

HEBREWS 11.3

Last week Julian introduced this series by helping us understand the well known definition of **faith** found in verses 1&2. *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.*

And verse 6 makes it clear that it is the kind of faith that believes God exists and that he wants to bless us. This is the kind of faith that pleases God, and as Julian put it, real faith. Julian dealt with it broadly, I want to narrow it down to the context of this letter to the Hebrews and hopefully demonstrate that verse 3, which we are looking at today, was not only relevant then, but is very relevant for us today .

Faith is not an independent commodity, as some think. Faith, put simply, is trust in God and, more specifically , trust in his promises. In Hebrews as a whole, the words *promise, promised, promises* appear 17 times and in Ch. 11, 6 times

The question is, if God has promised something, do I believe Him and know in my heart that he will reward me with what he has promised. As the writer puts it, "inherit the promises". And then, am I prepared to continue in that belief, living in the light of it, whatever the cost?

Much of the letter up to this point is an attempt by the writer encourage these Hebrew Christians that having accepted and received Jesus as their Messiah, their Saviour they had entered into a new and far superior covenant with God, than the old covenant given through Moses. Better promises, better priesthood, better sacrifices and a better inheritance. The old was just a shadow of the good things that have now come in Jesus. But with this identification with Christ came persecution, largely from their fellow Jews. 10:32-34

And so they needed to be encouraged to press on, to persevere, to not go back, however much pressure they were under. Hebrews 2:2, 3:6, 3:13-14, 4:14, 10:23. Keep looking to Jesus. 12:2-3

Why? Because the best is yet to be.

The writer, by way of encouragement, then gives them (and us) this catalogue people in Israel's history who believed God in a variety of circumstances. And in living out this belief, they were prepared to live as aliens and strangers in the world. Their attitude is summed up in 11:13 – 16, 2 Peter 3:13.

This is consistent with Jesus teaching. *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.* Matt.19:29.

This is faith in action

For some people, openly living for Jesus, resulted in various forms of persecution, such as alienation, ridicule, disgrace, loss of property, loss of freedom and even loss of life.

Allegiance to Jesus may result in this, but the writer tells us that it is worth it. 13:12-14.

Faith was about a choice: Follow Jesus and face persecution and inherit the promises, or go back to their old ways.

Is this a choice we face, or are likely to face in the future?

V3 that we are looking at today is very important, firstly regarding our likely confidence in God's promises for our inheritance. But secondly, our full and open acceptance of it may result in persecution for us in terms of ridicule, alienation and loss of job or status.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

This of course is consistent with the first verse in the Bible. *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* And what the writer to the Hebrews says in chapter 1.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

The implications regarding God's promises should be clear, if God is **not** the creator and sustainer of the universe, if He is **not** Lord of time and eternity, as we sing, why should we have faith in His promises for the future and even worse, suffer for such belief?

If you go to our web site you will find a page with our statement of faith and regarding the Bible it says, *We believe in the divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God – fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.*

All of it, including Gen. 1:1 and Heb. 11:3

Whether you are aware of it or not, we are facing a massive tide of opposition to these and similar verses in the Bible. According to Oxford professor, Richard Dawkins, we are lunatics to believe such rubbish in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence. He claims that science has eliminated God and he is on a personal crusade to prove it by promoting evolution and discrediting any belief in special, supernatural creation. His views and those like him have received a huge boost over the last year or so with the celebration of Charles Darwin's bi-centenary and the publication of his *Origin of the Species* in 1859.

If I was preaching this sermon 160 years ago, there would not be an issue. All the well known scientists up to that time believed that as they investigated the natural world that they were discovering the mighty works of God. Today, however, that is far from the case.

I am going to look briefly at some of the issues regarding evolution versus creation, but first let me ask the question, is your faith in God affected by what you believe about origins?

Because evolution has been accepted now as fact by our education system, major scientific institutions and the media, many Christians are embarrassed by the account of creation in the Bible and avoid it as much as they can in pursuing their faith. Amongst these there would be those who have sought to reconcile creation with evolution, saying this is the process God used. When well known and clever people like David Attenborough, frequently slip the word "evolution" in to their commentaries on the natural world and openly declare it to be a fact, do you feel intimidated?

Perhaps a simple definition of evolution is appropriate at this point.

The word evolution, when applied to the natural world, has come to mean that everything that makes up our world has come into being by natural, random processes, such as natural selection and the survival of the fittest. And that all living things have developed by these processes from simple organisms into the huge variety of species we see today over hundreds of millions of years without any supernatural intervention.

Does it matter what we believe about origins? I believe it does matter, because if the Bible is in question here, then all of it must be in question. It is worth noting that Jesus had no problem acknowledging creation. Mark 10:6

Even if we don't feel able to in any way refute the evidence presented for evolution, I need to stop at this point and dispel a couple **myths** put about by evolutionists.

Myth 1. Belief in evolution is based on science and belief in special creation is based purely on faith and contradicts the scientific evidence that is increasingly available today.

Evolutionists may have theories as to how life developed, but they do not know how the world came into being and how life began, because no one was there. Which take the greatest faith: **God** created the world out of **nothing**, or nothing created the world out of nothing. Both require faith.

Richard Dawkins, on a BBC television programme *Soul of Britain*, declared, "I think science has really fulfilled the need that religion did in the past, of explaining things, explaining why we are here, what is the origin of life, where did the world come from, what life is all about Science has the answers."

The plain truth is that science cannot explain -

- why we are here.
- the origin of life.
- where the world came from.
- what life is all about.

Belief in special creation, is not flying in the face of irrefutable scientific evidence.

It is a fact, that there is a growing body of eminent scientists world-wide, from all branches of science who, having viewed the same scientific data as the evolutionists, contend that the data best fits a creation model, rather than an evolution model. And they would say that evolution is not promoted on the irrefutable evidence of science, but on the bias of science viewed from a naturalist philosophical standpoint. Illustrative of this is the introduction to Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* written by Sir Arthur Keith 150 years ago who said: "Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We only believe it because the only alternative is special creation which is unthinkable." Unfortunately, creation scientists are seldom given a hearing, even among Christians, with the consequence that many Christians have given in to the evolutionist lobby and are embarrassed by the Genesis account of creation.

So, when looking at the natural world, your conclusion as to its origin relies entirely on your philosophical viewpoint, your "lens". You either start with atheistic naturalism, or you start with a creator God

Myth 2. Creationists believe that nothing changes; that all living things are as they were at the beginning.

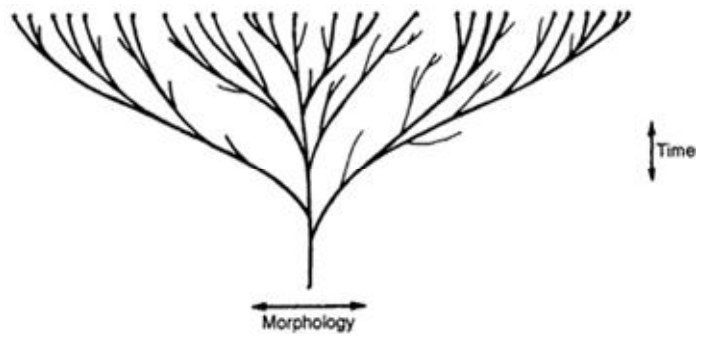
However, creationists must not put their heads in the sand and deny what is observable, for change clearly occurs over time within various species of plants and animals, often due to their need to adapt to their environment and undoubtedly the survival of the fittest frequently occurs in the animal world. Therefore, some evolution is observable and is fully endorsed by creation scientists.

So, how does this fit with the Genesis account of God's creation?

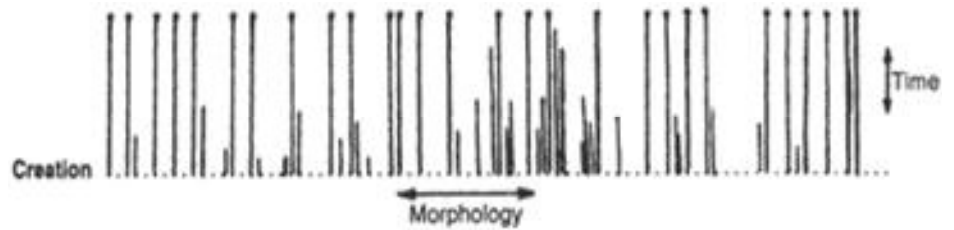
Consider these three models of how life might have developed.

Chart.

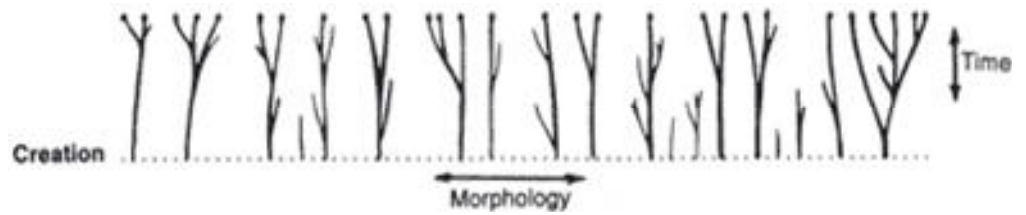
The evolutionary 'tree'—all today's species are descended from the one common ancestor (which itself evolved from non-living chemicals)



The alleged creationist 'lawn'—the Genesis 'kinds' were the same as today's species



The true creationist 'orchard'—diversity has occurred with time within the original Genesis 'kinds.'



Here is a scientific fact, that Darwin knew nothing about, and it has to do with DNA, that amazing molecule, packed with a staggering amount of genetic information, arranged in a highly organised code, or language, that allows living things to function, grow and reproduce.

Evolutionists claim that from a single cell, which was randomly formed from inanimate material, all life has developed, becoming ever more complex. "From microbes to men."

But from what is observable regarding the variations that have occurred in various species of animals, sometime producing new species, with each change there is a reduction in the gene pool. The DNA information is reduced. **So, the trend is downward, not upward**

This speaks clearly of the special creation of the "**Kinds**" of Genesis that contained all the genetic information to produce all the variations you see today and you cannot reverse the process. When questioned about this, evolutionists do not have an answer.

Because of their humanistic world view, writers, broadcasters, educators etc may attempt to blind you with science and claim that evolution is a fact, but you do not need to be intimidated.

Nothing has irrefutably disproved the Bible and we need to renew our confidence in what it says about origins as a foundation for what it says about our future. Faith in the promises of God.

Let's return to our text and the context of persecution. You remember I said that our open trust in the Word of God might result in persecution. This is already on the horizon regarding moral issues and it is already here regarding belief in creation. You remember I said that the theory of evolution has become thoroughly institutionalised and woven into the fabric of our society and it is promoted and defended with harsh religious zeal.

Question Time.

American Scientists lose their jobs because of intelligent design

Government proposals for independent schools; the danger of a lunatic fringe promoting creationism.

Creation article.

We can rust the foundations of our Faith.