

St Paul And Einstein

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[0 : 00] Here, I hear the wind of the wind, today, today, my Savior, I bear.

Our God and Father, we ask that you will open our hearts to your word and your word to our hearts for Christ's sake. Amen. It was suggested that singing that hymn just before the sermon might result in all the sailors in the congregation being drawn to the sea and would have left by the end of the hymn to go down to the shore.

What I want you to do this morning is to turn to the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians. To chapter 2 and verse 6.

And it's on page 157 in the New Testament section of your few Bibles. All those numbers again. 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, verse 6, page 157 in the New Testament section. Paul writes, 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 6, page 157 in the New Testament.

[2 : 32] Well, keep your finger in that place and we're coming back to it. Now, the following statement, which I will read to you, comes to me from no less a prestigious periodical than the Manchester Guardian, which says that on October 4th, 1971, a commercial jet airliner began a scheduled round-the-world flight eastward from the United States.

The jet carried four of the most accurate clocks available, cesium atomic clocks. The next week, on October 13th, a similar cargo was carried on a westward flight around the world.

In each case, the clocks were compared with reference clocks at the U.S. Naval Observatory. Those carried on the eastward flight lost 59 nanoseconds.

And those on the westward flight gained 273 nanoseconds, compared with the clocks which remained on the Earth.

Now, if you don't understand why that happened, it simply means that you don't understand the theory of relativity.

[4 : 07] And therefore, you should be going off to university to find out. And I recommend that you go to the university, and please don't come and ask me.

I'm just reading what I read in the Manchester Guardian. But I wanted to talk about the man who formulated the theory by which we suppose that we can understand what that difference was. And he was a man who, at the age of 16, imagined himself to be riding through space on a light wave with a mirror in his hand.

Now, that takes a certain amount of imagination. And he realized that he wouldn't be able to see his own image in the mirror.

And if somebody was watching him, they would see both him and the image in the mirror.

Somehow, those two problems are connected.

[5 : 17] And the answer is involved in the theory of relativity. The man was Albert Einstein. And it was this same man who formulated the equation that E equals mc squared, which fundamentally means that a tiny little bit of matter contains an astronomical amount of energy.

And having established that theory, it was then discovered that it could be applied to a bomb, and the history of the world was changed.

Because he was a Jew, he was forced to leave Germany, and before the war, came and became a professor in North America at Princeton University.

And he wrote to President Roosevelt in 1939 to tell him that Germany would take this formula and try and build a bomb that would convert mass into energy, resulting in an unbelievable explosion.

And the future of the world at that time seemed to depend on who was first able to engineer such an explosion.

[6 : 44] In fact, the whole history of our lifetime is in one very real way the story of great competing economic and ideological foes forced to talk to each other because of their mutual ability to

annihilate each other by a simple application of that formula, E equals mc squared.

One of the facts of life is that in the time it would take us to sing the next hymn, one of at least two world powers could precipitate such an explosion in this city that would mean none of us would get home to lunch.

That's how real and how present this has become. Now, Einstein was asked at one time what were the religious implications of his theory of relativity.

And he wrote this letter. Now, I've quoted you a letter from a very famous Jew by the name of Paul of Tarsus. This is another famous Jew of our own century.

And he wrote in reply to that this answer, which I want to read slowly because it's important. He wrote, I do not believe that the fundamental thoughts of the theory of relativity have any other relationship to the religious sphere than scientific knowledge does as such.

[8 : 27] I see this relationship in that deep interdependence of objective realities which can be grasped through logically simple thoughts.

This, to be sure, he said, is particularly applicable to the theory of relativity, which means that he thinks that you can understand the story of the airplanes by a series of simple logical thoughts. But it's probably a longer series than most of us have time for. He goes on in his letter and says, the sense of the religious, which is released through the experience of potentially nearing a logical grasp of these deep-lying world relations is of a somewhat different kind than the sense usually described as religious.

It is more a feeling of awe and reverence for the manifest reason which appears in reality, which does not lead to the assumption of divine personality, a person, that is, who makes demands of us and takes an interest in our individual being.

In this, he says, there is no will, nor aim, nor an ought, but only being. Well, there's a lot packed into that statement by Einstein.

[10 : 08] But on another occasion, he was asked to describe his own religious experience. And he wrote and said that it is rapturous amazing at the harmony of natural law which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that compared with it, all the systematic thinking and activity of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection.

He, as I said, was a Jew. He was even asked to be president of Israel back in 1952.

He was born in Germany, educated in a Catholic school, and was serving as a customs clerk in Bern, Switzerland, when he wrote the original papers on which his life work and these theories were developed.

He failed university entrance one year. That's a word of comfort to anybody who wanted to hear about it. And he was subsequently, even after he'd graduated, refused a teaching post at another university.

But Sir Bernard Lovell described him as one of the greatest scientists of all time. Well, compare him, if you will, with that other Jew who wrote another letter with which I began this sermon.

[11 : 54] And since I'm seeking to address particularly university students who this week begin another year and another term, I would say to you that you may regard your university education as acquiring what Einstein called scientific knowledge as such.

and that would include, at least potentially, the discovery of an intelligence of ultimate superiority, the discovery through the exercise of logically simple thoughts of the objective realities and their deep interdependence.

and it also could mean that you would experience with awe and reverence the manifest reason which appears in the total of reality.

well, that's human wisdom and that you can get a degree in at any university.

and in this scientific age, that is about as far as lots of good, careful, reasonably religious people are prepared to go.

[13 : 32] And the experience of God, which most people would subscribe to, they would, at their best moments, describe in the same terms that Einstein used.

he also stated some of the shortcomings of this position when he said of his own religious experience that this does, of his own thought life really, that this does not lead to the assumption of a divine personality.

A person who makes demands on you and takes an interest in your individual being. he said, in this there is no ought.

O-U-G-H-T. There is no will. There is no aim. Now take that statement and go quickly back to where we started from.

Where Paul writes, Among the mature, we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass away.

[14 : 54] that is, it is not a wisdom which is derived from the creation itself and by the study and examination of a creation which is ultimately doomed to pass away and which modern scientists very often terrify us by calculating how soon it is doomed to pass away.

But Paul says, we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God which God decreed before the ages for our glorification.

So he says that there is another kind of wisdom and you have, you want the contrast between these two men.

Let me tell you what is characteristic of the kind of wisdom that Paul makes us aware of. He says it's a totally different kind of wisdom which is imparted to us in our maturity and it's not based on the discovery as Einstein said of the deep interdependence of objective realities but rather on the gracious activity of that superior intelligence making himself known to us in a personal way.

That's the phenomenal claim that Paul is making. that that superior intelligence has chosen to make himself known to us.

[16 : 39] Now this creates a difficulty and the difficulty that it creates is that lots of people whose minds are not able to grasp the objective realities underlying our world are able to receive the self disclosure of God.

And this is where Paul got into trouble because the wisdom that he was talking about was available to everybody.

The wisdom that Einstein talked about is available to only a few brilliant minds after long years of study.

Now this creates the problem because the best minds can know that and not know God. And that's one of the contradictions that we find in our world that distresses us.

But Paul says that the reason that that is true is because the whole system of wisdom which belongs to this world and the system of wisdom which God imparts to us are different things.

[18 : 02] Well then he goes on from there to say that the essential content of the wisdom that Paul tells us about is something which lies beyond what the eye can see.

Even if the eye is enhanced by super power telescopes or microscopes, the mystery that God reveals to us is beyond their capacity.

It's beyond what the ear can hear even if it has radio telescopes that can reach into the deepest caverns of space. It is beyond the range of imagination.

If you've been to The Empire Strikes Back, you've got to admit that there's a great deal of imagination goes into that that keeps your eyes popping as you see how far scientific fiction imagination can carry.

But Paul says way beyond anything that they could even conceive of, God has revealed, and he describes it as the depths of God are revealed.

[19 : 27] The difficulty, and in a sense the crunch between these two systems of wisdom, Paul says was this, that the world's system of wisdom founded expedience to crucify the Lord of glory.

That is, they didn't understand Jesus Christ. They didn't, and they don't. And that's one of the hard facts of our world.

Because the understanding of who Jesus Christ is does not belong to the superior intelligence of atomic scientists, but belongs in the wisdom which is called the foolishness of God.

It belongs to the faith of a humble believer. And our world finds that hard to tolerate and maintain the hierarchies socially and intellectually that we want to maintain.

and so Paul says in a sense anticipating what Einstein said when he said there is no will, there is no ought, there is no aim, there is no person, there is no one interested in your individual being.

[21 : 01] Paul says that this belongs to another wisdom, that wisdom which God has imparted to us, not a wisdom which we have been able to grasp by ourselves.

And the ought, the will, the aim, and the being are derived from God's complete self-disclosure of himself in Jesus Christ.

And that this is communicated to us through the person of the Holy Spirit, who indwells us and makes known to us not the depths of space, which we are left to explore by ourselves, but makes

known to us the depths of God.

God. Now, that's, I think, the position that any responsible university student is in, who is a baptized, believing Christian, that he must acknowledge the immeasurable richness that is made available to the world by the mind of one of our greatest men, or in fact, by the minds of many of our greatest men, in various fields of study.

And to be able to trace their thoughts and share their discoveries is a very important part of university life, and a very important part of your total involvement in the world in which you live.

[22 : 56] But there belongs to your faith another wisdom, Paul says. And that wisdom is to be enabled by the activity of God the Holy Spirit in your life to come to a personal knowledge of God as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

The kind of intellectual knowledge and wisdom which is available to you and which I trust you will acquire will never hold you responsible for anything.

The kind of encounter which God seeks to have with us through his self-disclosure in Jesus Christ to faith will bring you into a personal relationship out of which you will be expected to live the whole of your life.

universities I think have a vested interest in dispensing one kind of wisdom and ignoring the other kind of wisdom.

And so I commend to you that you be willing to hear as God speaks to us through his word and make this startling revelation of himself in Jesus Christ.

[24 : 53] And to know that the full glory of your humanity which you may lose sight of at times involves you in that encounter with God which he has engineered in the giving of his son Jesus Christ to live to be crucified to rise again and to promise us his spirit to dwell in our hearts and that through the ministry of that Holy Spirit as it says in 1 Corinthians 2.10 God has revealed to us through the spirit the spirit searches everything even the depths of God that that's the wisdom that God desires all of us to have may God grant to you as you return to university and to all of us as we live our life in this nuclear age the awareness of this other wisdom we sing hymn number 492