “spoke to Moses face to face” (Exodus 33:11)? The answer is found in Numbers 12. Aaron and Miriam had spoken against Moses and arrogantly asked: “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” (Numbers 12:2).

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Assignments for this week:

Sunday AM: 1-12-2020:

Announcements: Josh Clements

Greeter: Chayer

Opening Prayer: Dennis Hartley

Lord's Supper: Dennis Hartley

Bill Talley

Takota Anderson

Clay Johnson

Scripture Reading: Damon Teel

Closing Prayer: Jeremy Jadwin

Song leader AM: JR Sampson

Communion to Shut ins: Durham

Sunday PM: 1-12-2020:

Opening Prayer: Charles Baker

Closing Prayer: Richard Lyons

Song Leader: Gary Beach

Wednesday: 1-15-2020:

Song Leader: Clay Johnson

Devotional: Mike Lawson

[continued from front]

God then appeared to Aaron and Miriam, saying: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord" (Numbers 12:6-8, emp. added). Notice the contrast: God spoke to the prophets of Israel through visions and dreams, but to Moses He spoke, "not in dark sayings," but "plainly." In other words, God, Who never showed His face to Moses (Exodus 33:20), nevertheless allowed Moses to see "some unmistakable evidence of His glorious presence" (Jamieson, 1997), and spoke to him "face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (33:11), i.e., He spoke to Moses plainly, directly, etc.

The Bible does not reveal "mutually incompatible characteristics of God" as Barker has alleged. His assertions in no way prove that the God of the Bible does not exist or that the Bible is unreliable. In truth, Barker's comments merely reveal that he is a dishonest interpreter of Scripture. If Barker can work "side by side" with a colleague without literally working inches from him (Barker, 2008, p. 335), or if he can see "eye to eye" with a fellow atheist without ever literally looking into the atheist's eyes, then Barker can understand that God could speak "face to face" with Moses without literally revealing to him His full, glorious "face."

In Our Thoughts and Prayers:

Ron Gibson: cancer

Robin Thompson (sister of Lindia Kisling): blood cancer

Emily Anderson's grandfather: Heart issues

Sharolet Trease (sister of Charlie Baker): cancer

Ron McCully (friend of Bakers): Health concerns

Lorraine Moser: Heart and kidney issues

Laure Bryant (sister of Maureen Dunaway's daughter-in-law): undergoing cancer treatments.

Ben Quade (brother-in-law of Bev Baker) undergoing cancer treatments.

Priscilla Lorton: Health issues

Jo Shrum: illness

Barb Durham's sister-in-law's sister: cancer

Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters serving in the military and their families.

Elders:

Dennis Hartley 417-674-0018

Larry Lawhon 417-310-2107

JR Sampson 417-674-0980

Deacons:

Takota Anderson 417-389-7449

Charles Baker 417-673-5237

Marty Block 417-388-2147

Josh Clements 417-850-0654

David Lawhon 417-388-1232

Steve Teel 417-359-6958

Minister:

John Johnson 417-434-0754

Worship Times:

10:20 AM Sunday

6:00 PM Sunday

Bible Class:

9:30 AM Sunday

7 PM Wednesday

Address:

3122 S. Grand Avenue
Carthage, MO 64836

Phone:

417-358-3661

Website:

carthagecoc.org

Supported Works:

Fair Haven Children's Home

Search Program

Gary Reaves

House to House

Weekly Record:

Sunday AM Worship: 80

Sunday PM Worship: 61

Wed. Night Class: 60

Contribution: \$2725

****Please make it a habit to check your mailboxes periodically for cards, letters, forms to complete or other items.**