

Explaining The Evidence

A Series On Evidences & Apologetics

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Prepared By Jeff Smith



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Lessons On Evidences & Apologetics



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All audio and PowerPoint charts used in presenting these lessons can also be downloaded from:
www.eastside-church.org.

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#1 – The Nature Of Evidence)

Introduction

We live in a world growing more skeptical & unbelieving day by day

- unbelievers used to be looked down upon, scorned (*society's reprobates*)
- now, they are praised as the "enlightened ones"

If when a believer is asked, "Why do you believe?" ...and all he can say is "Just because..." or "That's how I was raised...", that indicates such "belief" has not been well reasoned

- it is not based upon evidence

Paul's 1st century preaching provided "evidence" (Acts 17:1-3)

- "...giving evidence" [NASV]
- "...demonstrating" [NKJV]
- "...alleging" [KJV]
- "...proving" [NIV]

Literally, it means "to place before"

Theme

Beginning a series on "Evidences" (*reasons for having faith*)

- goal => to help us do as Paul did in Thessalonica
- even amidst conflicts (1 Thess. 2:1-2)

Series will not be "scholarly"

- many good works have been written by brethren that appear "scholarly"
- our attempt will be to offer presentations in "practical terms" so that all can understand
- even new converts or those young in faith can comprehend

First Topic => The Nature Of Evidence

Body

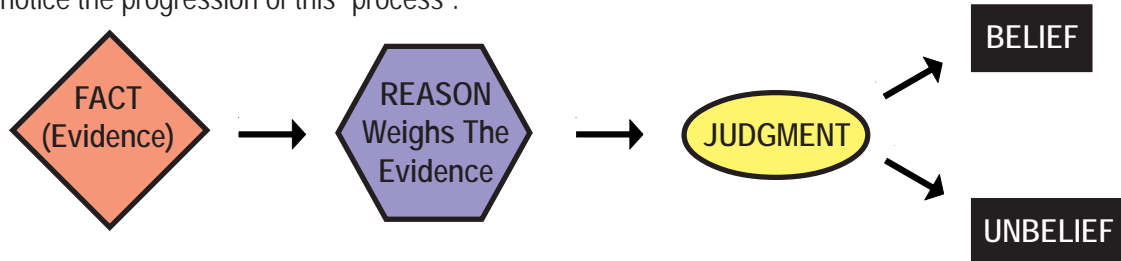
A) WHY THE NEED FOR EVIDENCE?

- some downplay the importance of, need for studying evidences
 - claim it shows a lack of faith
 - we should just believe => may even quote Jn. 20:29
- God never requires us to have "blind faith" [NO EVIDENCE]
 - He never wants us to believe only on our subjectivity, accepting things just because we want to believe them
 - in fact, the Bible teaches against such faith
 - "Do not believe every spirit, but try the spirits..." (1 Jn. 4:1)
 - "Prove (examine) all things..." (1 Thess. 5:21)

- God neither requires that we understand everything **[ALL EVIDENCE]**
 - it is reasonable to believe in God, the Bible w/o fully understanding all the specifics
 - we'll never **fully** comprehend God (1 Tim. 6:16)
 - may not understand why God asks some things (Heb. 11:7-8)
 - He has His "secret things" (Deut. 29:29)

The answer lies in the middle of these extremes

- God presents evidence... expects us to believe using reasoning abilities He gave us
- notice the progression of this "process":



Acceptance (Belief) is dependent upon 5 "factors":

- 1) The **WEIGHT** of the evidence.
- 2) The **CLARITY** with which the evidence is presented.
- 3) The **HONESTY** (integrity) of the examiner.
- 4) The **LOGICAL ABILITY** of the examiner to evaluate the evidence.
- 5) The **BIAS** (prejudice) of the examiner.

B) DIFFERENT KINDS OF EVIDENCE

- for the purposes of our study, we'll focus on 2 kinds of evidences
 - knowing & understanding the differences and significance of each will help defend God, the Bible against attacks from unbelievers

Scientific Evidence

- critics claim "*Give scientific proof that God exists, or that the Bible is true*"
- when we cannot, they think they have won the debate
- the reason why we cannot is worthy of consideration
- defined, science is...
 - "*The systematized knowledge derived from observation and experiment carried on in order to determine the principles underlying what is being studied*" (LSU textbook)
 - key components of science = testing and observation
 - one begins with hypotheses (possible answers), and eliminates one by one those who fail during tests, leaving a theory at the end
 - several things fall outside this realm
 - one's birth cannot be scientifically tested
 - birthing process can be tested, but your physical birth can't; it is a "1-time event"... it's not repeatable => certainly not under lab conditions

- where you were yesterday cannot be scientifically tested (time cannot be brought back and observed)
 - for this reason, creation cannot be tested, and neither can evolution theories for the beginning of life (*Big Bang, etc.*)
- ***God, the Bible do not fall under this category of evidence***
- admission => science is beneficial, teaches many things
- yet, it has limitations
 - 1) *the 5 physical senses (if something can't be observed and tested with the 5 senses, it is outside of science)*
 - 2) *the present (can't tell us about history because 5 senses are only in the present – cannot test the historical validity of past events)*
 - 3) *tells us "how" something works, not "why" (defines cause & effect, but cannot tell purpose)*
 - 4) *it is non-moral (not equipped to deal with morality; incapable of making value judgments)*
 - 5) *it can't deal with the unique (science only deals with things that are timeless, universal, or repeatable; one time events (miracles) are outside this realm)*

Though science is valid in medical breakthroughs & discoveries (*e.g. pasteurization*)...it has limitations
It is not "judge & jury" of God, the Bible, faith-based notions, etc.

- science is limited, cannot answer **all** questions of truth & reality

Historical Evidence

- a category equally valid in weight to science
- kind of evidence used in courts of law
- provides relevant data (*eyewitnesses, written documents, archaeological finds, etc.*)
- such must be considered, weighed before drawing conclusions
 - earlier examples that could not be scientifically proven (*your birth, where you were yesterday*) can be historically proven (eyewitnesses, a "document trail")
 - how do we know George Washington lived in 18th century?
 - how do we know Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 19th century?
 - how do we know Neil Armstrong walked on the moon in 20th century?
 - because they pass the test of historical research

The Bible can be put to and pass the same test

- it has testimony of eyewitnesses
 - one of the most reliable forms of evidence
 - even our courts rely on such => can convict criminals
- Scripture elevates such evidence (**Deut. 19:15; Mt. 18:16**)
- Scripture is confirmed by eyewitness testimony (**Lk. 1:1-4**)
 - significant enough that these things could be "most surely believed" (v. 1)
 - possible to "know the certainty of those things" (v. 4)
- Jesus presented alive "by many infallible proofs" (**Acts 1:3**)
- Scripture affirms over & over the events recorded therein were verified through eyewitness testimony (**1 Cor. 15:3-8**)

Those who dismiss God and the Bible w/o examination are guilty of foolish bias
- a judge would admonish any jury who did so in a trial

The question is...did the events in the Scripture occur in history?

- **only** way to know is to investigate them, not by science, but as historical events
- that requires testimony, plus any other information that might corroborate
(*archaeological finds, other extant documents, etc.*)

C) BENEFITS OF KNOWING, USING EVIDENCE

- if a lawyer knew of evidence that could exonerate his client but did not use it, he would be as ineffective a lawyer as the one who did not know the evidence existed in the first place
 - new trials are sometimes granted when it is discovered the lawyer did not use existing evidence
- evidence is either compelling or found lacking
 - this is where God expects us to use reasoning skills He gave us
 - He asks to accept that which is "most believable," giving us the evidence to accept it
- John said he wrote what he personally witnessed "...that you may believe, and believing, you may have life in His name" (**Jn. 20:31**)
 - belief will result in eternal salvation (**Jn. 3:16; 8:24**)
 - belief will result in faithful service for God (**Jas. 2:14-26**)

We're not interested in winning an academic debate with intellectual infidels

We are interested in winning souls for the eternal kingdom

- we want others to know the truths we already hold dear

This requires knowing how to recognize & use evidences of what we perceive to be truth

Conclusion

Many attacks are made daily against God, His word

- the disciple must be prepared to deal with them
- to do this, he/she must know something about apologetics & evidences
- remember...we are to defend the truth (**1 Pet. 3:15**)

When properly used, the Scripture is able to destroy its critic's arguments (**2 Cor. 10:3-5**)

Not enough to say something is true without giving some validity to the claim

- this is why Jesus, the apostles worked miracles (**Mk. 16:20**)
- this is why we have the written record of God's dealing with man (**Jn. 21:24-25**)

We need to refute those who claim the "higher ground" when we cannot satisfy them with scientific proof about God, the Bible

We need to exonerate God, the Bible by emphasizing its ability to pass the tests of historical evidence, and become more convinced ourselves

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#2 – The Existence Of God)

Introduction

Define a “prima facie” case

- legal authorities know the importance of such a case
- if adequate evidence is available to establish the presumption of a fact, such presumption becomes fact unless such can be refuted by other facts

It is impossible to prove that God does not exist

- the Bible does not make any attempt to prove His existence or debate the point
- it simply begins with the assumption (*affirmation*) that He does (**Gen. 1:1**)

Theme

When studying Evidences, it is necessary to consider God’s existence

We will not have as many references to Scripture as usual (*intentional*)

- unbelievers aren’t swayed by references to a book they don’t even accept

Our intent is to build a “prima facie case” re: God

- to examine evidence & be impressed with its weight so as to be pointed in the only *logical* conclusion => God does exist

Body

A) THE UNIVERSAL ARGUMENT

- also known as “*The General Argument*”
- in every age of human history, man has a religious instinct
 - crude or sophisticated, man believes in something to which he ascribes superior quality
 - man not only believes, but also engages in acts of worship and lifestyles he believes will please this superior Being
 - atheism is the *only* exception in any society
- ★ We yearn and long for God (**Psa. 42:1; Acts 17:27**)

B) THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

- also known as “*The Cause & Effect Argument*” or “*Argument From 1st Cause*”
 - for every effect there has to be an underlying cause => a bedrock of science
- all that exists can’t be proven that it came from “chance” or “luck”
 - Dr. Morrison mathematical illustration with 10 pennies [see page 8]
 - the world, all that exists = a very definite “effect”

- what "caused" it? => only 3 possibilities
 - ***universe is eternal – has always existed***
 - even unbelieving scientists date earth's age; they don't believe it's eternal
 - ***universe is not eternal – created itself***
 - no one can "credibly" believe this...it is too absurd for serious consideration (*atheism*)
 - ***universe is not eternal – created by superior force***
 - the only option that is left
- ★ We believe this "Creative & Superior force" is God
 - every effect has an adequate cause (**Heb. 3:4; Acts 17:24**)
 - God's creative force is responsible for all that exists (**Job 38:4-38**)

C) THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

- also known as "*The Intelligent Design Argument*"
 - from Greek "teleo" => an accomplished end or purpose (**cp. Jn. 19:30**)
 - because there is a purposed design, there must be a Designer
 - facts exist which support an intelligent design versus chance or blind luck
 - ***the planet*** => Dr. Morrison facts about the Earth [*see page 8*]
 - ***the animal life***
 - salmon return to their place of birth after many years at sea
 - eels from Europe & America migrate to the depths off Bermuda where they breed and die; the young eels return to either Europe or America, depending from where their parents came
 - starlings fly by day, using the Sun as a compass
 - warblers fly by night, navigate by stars (if fog or clouds obscure the stars, they halt)
 - ***human life***
 - the brain unscrambles thousands of electrical messages from the ear, transforming them into meaningful sound
 - the eye can process seven million different shades of color
- "To suppose that the eye with all its matchless ways for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree."*

 - quote from Charles Darwin, ***Origin Of Species*** (1859)
 - (from a chapter entitled "Difficulties Of The Theory")
- skin is body's largest organ => working with complex central nervous system; able to detect pain, touch, heat, cold (*make necessary adjustments for such conditions*)

- ★ Such complexity in the cosmos, the animal kingdom, and with the human body loudly declares a purpose, and One who designed it so (**Psa. 19:1; 139:14**)

D) THE MORALITY ARGUMENT

- one of the most compelling arguments atheists must answer
- men differ on what is "morally right or wrong"
 - evidenced by current attempts to "re-define morality"

- despite this, all agree that some code of basic morality exists
 - *a sense of "ought"*
 - one "ought" to pay his bills, treat others with dignity, fairness
 - *everyone demands fairness*
 - "It's my turn" / "That's not fair! You can't cut in front of me"
 - even a condemned criminal demands a "fair trial"
 - the presence of morality demands a moral Force behind it
 - moral standards do not apply to inanimate things
 - not even atheists apply moral standards to things
- ★ Man has been given his "moral compass" by God (Rom. 2:14-15)

E) WHAT IF THERE IS NO GOD?

- remove God & there are certain logical consequences we are faced with
 - *There is no explanation for life*
 - the atheist sees no evidence of design
 - only alternative is spontaneous generation (life from nothing)
 - a speculation arrived at in desperation
 - *There is no purpose for living*
 - if we are here through no design or purpose, then
 - why do we have the power to reason?
 - why do we have the drive to set goals?
 - why do we have the sense of purpose?
 - *There is no standard by which to live*
 - can't appeal to any objective standard as a measure for men
 - man is result of purposeless processes that did not have him in mind => he is here only by accident...a "lucky emergence from the slimy ooze"
 - the workings of such processes cannot provide ethical criteria of right & wrong
 - *There is no eternity for which to live*
 - extinction is the best the atheist can hope for
 - before man, there was eons of nothing...after man, there is eons of nothing
 - sandwiched in between, man exists for no apparent purpose or reason

But if God does exist, then there is...

- ...an explanation for life (Gen. 1:1, 27)
- ...a purpose for living (Eccl. 12:13)
- ...a standard by which to live (Jn. 12:48)
- ...an eternity for which to live (1 Cor. 15:53-58)

Conclusion

The question of whether or not there is a God is one of the most important questions one will ever attempt to ask and answer (Isa. 45:6-7, 9, 11-12, 18)

- we cannot put the concept of God into a test tube to prove His validity

Remember...it is impossible to prove that God does not exist

You decide which is more reasonable to believe...God does or does not exist?

- the evidence saying He does is abundant (**Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:19-20**)
- only a fool will say otherwise (**Rom. 1:28, 22; Psa. 14:1**)

"Seven Reasons Why A Scientist Believes In God"

Dr. Abraham Cressy Morrison

(selected quotations as published by Reader's Digest - Dec. 1946 & Oct. 1960)

By unwavering mathematical law we can prove that our universe was designed and executed by a great engineering Intelligence.

Suppose you put ten pennies, marked from one to ten, into your pocket and give them a good shuffle. Now try to take them out in sequence from one to ten, putting back the coin each time and shaking them all again. Mathematically we know that your chance of first drawing number one is one in ten; of drawing one and two in succession, one in 100; of drawing one, two and three in succession, one in 1000, and so on; your chance of drawing them all, from number one to number ten in succession, reaches the unbelievable figure of one in ten billion!!

By the same reasoning, so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on the earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance.

- The earth rotates on its axis 1000 miles an hour at the equator; if it turned at 100 miles an hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as now, and the hot sun would likely burn up our vegetation each long day while in the long night any surviving sprout might well freeze.
- The sun, source of our life, has a surface temperature of approx. 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Earth is just far enough away so that this "fire" warms us just enough and not too much. If the sun gave off only one half its present radiation, we would freeze, and if it gave as much more, we would roast.
- The slant of the earth, tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, gives us our seasons; if the earth was not so tilted, vapors from the ocean would move north and south, piling up for us continents of ice.
- If our moon were, say, only 50,000 miles away instead of its actual distance (239,000 miles), our tides might be so enormous that twice a day all continents would be submerged; even mountains could soon be eroded away.
- The crust of the earth ranges from 5 km (16,000 feet) to 40 km (131,000 feet). If it were only ten feet thicker, there would be no oxygen, without which animal life must die. If the ocean were a few feet deeper, carbon dioxide & oxygen would be absorbed and no vegetable life could exist.

It is apparent from these and a host of other examples that there is not one chance in billions that life on our planet is an "accident" (here by chance).

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#3 – The Co-Existence Of Good & Evil)

Introduction

One of the more influential arguments atheism has is the co-existence of God & evil

- If God is ***omnipotent***, and if God is ***omnibenevolent***, then evil shouldn't exist
- But evil does exist, so that means
 - a) God doesn't exist
 - b) God is powerless against it (not omnipotent) or doesn't care (not omnibenevolent)

At times, even believers may think like Gideon (**Judg. 6:11-13**)

Theme

How do we reconcile 2 ideas of a loving, omnipotent God and evil's existence?

Better question => is it right to enter into a relationship with Him if He does exist?

Body

A) SOME INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS...

- first need to define what is meant by "suffering" and "evil"
 - someone contracts a deadly disease and dies?
 - Sept. 11, 2001 => terrorists attacks?
 - does evil have to be catastrophic...or just that I don't like it?
- for God to remove all "evil" would not be good
 - some "pain" is good...humans & animals have nervous systems that produce sensations of pain when we do something harmful to us
 - we also learn from mistakes of others when they suffer (**Jer. 3:6-11**)
- admission: we will not be able to provide all the answers to this "dilemma" (**Acts 12:1-4, 7-10, 19**)
- however, we can provide some Biblical perspective that might make it seem less of a "dilemma"

B) SOME BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ABOUT SUFFERING & EVIL

Some suffering is punitive

- evil actions bring evil consequences => Divine warning (**Ex. 9:13-17**)
- a "system" of right & wrong demands "penalty" (suffering) for disobeying
 - example of a person carelessly misusing a power saw
 - true of moral or spiritual disobedience, too (**Ezek. 18:4**)
 - we bring such suffering upon ourselves (**Rom. 1:27**)

The suffering that comes upon man as a result of sin does not condemn an unloving God, but rather justifies a fair God in His justice

Some suffering is for testing

- not all suffering (evil) is related to sin => Job's contention to his "friends"
- some suffering is not because we have done wrong, but because we can do better
 - causes our faith to grow, produce endurance (**Jas. 1:2-4**)
 - causes our hope to become stronger, purer (**Rom. 5:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:6-7**)

If life is going along great - then, all of a sudden, you suffer (experience "evil")...

- ...is it truly pointless? **NO**
- ...does it manifest an uncaring God who lets you suffer? **NO**
- ...could God be testing you to actually make you better? **POSSIBLY**

Some suffering is meant to glorify God

- rather than indicating God's impotence (failure to deliver), some suffering actually showcases His omnipotence
 - blind man (**Jn. 9:2-3**)
 - many assume that sin & suffering are always connected
 - Israel in Egypt (**Ex. 15:1-2; 19:4**)
- this is a hard one for unbelievers to comprehend
 - what kind of God would allow man to suffer just to show His glory?
 - is He egotistical, vain?
 - not the best way to ask the question
 - better way => emphasize knowing God's power is essential to salvation
 - God's display of His power is not only to ***instruct*** us about Him, but also to ***attract*** us to Him
 - He is the only One who can solve our problems

Evil will have a day of reckoning

- the atheist argues assuming evil (suffering) exists without any consequences
 - atheists demand fairness when someone does something wrong
 - if one cuts line => go to the back
 - if one murders => go to jail
 - just as much as they demand such, so, too, will God ultimately bring about justice for all the damage caused through evil, suffering
 - all will have appear in judgment (**2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27**)
 - all will receive judgment based upon what we have done (**Jn. 5:28-29**)

Rather than cast doubt on the believer's God because evil exists, all should focus on the fixed and certain destiny of evil

- Satan, all his works, will be cast into punishment (**Mt. 25:41**)
- if we don't want to be there ***THEN***, we should listen to God ***NOW***

C) SUFFERING CAN DRAW US CLOSER TO GOD

The sufferings of Job (**Job 1-2**) and Paul (**2 Cor. 12:7**) teach us that suffering & evil actually brings us closer to this God who loves us

- Job gained this insight by enduring with patience all he went through
 - he also learned one cannot question God, His omnipotence, or love
- Paul was reminded that humility is something we all need

Not only do sinners need God, but also the righteous do, too

When we suffer, ***we don't need answers*** => ***we need God!!***

- this is where atheists (and us sometimes, too) make the mistake
- when Job finally saw this (**Job 42:2-6**), he stopped asking questions
 - he concluded that whatever the explanation was, it didn't matter
 - his sufferings put him right where he needed to be...close to God
- when Paul finally learned the purpose for his "thorn," he rejoiced to have it (**2 Cor. 12:9-10**)
 - he stopped requesting its removal
 - through it he was reminded that the power was with God...not man

Conclusion

Admission...even after such a lesson, we still do not know all about pain, suffering, and the presence of evil in the world.

- much about suffering is hard to explain => e.g. suffering of children, etc.

While God was on the earth, walking among men, He did not heal every disease, relieve every needy person, and raise every person who had died

- people suffered while God was among them
- the purpose of His coming was not to remove evil from their midst
- His purpose was to redeem man from what would make him suffer the most => **SIN**

This all-powerful and all-caring God simply asks us to trust Him during those times of earthly suffering so that we may avoid eternal separation from Him

- that would be the greatest suffering of all

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#4 – The Identity Of Jesus Christ)

Introduction

So far, we have studied...

- the nature of evidence (*different kinds*)
- whether or not God exists
- reconciling the dilemma of God and evil existing together

Another important topic one must then come to grips with => who is Jesus Christ?

- what of this historical character who lived long ago in Nazareth and has had such a profound effect upon human history?

Jesus Himself asked such a question in **Mt. 16:13, 15**

During His final week, in a confrontation with those who would have Him killed, He asked the question again (**Mt. 22:41-46**)

Theme

Pilate's question recorded in **Mt. 27:22** is very apropos for us today

We cannot escape Him => He is ever before us

- *we must decide*

Any thought, refusal, or affirmation is our decision about what to do with Him

Body

A) WAS HE INVENTED?

- some contend that He was made up... "invented"
 - at least the majority of what He said & did is fabricated
 - the Gospel writers have certainly "duped" humanity if so
 - modern-day quotes from "*The Jesus Seminar*"
 - for more detailed information, see www.westarinstitute.org/Seminars/seminars.html
- accepting/rejecting Him should be solely based upon the evidence
 - mainly, the teaching in the N.T. (*the gospel accounts*)
 - extra-Biblical information is offered to verify that others who lived chronologically closer to Him attest to His existence
 - Flavius Josephus => ca. 37-95 A.D.
 - Jewish commander in revolt against Rome in A.D. 66
 - spent last half of life as Jewish historian
 - Pliny the Younger => wrote around 111 A.D.
 - Roman governor of Bithynia
 - corresponds with Emperor Trajan re: executions of those who claimed to be Christians, followers of "the one known as Christ"

- Cornelius Tacitus
 - Roman historian; wrote around 112 A.D. re: how Nero blamed Christians for his own burning of Rome (64 A.D.)
 - cites Christ's execution by Pilate during reign of Tiberius

B) WHAT DID OTHERS SAY ABOUT HIM?

- men of His day (**Mt. 16:14**)
 - He was a great prophet, servant of God
 - He was a persuasive teacher
- Peter (**Mt. 16:16; 2 Pet. 1:16-18**)
 - he knew Him to be the Son of God, the promised Messiah
 - he knew He was not the product of fables, myths
- John (**Jn. 1:1,14; 1 Jn. 1:1**)
 - he knew Him to be the very essence of God
 - he had first-hand knowledge of Him
- Paul (**Phil. 2:5; Col. 2:9**) => the *most* compelling, compared to these others listed (**Gal. 1:13-14**)
 - on equality with the Father in heaven
 - the fullness of what constitutes Deity
- writer of Hebrews (**Heb. 1:3**)
 - He was the "exact representation of Him" (Father)

C) WHAT DID HE SAY ABOUT HIMSELF?

- *He claimed equality with God* (**Jn. 5:17-18**)
 - theirs was such a relationship that He said man should honor Him as he honors the Father (v. 23)
- *He claimed to be sinless* (**Jn. 8:46**)
 - He condemned self-righteousness (**Lk. 18:9-14**), but confessed no sin in Himself
 - He challenged any to find sin in Him => who among us would issue such a challenge to others?
- *He claimed to be eternal* (**Jn. 8:58**)
 - the tense of the verbs is the all-important part of this passage
 - hard for finite humans to fathom an eternal Being
- *He claimed to forgive sins* (**Mk. 2:5, 8-12**)
 - how the Jew must have thought Him to be so indignant!!
 - to prove He could forgive sins, also showed power over diseases
- *He claimed to be the only way to salvation* (**Jn. 14:6**)
 - we criticize each other for our "favorite ways" to certain destinations
 - some prefer one way over another
 - Jesus claimed to be "THE ONLY WAY" to heaven
- *He claimed to fulfill all prophecies re: the Messiah* (**Lk. 24:44**)
 - of the approximate 800 prophecies in the O.T., no less than 393 focus on the Messiah
 - what are the chances that 1 man can fulfill them all?
 - mathematician Peter Stoner (*also a believer*) selected just 8 prophecies
 - he concluded for one man to fulfill just 8 would be 1 in 10¹⁷
 - 1 followed by 17 zeros!! (100,000,000,000,000,000) => that is 100 quadrillion!!

"Suppose we take 10¹⁷ silver dollars. Mark one of them and then stir them all up. Next lay them on the face of the state of Texas (area of 268,000 sq. miles). This would cover the surface area of the state 2 feet deep. Now blindfold a man and tell him he can travel anywhere as far as he wants in the state, but he must pick up only one silver dollar and it must be the one that was marked."

- again, this illustrates only fulfilling 8 prophecies!!
- how much greater the odds of Jesus fulfilling all 393!!!



D) WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT HIM?

- neutrality re: who He is => impossible
- we cannot escape this => we must decide because He is before all of us
- what are the only possibilities?
 - **Liar** => if He willingly deceived men to believe something He was not, He was an absolute fraud
 - if He was not who He claimed to be, He was wicked & ungodly to the core
 - He treaded upon the deepest and most intimate needs of the human spirit
 - He took desperate people who needed the mercy of God upon their pitiful souls, and worked it to gain popularity and enlarge His ego
 - if this is the case, even the Koran & Book of Mormon have it wrong
 - even if not the Christ, He still could not be a good man
 - **Lunatic** => that deluded & crazy to deceive centuries of people?
 - would such a one die for such a deception?
 - would family of such a one allow Him to die? (Jn. 19:25)
 - **Lord** => the only plausible conclusion
 - no one ever taught like He did (Mt. 7:28-29; Jn. 7:40-46)
 - no one ever did what He did

Conclusion

Remember... the real issue is not whether or not Jesus lived

It is...is He the kind of person the Bible says He is, and did He live the kind of life the Bible says He did?

If Jesus is the Son of God and you follow Him –

- **you will have to give yourself up** (Mt. 16:24)
- BUT
 - **you will be saved** (cp. Lk. 6:46; Mt. 7:21)
 - belief in Him, His word (Jn. 8:24)
 - confession of who He is (Mt. 10:32)
 - repentance of sin (Lk. 13:3,5)
 - baptism in His name for remission of sins (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38)
 - **you will have life** (Jn. 10:10)
 - **your soul will have rest** (Mt. 11:28-30)

If Jesus is the Son of God and you do not follow Him –

- you will die in your sins (**Jn. 8:24**)
- you will face Him in judgment (**2 Cor. 5:10**)
- you will be without Him forever (**2 Thess. 1:7-9**)

Each of us must decide who He is

- neutrality is not an option (**Mt. 12:30 ; Rev. 3:15-16**)

Re: our decision, our eternal destination hangs in the balance.

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#5 – The Reliability Of The Bible)

Introduction

So far, we have turned to 1 book as the credible source of information re:

- the nature of evidence
- the existence of God
- the co-existence of God and evil
- the identity of Jesus Christ as the Messiah

That 1 book is *The Bible*

- a book containing historical information and eyewitness testimony that provides evidence for...
 - ...faith in God & His Son Jesus Christ
 - ...instructions for daily godly living
 - ...hope of dwelling in heaven for all eternity

Theme

If the Bible is not what it and a believer claims to be, all such appeals to it are meaningless
Even more so, faith and hope in God would be in vain

Is the Bible reliable, trustworthy?

Body

A) THE BIBLE'S CONTINUITY

- when first considering the Bible as a credible book, one must address the Bible's continuous flow of thought & purpose
 - how often have you read a book and thought something wasn't right about the way it was written?
 - it didn't "flow just right" or have any continuity
 - remember...such books written by only 1 author!!
 - the Bible cannot be successfully criticized in such a way
- the Bible possesses characteristics that would work against such continuity
 - time* => over a period of 1500 years by over 40 different writers
 - place* => written from diverse places (*wilderness, palace, prison, on the road*)
 - human perspectives* => from all walks of life (*royalty, fishermen, tax collector, doctor*)
 - language* => 3 (Hebrew, some Aramaic, Kione Greek)
 - types of writing* => law (*criminal, civil, ethical, sanitary*), history, poetry, prophecy

Despite all this divergence, not 1 single hiccup of inconsistency!!

- Moyer quote => page 20
- Jenkins quote => page 20

B) THE BIBLE'S CHARACTERISTICS

- we'll focus on 3 characteristics => inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy
 - characteristics that stand and fall together
- "**inspiration**" => the source, or origin, of the Scripture (2 Pet. 1:20-21)
 - the Bible is "God-breathed"
 - the Bible is the product of **verbal plenary inspiration**
 - "verbal" => of, or pertaining to, words (1 Cor. 2:12-13)
 - "plenary" => wholly, extending to all parts (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - compared to other ideas about inspiration...
 - partial** => only parts are inspired
 - renders the Bible useless => which parts?
 - natural** => as compared to an author or painter who claims to be "inspired"
 - demeans the Bible => doesn't explain divine concepts
 - mechanical dictation** => writers were simply stenographers
 - doesn't explain different writing styles
 - thought** => thought was conveyed but writers chose own words
 - doesn't account for times when writers were unsure about what they wrote (1 Pet. 1:10-11)
- "**infallible**" => incapable of error, deception
 - God tells us He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18)
 - if that is so, then His "God-breathed" words must also be of the same nature, character
 - they would not knowingly be deceptive, injurious to man
- "**inerrant**" => cannot be proven to be false or containing mistakes
 - works of men are found to contain error, both knowingly and unknowingly
 - such detracts from their intended purpose (*damages reliability*)

The Bible claims inspiration, infallibility, & inerrancy in numerous ways

The O.T.

- "thus says the Lord" over 400 times (Ex. 4:22; 5:1)
- Jeremiah had God's words in his mouth (Jer. 1:9)
- the fulfillment of prophecy is a strong claim
 - only the true God can infallibly declare "events to take place" (Isa. 44:7, 28)
 - true prophecy must have criteria
 - event must be beyond power of man to foresee
 - must be demonstrated prediction came before event
 - prediction must be applicable to the event
 - language of prediction is unambiguous, unmistakable
 - prediction has clear, unmistakable fulfillment

The N.T.

- what the 1st Christians received was God's word (1 Thess. 2:13)
- what the apostles wrote was called "Scripture" (2 Pet. 3:16) and "the Lord's commandments" (1 Cor. 14:37)
- curses pronounced upon any who changed it (Rev. 22:18-19)

Jesus' view of Scripture

- viewed the O.T. as authoritative (Mt. 4:1-11) and factual (Mt. 19:4-5; Jn. 3:14)
- viewed His own words as authoritative (Mt. 5:31-32; 24:35; Jn. 12:48)
- viewed what apostles would write as truth (Jn. 14:26; 16:13)

C) THE BIBLE'S UNIQUE DOCTRINE

- if the Bible is inspired, then we can rely on it for all matters of which it speaks
- if the Bible is truth (*absolute*), then it is not going to be wrong
 - it is trustworthy => the nature of infallibility
- if the Bible is from God, then it is our only source for faith and authority
- if the Bible is inspired, then it is relevant to all areas of life (Heb. 4:12)
 - it is not an ancient, "dead relic" of an unenlightened past, but a living testimony to a true and powerful God Who has a future planned for man
- the Bible's grand theme = redemption of man from his sin (Rom. 3:23)
 - God's eternal purpose to redeem man in Christ is taught from cover to cover
 - man's fall => deprived access to Tree of Life (Gen. 3)
 - man's glory => restored access to Tree of Life (Rev. 22)
 - all writings in between relate to this great epic
 - what the Bible teaches about salvation is clearly unique
 - sin is always revealed as rebellion against God
 - man constantly portrayed unable to save self (Jer. 10:23)
 - God is always the Savior
 - salvation is always moral, never forced or coerced
 - God invites; man chooses (Mt. 11:28-29; Josh. 24:15)
 - man must repent => only then will God forgive
 - God has always required faith & obedience on man's part
 - Noah told to build an ark
 - Hebrews required to obey Law of Moses
 - man today must obey the gospel of Christ
 - from beginning to end, there is altar, sacrifice, & priest
 - man's redemption always based upon a Divine sacrifice acceptable to God

What other book could be so unique as to show man's failures & at the same time point the way to his great moral potential? **NONE!!**

To this day, no one has ever successfully shown the Bible to be erroneous...full of all those supposed "contradictions"

- no other book has undergone such opposition
- it still stands, just like it said it would (1 Pet. 1:22-25)

D) THE BIBLE'S SURETY

- can we be sure what we have is real, right, and true?
- just how reliable is our modern-day copy of the Bible?

- this is the subject of *"Textual Criticism"*
 - the field of study devoted to examining Biblical autographs, manuscripts, & versions
 - *"autographs"* => original documents written by Bible writers
 - *"manuscripts"* => copies of the originals written in same language as the originals
 - *"versions"* => translations of the originals into other languages
- an admission we must make => Biblical autographs no longer exist
 - many use this to call the Bible & its reliability into question
 - consider the following comparison...
 - as far as we know, the original of Shakespeare's "Romeo & Juliet" no longer exists
 - how many literary experts are "hot & bothered" by the absence of the original of one classic pieces of literature?
 - does anyone call into question the reliability of the copies we have of "Romeo & Juliet?"

How can we be sure what we have in our Bibles represents the original autographs?

- consider a simplistic illustration [courtesy of Greg Gwin => page 21]

There are thousands of manuscripts and early versions of the Bible available for the type of comparative analysis found in bro. Gwin's example

- re: the N.T. alone...
 - ...there are 5,000+ manuscripts and 10,000+ documents of various versions
- this is abundant proof with a good degree of certainty that the modern-day Bible is a reliable copy of the original document

Additionally, writings of secular authors who quote and make reference to inspired writings provide further proof

- men who lived at the same time as the apostles or shortly thereafter who wrote documents which quote N.T. passages
 - Clement of Rome (ca. A.D. 30-100)
 - Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 100-165)
 - Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 115-200) [*disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John*]

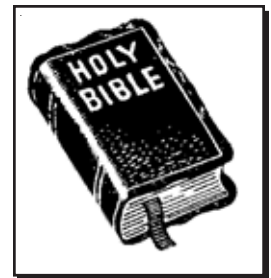
The Scripture teaches the word of God will never pass away (Mt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:22-25)

- God has had His hand in bringing His word down through the ages in such a condition that what we have today can be trusted

Conclusion

The Bible continues to be the world's greatest enduring book

- most recent parts are at least 2,000 years old
- oldest parts are at least 3,500 years old
- untold thousands of books written since have been lost due to neglect, indifference
- the Bible is always at the top of the annual best-seller's list
- no other book is as divergent...and yet, as harmonious



It is the most loved book ever and also is the most criticized book ever

- atheists and even liberal theologians constantly call into question the Bible, its teachings

If the Bible is not God's word, then the believer's faith is a hoax

If the Bible is God's word, then billions of souls will be lost forever in hell because they rejected the Bible's principle character => Jesus Christ

If the Bible is not true, then there is no standard of right and wrong => we're left to grope in darkness

If the Bible is true, then *"Let God be true but every man a liar"* (Rom. 3:4)

The standard of our faith in Christ is the Bible

- we believe that receiving the Bible will save our souls (Jas. 1:21)

You can count on the reliability of the Bible as God's only word for your life!

* * * * *

"Could all these things be true if the Bible were only a product of man?

For instance, if just 5 or 10 of us, all from one walk of life, one generation living in one place at one time on one continent, all speaking the same language, wrote about just 1 controversial topic, what are the chances we would all be totally agreed on every point?

Now factor in the 40 different Bible writers, speaking different languages, in different places, over 1,600 years, etc. Ask yourself...is it possible that Bible is merely a product of man?"

- T. Doy Moyer
Standing On Solid Ground
(A Study Of Evidences & Worldviews, pg. 52)

* * * * *

"Within the Bible there is not a false or discordant note in any of its teaching. What 1 Bible writer affirms, no later writer denies."

- Ferrill Jenkins
Introduction To Christian Evidences, pg. 42

Illustration of how the process of *Textual Criticism* works.
[courtesy of Greg Gwin]

- 1) Joe writes a letter to Sam.
- 2) Sam decides that others also need to read what Joe wrote.
- 3) Having no copy machine available, Sam sends hand-written copies to Jack, Fred, & Bill.
- 4) Sometime later, Joe (*the original letter writer*) dies. His original letter is inadvertently destroyed.
- 5) At this point, how can Jack be sure his copy of the letter is true to the original one Joe wrote to Sam?
- 6) There is only 1 way...Jack can compare his copy to the copies held by Fred & Bill.
- 7) If all 3 are identical, Jack can conclude with a fair degree of certainty that his copy is accurate.

(Obviously, the level of confidence will increase with the number of copies available for comparison).

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#6 – How We Got The Bible)

Introduction

We are a people of faith (2 Cor. 5:7)

- faith in God, the existence of heaven
- even faith in others (1 Cor. 13:7)
- re: this series... *faith in the Bible*

Therefore, we must be a “people of the Book” and must know as much about it as possible

In a way, the Bible is a human production

- Jesus never personally left any written instructions to guide His followers
- God chose human agents (*apostles, other inspired writers*) to write down what the Holy Spirit revealed to them (1 Cor. 2:6-13)

When saying, “Men wrote it,” that does not mean...

- ...they thought up its contents, originated it
- ...they got together and decided what goes in, what stays out (i.e. some “council”)
- ...they corrupted the original contents because of what they wanted in, out

Theme

What one thinks about the Bible has a direct bearing on his acceptance of it, its teachings

If one subscribes to theories like...

- ...the Bible is from man; therefore, a dated book
- ...the Bible has been thrown together arbitrarily
- ...the Bible has been corrupted
- ...then he won't take the Bible seriously

Knowing how we got the Bible will help answer such false theories

Body

A) DID THE BIBLE COME FROM GOD?

- such a unified & harmonious, yet “diverse” literary work is virtually impossible if from man
 - previous lesson material on Bible's characteristics re: its unity [*Lesson 5, page 16*]
 - therefore, it must be from God, guided by Him
- the Bible writers claimed what they wrote & spoke came from God

Old Testament

Moses (Lev. 4:1; 6:1,8,19; 7:22; etc.) => “Lord spoke to Moses”

Joshua (Josh. 1:1; 3:7; 6:2; etc.) => same phrase

Samuel (1 Sam. 3:19-20)

David (2 Sam. 23:1-3)

God spoke "to" and "by" David => wrote almost ½ the Psalms

The prophets

Isaiah (Isa. 1:1-2,18; etc.)

Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1-4,11,14; etc)

Malachi (Mal. 1:1-2)

This claims that God spoke to & through them...what they wrote was from God

New Testament

Jesus (Mt. 5:17-19) => emphasized the importance of O.T.

- implication is that it was from God => phrase "*It is written...*"

Apostle Peter (2 Pet. 1:20-21) => not talking about our interpreting or understanding, but about the origin of Scripture

Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13)

- what he wrote came from God

The Lord's promise to the apostles (Jn. 14:25-26; 16:12-13)

- they would remember all He taught them

- they would be guided into all truth

This certainly had a bearing on what they spoke, wrote => it came from God

They were not just reporters, but "eyewitnesses" (Lk. 1:1-4; 1 Jn. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:16-21)

- we know we don't have all these men wrote...not all has been preserved (1 Cor. 5:9)

- what we do have is sufficient for faith, serving God (Jn. 20:30-31; 21:24-25)

- proof that the Bible has come from God

B) HOW DID "THE BOOKS" BECOME "THE BOOK?"

- "Bible" => *biblia*, meaning "the books"

- many wonder about, question the compilation process of the Bible

- obviously, there hasn't always been a one-volume book

- somewhere along the way some compiling was done

- this gets to the "canon" of the Scripture

- "canon" is from Greek word *kanon*...and further back, the Hebrew word *qaneh*

- basic meaning = reed (*our English word "cane" comes from this word*)

- a reed was used as a measuring rod

- therefore, "canon" eventually came to mean a standard or rule

(2 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 6:16)

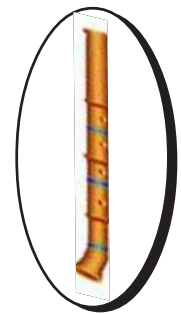
- how are some books canonical and other books non-canonical?

- who/what determined what became part of "the Book"?

★ - we first submit that man, nor groups of men, did not decide this

- man cannot decide a book's *canonicity* anymore than they decides its *authority*

- the canon's development as a process can be seen from "the Book" itself

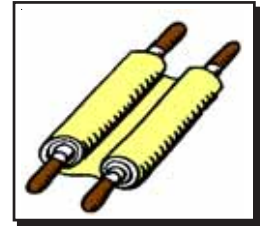


Old Testament

Moses

- told to "write down in a book, recite to Joshua" (Ex. 17:14)
- later at Mt. Sinai...more writing (Ex. 24:3-4,7) => called the "book of the covenant"
- shortly before his death => more in "a book" (Deut. 30:10; 31:24-26)
 - this "book" to be perpetuated throughout Israel's years
- to him is attributed the first 5 books of the O.T. [*the Pentateuch*] (Josh. 8:31; Neh. 8:1-8; Jn. 5:45-46)

The process of "The Book" started to take shape



Joshua

- charged with maintaining "the Book" (Josh. 1:7-8)
- shortly before his death => wrote in "the book of the Lord" (Josh. 24:25-26)
 - books being added to "the Book"
 - the O.T. canon was being built, maintained for the future

The Prophets

- Jeremiah (Jer. 25:13; 30:2)
 - His words obviously preserved, accepted
 - By Daniel (Dan. 9:2) - By Ezra (Ezra 1:1)



Jesus

- Lord spoke with confidence of "the Scripture" => O.T. canon
 - Lk. 24:27, 44-45 => referenced "the Scripture" and what was written in "the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms"

The O.T. canon was pretty much set in days of Jesus

- though not in same order as ours, it is identical

New Testament

Apostles

- what they wrote was seen as authoritative in 1st century local churches (1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16)
- Paul quotes Luke, calls it "scripture" (1 Tim. 5:18; Lk. 10:7)
- Peter says Paul wrote "scripture" (2 Pet. 3:15-16)

Uninspired men

- Justin Martyr (*2nd century writer*)
 - he mentions "memoirs of the apostles" that were read in church assemblies
 - these "memoirs" agreed with what the early believers had already accepted (Acts 2:42)

Over time, the inspired writings were gradually accepted by God's people

- the early believers saw them as genuinely from Him
- nothing in the development of the "canon" was determined by people

C) HAS THE BIBLE BEEN CORRUPTED?

- some play heavily on this (*e.g. Mormons*) to justify their own doctrine
- this point gets to accepting the Bible as we have it today
 - those who claim its corruptibility must prove it to be so
- usually this leads to the discussion of the Apocrypha => "*Lost books of the Bible*"
 - the Bible is "corrupted" because some books have been left out
 - "apocrypha" = hidden, secretive, concealed
 - reference to extra books outside what we call Scripture
 - Ecclesiasticus, 1 & 2 Maccabees, etc. => Catholic Bible
 - many want to place these "lost books" right along side what we accept as "Scripture"
 - should they be accepted as genuine, belonging in the Bible?

Old Testament Apocrypha

- written in Greek (not Hebrew) from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D.
- a collection of about 15 "books" containing history, romance, some moral instruction, fictitious elaborations on persons, events from O.T.
- Roman Catholic Church finally accepted 12 of them, endorsed them as canonical (*Council of Trent, 1546*) [*such an "endorsement" doesn't make them canonical*]

They should be rejected for these reasons:

- never included in the O.T. canon (*Jews never accepted them*)
- never claimed to be inspired of God
- never once made the statement, "Thus the Lord spoke to..."
- Jesus nor His apostles never quoted from them (*they never accepted them*)
- they were rejected by uninspired writers of the time
 - Philo (*a 1st century Jewish historian from Alexandria*)
 - Josephus (*a 1st century Jewish historian from Palestine*)
 - Jerome rejected them
 - important because he is a highly regarded "Catholic saint"...he translated Latin Vulgate in 400 A.D. (*Latin translation of Hebrew & Greek testaments*)
 - the Vulgate remains the basis for Roman Catholic Bible

New Testament Apocrypha

- other gospels (Barnabas, Thomas, etc.)

They should be rejected for these reasons:

- no indication 1st century Christians accepted them
- they are of obvious inferior quality

Gospel of Thomas records childhood life of Jesus as somewhat "temperamental"

- was once with playmates and struck one blind, another one dead
- once made clay pigeons at the riverbank, blew on 1 of them, and it flew away
- it doesn't even mention Jesus' crucifixion or resurrection, nor the final judgment
- written in late 1st or early 2nd century

Gospel of Barnabas is nothing short of blasphemous

- Jesus claims He is not the Messiah
- instead, He came to prepare the way for Mohammed, the *real* Messiah
(uses language similar to that of John the Baptist – Mk. 1:3)
- written in 16th century in both Italian & Spanish

Omitting the Apocrypha does not “corrupt” the Scripture
Rather, rejecting these obvious forgeries preserves the *true* canon of the Scripture

- God promised His word would be protected, preserved through all ages
 - accomplishes that for which it has been sent (**Isa. 55:10-11**)
 - it is an imperishable seed, one that “lives and abides forever” (**1 Pet. 1:22-25**)
 - would God allow man to corrupt the very thing needed for his salvation?
- Jesus cites an obvious uncorrupted O.T., implying its reliability (**Mt. 19:4-6; 22:31-32**)
- other “external evidence”
 - evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls point to its reliability *without* corruption
 - there are over 4,000 Greek manuscripts (*portions, whole*) of the N.T. testifying to its reliability
 - the multitude of non-inspired witnesses to the N.T.’s uncorrupt nature
 - many quotations from the Apostolic Fathers
 - Latin & Syriac translations from original manuscripts
 - the testimony of myriads of textual scholars well versed in original languages upon which are based our English translations

Conclusion

Therefore, based upon all this, we can have complete confidence that what we have is the uncorrupted, untainted “Book of the Lord”

***Finally, we come back to the question “How did we get the Bible?”
Really, the question is “Can we trust the Bible?”***

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

- Jesus’ own words (**Mk. 1:15**)
- the gospel is something to be believed in (**Rom. 10:17**)
- it is a message of hope for man’s greatest need => salvation from sin

We need to have faith, trust, hope that it is from God, and that its message is pure & true

- if it is not, we are absolutely hopeless and lost

The Bible we have today is from God

- the process that compiled what we have as the Bible today was governed by Him
- what we have has not been corrupted by men

The *real* question is => do you trust the Bible...enough to do what it says?

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#7 – What Is Apologetics?)

Introduction

What do you think when you read the following question... *“Have You Apologized?”*

- something you've done that is wrong, hurtful, offensive to others?
- we are taught to “apologize” to try to smooth over some bad we've done

Words can convey different meanings, given a change in context

- such is the word “apology”
- religiously, this word takes on a whole new meaning
 - the basis for this lesson

Theme

The natural follow-up to a series on *Evidences* => the subject of *Apologetics*

- it is one thing to know the evidence...it is another to know how to use it
- the Scripture reveals all that pertains to a saint being an “apologist”

All Christians need to be involved in “apologetics”

- though the terms may seem big, these Biblical concepts are very simple

Body

A) DEFINING APOLOGETICS

- “apology” in both noun & verb form appears in the Greek N.T.
 - *apologia* [noun]...*apologeomai* [verb]
- “a speech of defense” (*Arndt & Gingrich*)
- “to answer by way of making a defense for oneself” (*Vine's*)
- in the Scripture, it is to defend the truth of God
- it is the very opposite of our word “apology”
 - in common English usage, we make an excuse or express regret

The Bible has a distinct “apologetic” element

- the prophets (*Isa. 1:18; 41:21*)
- Christ (*Mt. 11:2-6*)
- the apostles (*Acts 17:2-3; 18:4,19; 24:25; 1 Thess. 5:21; Phil. 1:15-17*)

B) THE NEED FOR APOLOGETICS

- apologists are needed today because of the culture in which we live
 - God, His truth needs to be defended => constantly under attack

- our culture has been labeled “*The Post-Modern Age*”
 - post-modernism? => period after modernism (“*Modern Age*”)
 - characteristics of “Modernism”
 - basic humanism (*all answers, whatever defined as “truth” is found in human wisdom*)
 - man “naturalized” all concepts about God” (*miracles, revelation, anything labeled “supernatural”*) and replaced them with the “enlightenment of human reasoning”
 - search for truth moved from what was revealed from God to what was observed in nature or society by man

- we’re now in the “*Post-Modern Age*”
 - modernists sought truth with human intellect
 - post-modernists deny truth even exists (*relativism, no absolutes*)
 - post-modernism attempts to redefine everything
 - “family”, morality, etc.
 - in public education, through the media, etc.
 - perhaps post-modernism really isn’t that new (**Jn. 18:38**)

- post-modernism is also known or characterized by other labels
 - 1) “*Pluralism*” => emphasizes cultural diversity, acceptance of all divergent views, even contradictory ones
 - post-modernists remind us of our “global culture,” the need to be inclusive, tolerant, and accepting of every single view
 - no way is wrong...no one way is exclusively right
 - 2) “*Deconstruction*” => emphasizes clearing up unclear, ambiguous communication
 - on the surface, this may sound good to some
 - ★ - meaning of communication is defined by reader/hearer...not writer/speaker
 - one of the major problems in our current political culture
 - the Constitution is under such an attack
 - liberal politicians say the Constitution must be understood in modern context, not as the framers originally meant when they wrote our nation’s founding documents
 - similarly, people do this to the Bible today
 - we need to “re-interpret” the Bible in modern-day terms
 - original intent is rejected out of hand by the post-modernist
 - by contrast, the Biblical apologist seeks to defend original intent

This helps us see something important

- some of our own brethren have taken up the call for a “*New Hermeneutic*”
 - “hermeneutics” => the methodological interpretation of the Bible [*Webster’s*]
 - make the Bible more understandable to a current & changing world
 - this is why we have so much trouble with doctrinal diversity, **Rom. 14**, and how far to extend fellowship
 - demanding & accepting a “New Hermeneutic” in effect states we are not pleased with the inspired revelation from God...that we want something else
 - the Scripture warns against such (**Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 4:2-4**)

So, the differences are clearly delineated

Why are there such different philosophies?

- the answer will always lie at the foot of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18-21)
- defined by those in Christ (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Jas. 4:4)

What, then, are our choices in dealing with these differences?

- we can recognize divergent philosophies as "equal"...accept & tolerate them
- we can be "apologists"...we can defend the absolute truth of God

C) THE RECIPE FOR APOLOGETICS (1 Pet. 3:15)

1) "Sanctify God in your heart"

- set Him apart, high above all else (Mt. 22:37)
- venerate Him, not just because of who He is, but also because of what He says, what He's done
 - we all put greater stock in words & deeds of those we respect
- this is *complete* commitment to His will => as outlined in His word
 - He is the God of truth (Psa. 31:5)
 - His truth endures to all generations (Psa. 100:5)
 - Jesus is the *only* way of truth (Jn. 14:6)
 - He sent His Helper to reveal all truth (Jn. 16:13)
 - we are sanctified through truth (Jn. 17:17)

2) "Always be ready to make a defense"

- great servants have always defended God, His word
 - Moses before Pharaoh (Ex. 7-11)
 - Samuel before Saul (1 Sam. 15)
 - Nathan before David (2 Sam. 12)
 - Elijah on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18)
 - Peter & John before the Council (Acts 5)
 - Stephen before the Jews (Acts 7)
 - Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17)
- Peter assumes the Christian will defend the word of God
 - one cannot answer (*defend*) what he doesn't know
 - one will not know without studying (2 Tim. 2:15)
- the emphasis is on "being ready" to be the apologist (*how one prepares himself*)
 - how ready are we to defend "Bible basics?"
(*God, Christ, Holy Spirit, salvation, 1 true church, no instruments, baptism, etc.*)
 - being asked most likely will not result from a "formal inquisition" (*police interrogation*)
 - rather it will come from interested friends, family
 - it might possibly even come from disinterested enemies who watch us (1 Pet. 2:11-12; 4:3-4)

This is especially important because our children face a literal barrage of unbelief

- from the media, public education
- we interact with those who will be swayed by such error

3) *"With gentleness and reverence" (meekness & fear)*

- this is "how" we are to be apologists
- the focus is not on winning debate points over an opponent (*arguing*)
- the focus is on defending the gospel by which we live, and by which we want others to live
 - being a submissive servant of God who is meek/gentle in character (Mt. 5:5)
 - being one who always trusts God (Jas. 3:13-18)
 - showing reverence for God, His word (cp. Deut. 6:1-3)
 - text from which Jesus quoted Mt. 22:37

These character traits must always show themselves in our "apology" (defense) of the gospel to those who ask

Conclusion

The disciple of Christ is to be an "apologist"

- not making excuses for the gospel (*"I'm sorry...that's just the way it is"*)
 - something alluded to by the Lord's own disciples (Mt. 15:12)
- it is to make an honorable defense
 - serving the Lord...living the gospel truth...championing its cause
 - the Lord has never sanctioned a crass or crude spirit (Mt. 10:16)
 - yet, the faith still must be defended (Jude 3)

If the Christian does not do so in a world darkened by sin, who will?

- who will be the salt? (Mt. 5:13)
- who will be the light? (Mt. 5:14-16)

Have you set God apart in your heart, sanctified Him?

Are you always ready to defend the gospel by which you live?

Is your character meek and gentle, reverencing the One whom you defend?

"Have You Apologized?"

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#8 – Having A Place To Stand)

Introduction

Statement of Archimedes (3rd century B.C. Greek mathematician)

- "Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world."
- he proved the law of the lever by geometry
- he proved that moving the world doesn't depend on brute strength, but rather on what he requested... "A Place To Stand"



Finding such a place can be difficult...

- ...if one doesn't know where to look
- ...if one is deceived by what he thinks is such a place
- ...if such a place doesn't even exist

Theme

Apologetics requires solid ground on which to stand

- if the ground on which we currently stand gives way, we will certainly fall with it
- we sing of "solid ground"
 - [*"The Solid Rock"* (Hymns For Worship #378) => vv. 1-3 & chorus]
 - [*"Higher Ground"* (Hymns For Worship #109) => v. 1 & chorus]

On what ground do you currently stand?

Body

A) REMEMBER...WE LIVE IN THE POST-MODERN AGE

- our earlier discussion re: *The Post-Modern Age* [previous lesson]
 - the absence of absolute truth
 - the need to tolerate, accept all views, even divergent ones
 - the notion that each one decides his own "path"
- we are told today, "Any place to stand will do."
 - no one place is any better than another
 - in fact, it's up to us to make any place as secure as we want it to be
 - we can't judge, condemn the place where others choose to stand

If one place is as good as another, why are we inundated with problems, social ills, etc.?
[*marriage, family, moral, political, etc.*]

Man is not able to decide what and where the solid ground is...his perspective is limited

(Isa. 55:8-9; Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12; Mt. 7:21-23; 2 Jn. 9)

- all he'll ever find is sand, not rock

B) HAVING A PLACE TO STAND IMPLIES...

...SUCH A PLACE EXISTS

- everything should be considered when searching for a place to stand
 - God isn't afraid of man searching (**Jer. 6:16**)
- one by one, all man's inferior choices of a place to stand will fail the test, leaving only one such "place" to be the only safe ground on which to stand => THE BIBLE

An eternal God inspires an eternal word (**Lk. 16:17; Heb. 4:12-13**)
- this is the gospel we have heard preached (**1 Pet. 1:23-25**)

...SUCH A PLACE IS NEEDED

- offers the only support when the faith, *OUR FAITH*, comes under attack
 - from unbelievers (**Titus 1:10-11; Gal. 1:6-7; 3:1-3; Col. 2:6-8, 16-19**)
 - even from our own brethren (**Acts 20:28-32; 2 Pet. 2:1-3**)

God has made provision for ground that will hold up to even the strongest of human deceptions, attempts to undermine absolute truth

...SUCH A PLACE CAN BE FOUND

- because it exists and is needed, that means we can locate, stand on it
- shown by the basis on which God has always dealt with man
 - human reasoning is a Divine gift [*point made in the 1st lesson*]
 - one of the ways man is superior to all other creation (**Psa. 8:5-8**)
 - through such reasoning, we should come to realize the solidity of this ground, and the unsteadiness of all other grounds

God has used, expects us to use, this ability to see, appreciate, and apply absolute truth

As stated in the previous lesson, the Scripture has an apologetic characteristic about it

- before sending Israel into captivity for their sins, God challenged them (**Isa. 1:18**)
 - "reason" => produce your cause, present your case
 - He wanted them to see how shallow their ground was
- Jesus showed importance of knowing where one stands
 - He encouraged using evidence (**Mt. 11:4**)
 - He emphasized knowing "the doctrine" (**Jn. 7:15-17**)
- the apostles practiced, proclaimed apologetics
 - not just preaching, but challenging others re: the "ground" on which they stood
 - Paul "reasoned" always (**Acts 17:2-3; 18:4; 24:25**)
 - "reason" [*dialegomai*] => converse, discourse, dialogue
 - the apostles did not literally move the world, but they did have a tremendous impact on the world in which they lived (**Acts 17:6**)

- Christians are to engage in such activity
 - "examine everything" (1 Thess. 5:21)
 - "give a defense" (1 Pet. 3:15)
 - "contend" (Jude 3)
 - "test the spirits" (1 Jn. 4:1)

Every person needs a place to stand to be successful

- parents understand secular education to be important for their children's success
- how much more the disciple's spiritual education?

When we refuse to seek such solid ground, only failure results

- recall the Clinton White House scandals of 1998 (*adultery, lying, sophistry*)
 - *"It all depends on what the meaning of 'is' is..."*
- such should have outraged our nation
- instead, as a whole, we were unshocked & unconcerned
 - proof of the mindset of a Post-Modern World
 - when people give up the absolute standard of the word of God, any standard will do... it makes no difference
 - it becomes like water...it seeks the lowest level

Conclusion

Mt. 7:24-27

- building well = hearing & doing
- building bad = hearing and not doing
- "building the house" represents our quest to stand on certain ground
- not building on the solid Rock = a great eternal tragedy (Lk. 6:49)
- will we "dig deep" in search of solid ground? (Lk. 6:48)

The proper worldview of the Christian provides a valid vantage point (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Col. 3:1-2)

- not only can we properly view the post-modern world, we can also see the only firm place to plant our feet
- all other spots in the world are made of shifting sand

Do you appreciate the fact that God has given you a place on which to stand?

Do you stand on this ground?

EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE

(#9 – The Apologetic Value Of A Godly Life)

Introduction

One might think the only way to be an “apologist” is to be involved in *formal* defense of the gospel before unbelievers

- sermons, speeches, debates, etc.

While such activity would be a defense of the faith, it is not the only way to be an “apologist”

- there is what we might call “informal apologetics”
- a more basic way in which all can be involved...even if we can't spell or define “apologetics”

Theme

Far too often we underestimate the value of what may seem to be small things

- consider *The Parable Of The Mustard Seed* (Mt. 13:31-32)
 - great things can have small beginnings
 - small things overlooked by man are important to God

All admit that we should live exemplary, godly lives (2 Tim. 3:12; Titus 2:12)

But sometimes we don't realize the value of living that way

- we live in such a way because God commands it
- but...there is also another reason for living in such a way

There is an “apologetic value” to a godly life

Body

A) HOW IS A GODLY LIFE APOLOGETIC?

- 1st century Christians illustrate how (1 Thess. 1:2-10)
 - background of Thessalonica
 - the 2nd church started in ancient European continent (Acts 17:1-9)
 - the chief city of the entire Macedonian province
 - this means it was a center for commerce, vice, and idolatry

1) *It “sounds forth”* a statement (vv. 8-9)

- one must eventually decide to turn from sin and start serving God
- they left their prevalent idols and turned to the living God
 - imagine what all they had to leave to do so
 - all they had ever known or done
- we learn one doesn't have to give a speech to “declare” something

- 2) *It "influences"* others to follow (vv. 6-7)
 - apologetics (defending something) implies affecting others
 - one isn't an apologist to one's self
 - they received the word "in much tribulation" (v. 6; Acts 17:5)
 - they followed the apostles, the Lord (v. 6)
 - they became examples to all the believers in the Roman provinces of Macedonia & Achaia (v. 7)
 - their faith was so much of a model in this that Paul had "no need to say anything"
 - their faith had such a solid stamp of reality that Paul had no need to verify it when he preached in other places

- 3) *It "waits"* for the second coming of Christ (v. 10)
 - this is yet another area in which truth is defended
 - the gospel says the Lord is coming back, and we believe it
 - we believe the basics of the gospel (Acts 17:3)
 - these saints were waiting for the return of the resurrected Lord, and for Him to deliver them from the wrath to come on the disobedient

B) HOW DO WE DEVELOP SUCH A LIFE?

- it doesn't automatically come when one "signs up" (*i.e. obeying the gospel*)
 - even scrubs on a team wear the same uniform as the starters or stars...yet, they seldom get to play
 - the type of "uniform" we're advocating has to be developed
 - it is the adornment of the doctrine of Christ (Titus 2:10)

1) *We must make up our minds to do it*

- we are what our minds contain (Prov. 23:7a)
- it is the internal purpose or resolve to do God's will (Dan. 1:8a)
- this is "girding up the loins of our mind" (1 Pet. 1:13a)
- this is "transforming the mind" to the will of God (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:5)

2) *We develop the character that agrees with our mental decision*

- "Change banks" => deposit our treasure in the only safe place (Mt. 6:19-20)
- "Keep looking up" => not around or down, but in the direction where we have set our affections...our mind (Col. 3:1-3; cp. Ex. 2:12; Heb. 11:24-26)
- "Don't quit" => never forget this won't be over soon...it is a long distance marathon
 - we must lay sinful things aside and finish the race, keeping our eyes on the goal before us (Heb. 12:1-3; 10:36, 39)
 - only then can we successfully defend the faith
- "Grab someone's hand" => we must reach out to help someone who is struggling, or reach up to God's hand to get help ourselves
 - an admission that we cannot do this alone
 - emphasizes the need for "brotherly kindness" (2 Pet. 1:7)
 - ex. *Father Flanagan's Boys Home* [started Dec. 10, 1917 in Omaha, Nebraska]
 - their slogan => "He Ain't Heavy...He's My Brother"
 - though we oppose Catholicism, we can appreciate the spirit of this example

The 3 N.T. uses of "Christian" indicates the kind of life that can affect others in an "apologetic" way

1) Acts 11:19-26

- teaching, preaching the gospel
- many people turning to the Lord
- grace of God was evident (v. 23)
- many were being added (v. 24)
- living a godly life was a great apologetic for Christianity

2) Acts 26:24-28

- Agrippa noticed Paul's change from ungodliness (vv. 9-11) to godliness (vv. 12-18, 23, 26)
- he was "almost persuaded", not just by Paul's preaching, but also by Paul's changed life

3) 1 Pet. 4:12-16

- being willing to suffer for a cause is a strong apologetic (Heb. 11:35-40)
- it says to others *"I deem my present discomfort worth bearing in order to gain what I hope is coming in the future"* (Rom. 8:18)

Conclusion

It may be that the strongest "apology" or "apologetic" of all is not some great sermon or speech

It is faithful daily living for the Lord that exalts Him, His cause

- *showing* others that we live for Christ is the strongest defense of that for which we stand
- people would rather "see" a sermon than "hear" one any day
- it is what lightens a world darkened by sin (1 Pet. 2:9; Phil. 2:15)

We can have complete confidence in the word of God and its saving power (Rom. 1:16)

We should also have complete confidence in each other

- we aren't dumb sheep following a shepherd
- we are to be willing workers, "doing all things for the sake of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:23)
- we are to be light that others can see that will also lead them to God (Mt. 5:16)

Living a godly life, faithfully devoted to Christ, His kingdom is something all believers can do

- it may very well be the best way to "apologize" for truth