

“Who Is God? Really
LAITY SUNDAY – June 12, 2016
7:30: Ken Lynch

Where do we search for clues? How do I fit thousands of years into a fifteen or twenty minute sermon?

I'll start with asking if anyone has been watching the series of “The Story of God” shown on the National Geographic Channel on Sunday evenings. The show is hosted by Morgan Freeman who does an excellent job. He takes you briefly to the heart of every religion and lets them explain their beliefs. He does it in an open and understanding fashion.

The program starts in Jerusalem where three major religions are located within miles of each other: Judaism with its wailing wall; Muslims with the dome of the rock and Christianity with the Garden of Gethsemane; and Galgotha, where Christ was crucified.

Morgan met with an Imam who did a good explanation of the Muslim faith including their daily call to prayer and respect for peaceful co-existence. Then he met with a Jewish rabbi and covered some of the patriarchs of the Old Testament along with the story of Moses being found by Pharaoh's daughter in the River Nile. Also, how God made a covenant with Abraham for them to be his chosen people.

From there, Morgan flew to India where he met with a 30 year old leader of the Buddhist faith. He explained meditation and how God in me is who I am. How pure energy finds the single divine entity.

The Hindus feel the Milky Way is heaven's river and flowed to earth as the Ganges River. Here, water, air and light combine to form life.

He mentioned the Mayan's story of creation, something about astronomy and the constellation Orion and the corn god. Where did they disappear?

He took us to a Navajo nation ceremony where they were having a ritual for the changing of a young girl into a woman along with other ceremonies relating to God as divine spirits.

Most religions believed primarily in one god where the Romans, Greeks, Egyptians and others had multiple gods; most also worshipped idols.

Here is where I will shift my theme on “who is God in Christianity?” Our beliefs center around the bible's Holy Scriptures. You may remember how I once said the bible: B-I-B-L-E stood for “basic information before leaving earth.”

I would now like to lead us to the book of Isaiah. In its 66 chapters it covers who God is, his purpose in our lives, where we have been in early times, predictions of Jesus' birth, his teachings and finally where we are headed in our own final days.

I start with chapter one: The vision of Isaiah, son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Time dates this as 730 to 680 B.C.

"Hear, O' heaven and give ear O' earth, for the Lord has spoken. Cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

Chapter 6: *"and I heard the voice of God saying 'who should I send' --- I said, 'Here am I, send me.' He said, 'Go and say to the people: keep on hearing but do not understand. Keep on seeing but do not perceive. Make the heart of the people dull and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see and understand with their hearts and be healed." Then I said, 'How long, O' God?"*

Chapter 7: *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel."*

Chapter 9: *"For to us a son is born, to us a son is given and the government shall be on his shoulders, and his name shall be 'wonderful counselor, mighty God, Prince of Peace.'"*

Chapter 11: *"There shall come forth from the stump of Jesse a shoot and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding."*

Then there are a series of Oracles (divine or authoritative utterances) regarding Damascus, Cush, Egypt and other cities. Then I go to.....

Chapter 35: *"The ransomed shall be returned, the deaf shall hear, the eyes of the blind shall see, the lame shall leap like deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy."*

Chapter 43: *"Remember I am your God."*

Chapter 44: *"I am the first and the last; I am the only God."*

Chapter 52: *"Behold my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up. His appearance so marred, beyond human semblance. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that brought us*

peace and by his wounds we are healed. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb who is led to slaughter.”

Chapter 55: *“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, for he will abundantly pardon.”*

Chapter 62: *“On your walls O’ Jerusalem, I have set watchmen all the day and all the night, they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance take no rest and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.”*

Chapter 63: *“O’ Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts, that we fear you not.”*

Chapter 65: *“For behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But rejoice and be glad in that which I create.”*

These verses are just skimming the surface of the message that lies within. Now I bring us to 2016, **OUR** time on God’s earth.

I feel there is not enough mention of the competing between good and evil. Why, since the very beginning, do we find war as the answer? Even in our own country, there is so much division that a middle ground may never be found. So much money is spent on elections and weapons of mass destruction that the world’s hunger and poverty could be solved.

The rich are spending on artificial intelligence to basically try to be God and create their own species. A Russian billionaire is spending 100 million to hunt for alien life somewhere out in space. Our scientific brain power is trying to build a miniature spacecraft powered by light weight mirrors that will have sun power and travel at the speed of light and carry cameras to take pictures of things so far away that we can only dream of. In Arizona, there is a place where some hundreds of severed heads are frozen in a vault waiting for science or medicine to advance to a point where they can thaw and receive new bodies.

HELLO!!! When will God say “ENOUGH?”

My closing thoughts about the scriptures --- we wonder, is it possible to understand them? Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have hope.

God has also given us his Spirit to help us to know his mind. Jesus said that he was sending the Spirit to guide us into all the truth. Paul confirms this in 1 Corinthians, saying , *“What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.”*

With the help of the Spirit, we can approach the Bible with confidence, knowing that through its pages God wants us to know him and his ways. When the apocalypse comes and the veil is lifted, science will finally understand religion! God is in all of us --- we just have to let him out.

Pastor Mary Anne gave me a copy of the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith. I have been a member of this church for 20 years or more, but have never seen it. As a former Presbyterian, the Apostles Creed was always used.

Let me read our Statement of Faith.....

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, and to his deeds we testify:

He calls the worlds into being, creates man in his own image and sets before him the ways of life and death.

He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

He judges men and nations by his righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, he has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.

He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

He calls us into his church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be his servants in the service of men, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

He promises to all who trust him forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, his presence in trial and rejoicing and eternal life in his kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him. Amen.

Shall we pray.....

Father, thank you for giving us your Son to bring us into relationship with you. Thank you for giving us the scriptures so that we can know you better. And thank you for giving us your spirit to guide us into the truth of what we need to know about you and your great love. Amen.