

The Doctrine of Interaction

Lesson Four

The Issue: Just how big a “bite” should the material world that we live in have? To what degree should it have a say in how we deal with life here on the earth? Is God involved? If He is, then how is He involved? We need very much to have a comprehension that is biblical about the relation that exists between the world that we cannot see, and the world that we do see. In this study of Psalm 25, we will take note of at least seven ways that David teaches us how to interact with the world of matter and energy. What is at stake is faith and our relationship to the Lord.

Underlying Assumptions as Expressed in Everyday Terms:

- 1) God rules the world of the spiritual. But while we live here in the dimension of the natural, the Lord gives us common sense to get by.
- 2) Of course no one who is a Christian really doubts that “God is with us,” but we know that this is subject to certain kinds of limitations. The most we can absolutely assert is that God is with us in a “spiritual sense.”

Generalization: There must be a conviction that the eternal, and all that goes with it, has primacy over the natural/material.

The Scripture Passage: Psalm 25:1 – 3

The Lesson:

- 1) David believed-- and it is established in this text-- that there exists something that has primacy over the field of materiality.
- 2) The term primacy means that one thing has more power than another thing. It means that one thing is superior in every way to another thing.
- 3) David tells us in the three verses under consideration for this lesson that God and the eternal has primacy over everything on the natural side of things. This is not merely an idea; it is more than that. This is a conviction.
- 4) David has decided that he will interact with the world of matter and energy on the conviction that what he does not see has primacy over what he does see. All of his problems, which he laments and are of concern to him, are on the natural side. This is where his enemies are; this is where is anxieties and worries are. David is in the game and it is a big game!
- 5) The thing that David is convinced that has primacy is the Living Personality of God

Himself. In verse one David refers to this One as “God” and as “Lord”. So this living personality is categorically removed from, and is different from, and has primacy over the material components that comprise his situation!

6) This has to mean that David is motivated by the belief that the materiality of any situation is never prime. It is never first in order. The material side will not determine anything.

7) To the contrary: “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul” (verse 2) and “in you I trust” (verse 2). We have no reason to believe that this “trust” that David has is:

- conditional to the material realities that he faces
- circumscribed in any way by the material order of things
- qualified by his personal involvement in the material or natural

8) This is a unique kind of trust and belief and faith. It is surely clear and certain that David’s faith is of a particular type. This man, completely surrounded by material forces that are over his head, holds a faith that is not “toned down,” made “realistic,” nor is it validated by his “common sense.”

9) Thus there must be a relation between David’s faith and this conviction of the primacy of the eternal over the material. Regardless of the situation, David does not expect that the natural side of things will be stronger than God the Lord.

10) So here is the question. What shall we say about a kind of faith that denies primacy to the eternal and assigns it to the material? Is such a faith biblical? Is it warranted by the Scriptures?

11) If David has a faith that assigns primacy to what he cannot see, taste, touch, hear or smell how will that faith force him to interact with the world of matter and energy (which is the stuff that he can see, taste, touch, hear and smell)?

12) There are abundant examples in the Bible of people who put the primacy on the material and not on the invisible. When they did that did they cease to “believe in God?” Well, no--but they did have a faith that was controlled by their own experience. So what they meant when they said that they believed in God would have to be vastly different than what David meant.

- Numbers chapters 13 and 14: the case of Israel and the day of unbelief
- Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41; Luke 8:22-25: the case of the disciples in the storm-tossed sea
 - Matthew 23:23-24: Jesus’ words to the Pharisees

13) Could it be that what we are required to call faith must undergo a significant revision?

Discussion Questions

- 1) Define primacy in your own words. Give examples of the primacy relationship in these familiar Bible stories: Creation, the Flood, David and Goliath, the Resurrection.
- 2) Look at Psalm 25 and list examples of where David indicates the primacy of the Lord over the material realm.
- 3) What “weight” does David assign to common sense, in regards to the relationship between the material and the eternal?
- 4) What evidence do you see in this psalm of the *personality* of God, and the way this affects the relationship between Him and the material realm in which we live?
- 5) What do you think is necessary for a 21st century believer to take primacy away from the material and assign it to God? What steps would such a believer have to take? Would such steps begin with thought or action?
- 6) Given what you have learned from Psalm 25 about primacy relationships, how has your definition of faith changed (if at all)?
- 7) Think of a situation you’re facing that involves your interaction with the material world. What steps will you take this week to assign primacy to God, as pertains to your situation?