

Evidences

October through December 2020

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Purpose of our study: God desires men to believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. That belief is called Faith, and it comes from an obedient knowledge of the Word of God, the Bible. The Truth can stand up to scrutiny; therefore, we need to be ready with an answer for difficult questions on why we believe.

Class 1: The Value of Evidences

READING: Isaiah 7:10-16, Hebrews 11:1-6, John 17:17-19

CLASS POINTS: Belief is a choice. We often choose to believe important things based on evidences that are not always sound. Just because we believe something does not mean it is true. Truth exists apart from our beliefs.

QUESTIONS

1. Define the following:

FAITH
EVIDENCE
PROOF
ATHEIST
AGNOSTIC
TRUTH

2a. Briefly explain why you believe:

- a. Moscow is the capital of Russia
- b. Gravity keeps you on the ground
- c. America won World War II
- d. The sun will rise tomorrow
- e. Your family is your family
- f. An airplane you are getting into will successfully fly

2b. Which of these things can you prove? Which of them do you believe by a preponderance of evidence? Which do you believe because of a credible testimony?

3. What are three examples of things Christians believe that people who are not Christians do not believe.

- a.
- b.
- c.

4. What are some things Christians are required to believe (i.e. Hebrews 11:6, John 8:24)?

5. Is it wrong for someone to seek evidence of God, the Bible, Jesus?

6. What is TRUTH according to John 17:17-19? What is the difference between what is true and the Truth?

CONCLUSION: We use critical skills daily to learn what is true. We can apply this to our Faith

Class 2: The War of Evidences

READING: 1 Corinthians 1:18-28, Acts 17:16-32

CLASS POINTS: The western world is shaped by the ideology of materialism. This ideology is based on the concept that all things real are material; there is no spiritual reality. Obviously this is a total contradiction to the doctrine of Spirituality, which states that the Spiritual reality is more real than the physical. This has led to an ideology war against Spirituality. What few understand is that materialism is merely a worldview, and is one not always agreed upon.

QUESTIONS

1. What system of ideology would you describe the non-believer in the New Testament world to have lived under (consider Acts 17:16-18)?
2. What evidences exist for materialism (consider 2 Peter 3:3-4)? How might these same evidences testify for Spirituality?
3. How does materialism deal with the following issues:
 - The Creation
 - The Flood
 - The Exodus of Israel
 - The Miracles of Jesus
 - The Resurrection of Jesus
4. What is science? Is Christianity incompatible with science?
5. What biases from materialism would we expect to find in education systems? In news media? In governmental actions and services? In environmental concerns?
6. In what ways does the materialist ideology persecute Christianity?
7. Why should we study material evidences for spiritual truths?

CONCLUSION: What anyone believes is usually based on their worldview. Understanding this causes us to realize that all belief is a choice. Pre-supposed "truths" often prevent people from seeing "Truth".

Class 3: Evidences of an Invisible God

READING: Romans 1:16-23, Genesis 1:26-29

CLASS POINTS: One of the most important ideas about God is that He has revealed Himself. The more we learn about the universe, the more we see that it requires a Designer, and considering that truth means we can determine certain characteristics of that Designer. Yet there is only so much we can know about God by the creation. Perhaps we can learn much by the pinnacle of creation, the human being.

QUESTIONS

1. According Romans 1:20, what two characteristics of God are clearly seen in nature?
 - a. How are these characteristics seen in nature?
 - b. To what things will a materialist attribute divine characteristics?
 - c. If you did not have the Word of God, what things would you deduce about God?

2. What does it mean when people describe the universe as “orderly”?
 - a. What are some characteristics of being orderly the universe presents to us?
 - b. How does God present Himself in 1 Corinthians 14:33?

3. How might each of these fields of knowledge point to a Designer:
Mathematics
Microbiology
Astronomy

4. List some characteristics of humans that are not present in any creatures in the animal world
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

5. What are some examples of FALSE evidences given for the existence of God?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

CONCLUSION: In John 12:29 God spoke from heaven. Some heard a voice, others merely heard thunder. The universe declares that it was designed by an intelligence. Some hear a voice, while others merely hear thunder.

Class 4: Evidences of Jesus Christ

READING: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Luke 1:1-3

CLASS POINTS: Our Faith revolved around the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. There are many questions asked about Him. Did he actually live? Did He create a faith that survives to this day? Did He perform the miracles claimed? Did His disciples actually exist? Did they write the New Testament? Did He return from the dead? These are all questions that are fair and honest to ask, and answers are present for them.

QUESTIONS

1. What evidences do we accept for the existence of:
 - a. George Washington
 - b. Martin Luther
 - c. Johanne Gutenberg (inventor of the printing press)
 - d. Alexander the Great
 - e. The first man and woman (any context)

2. A Court of Law:
 - a. What is a witness? What is a “martyr”?
 - b. What is testimony?
 - c. What is a “weight of evidence”?
 - d. What is the burden of proof in a civil trial? In a criminal trial?
 - e. What is a “hostile witness”?
 - f. What is “witness credibility”?

3. The Gospel Court of Law
 - a. What is John 20:30-31 witness testimony of?
 - b. What is 1 John 1:1-2 witness testimony of?
 - c. What does John 1:7 speak of regarding testimony?
 - d. What does John 5:31 speak of regarding testimony?

4. The World Court of Law
 - a. What “hostile witness” (i.e. non-Christian) testimony of Jesus Christ exists?
 - b. How does the mere existence of Christianity testify to Jesus?
 - c. How does the martyrdom of early Christians speak to the truth of their testimony?

5. How do the “hard sayings” of Jesus attest to the reliability of the writers? How does the admission of ignorance (i.g. Mark 9:32) by the writers on some of these things attest to reliability?

CONCLUSION: Did Jesus of Nazareth exist? For any other person, the evidence of existence would be undeniable. The doubt of His existence pertains NOT to the evidence, but to the conclusion.

Class 5: The Validity of the Bible

READING: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Luke 1:1-3

CLASS POINTS: Most people do not understand the nature of the Bible. It is not one book, but two libraries of books. This library makes a number of claims about itself. It claims it was given directly by God (inspiration) in 2 Peter 1:20-21. It claims it is indestructible in 1 Peter 1:24-25. It claims to be entirely sufficient for a Christian in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. It claims it can be understood in Ephesians 3:3-4. It can be seen that God exists, and that Jesus of Nazareth and His disciples really lived. But it is the magnificent claims of the Bible (The Holy Spirit) that make the existence of God and Jesus a matter of debate.

QUESTIONS

Are the following statements true? If so, how? Can you give an example?

1. Fulfilled Prophecy: Bible predictions, (written hundreds of years before the events they predict) have come about. These predictions can be divided into those that pertain to general events in history, and those pertaining to the coming of Christ.
2. Scientific Accuracy: The Bible makes statements about nature, health, and the earth that are accurate.
3. Historical Accuracy: Ancient records of history most often are in accord with the Bible. As the study of archeology discovers new artifacts and relics, no discoveries create major conflict with the Bible.
4. Unity: The Bible, two libraries of 66 books written by at least 40 people from many cultures over 1500 years, has a unified harmonious message.
5. Survival (Integrity): Despite attempts to destroy or limit its availability, the Bible is the most widely circulated book of all time.
6. Survival (Distribution): There are more ancient and growing numbers of copies of Bible texts than any similar writings.
7. Falsifiability: The Bible contains specific details that could be ascertained by outside sources to be true or false, and has never been demonstrated false.

CONCLUSION: The Bible creates by its design an expectation to be examined and cross-examined by a truth-seeker and found to be true.

Class 6: The Bible As A History Book (Part I: Old Testament)

READING: Genesis 2:3-7, Genesis 6, 11, Daniel 1-4

CLASS POINTS: Is the Bible a history book? Not directly, as its fundamental purpose is to instill the concept of faith and grace. But history is an important part of authority and identity, so much of the Bible is written as a history book. The Bible often paraphrases history and focuses on certain important events. It is not always chronological, and sometimes passes by circumstances that the world considers important, and places importance on events the world may minimize.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you obey the laws of the United States and not some other nation? What makes you an American (if you are)?
2. How would a history of the American Revolution be written differently in the United Kingdom?
3. What parts of the Old Testament contain history of all mankind?
 - a. What events in the Bible would be common history to all mankind?
 - b. How would you expect that to appear in human histories?
4. One important record in the Bible is the narrative of the great flood. How would we be able to discern of the many flood stories that the Bible is the original upon which all others are based?
5. There are a number of nations mentioned in the Old Testament. Why would it not be reasonable to expect many to be evidenced in archaeological surveys?
6. Who are some of the world leaders mentioned in the Old Testament who also are chronicled outside of the Old Testament?
 - a. What is the significance that there are accounts of leaders from a variety of nations?
7. Why is the Temple location a matter of political concern today?
 - a. Why would some actually destroy or hide evidence of the Temple of Solomon?
8. What does this mean: "absence of evidence does not equal evidence of absence"?
 - a. What important artifacts might this apply to in the Old Testament?
 - b. Why might these artifacts be absent as an evidence?

CONCLUSION: The Old Testament can be demonstrated by every standard available to be an excellent compilation of history for a greater part of the world. Many have stood against the Bible in regards to its historical testimony and been ruined when demonstrated true.

Class 7: The Bible As A History Book (Part II: New Testament)

READING: Matthew 2, Acts 12:20-25, 18:12-17

CLASS POINTS: The New Testament is a far more limited time period than the Old (70 years verses 4-6,000). Thus the expectation might be to find less opportunity to verify facts. Yet ironically there almost seems to be more evidences present for the New Testament. People, places, events and even buildings are in the New Testament and can often even be seen today.

QUESTIONS

1. The books written by Luke are written as “*an orderly account*” (Luke 1:2).
 - a. What does this mean?
 - b. What is the particular value of the writings of Luke when seeking to ascertain the credibility of his writings?

2. What are three cities mentioned in the New Testament that are present today?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

3. How should we consider a parallel testimony of Scripture (i.e. when a secular source says the same things as the Bible)? In other words, should we give more credibility to the Bible or to the source?

4. If outside sources also state that certain rulers were ruling in the same time period as they are found in Scripture, how does this testify to the credibility of the Bible?

5. How many different Roman Governors are mentioned in the New Testament

6. How many different Herod’s are in the New Testament?

7. What records of the New Testament are by eye witnesses?

CONCLUSION: Everything about the New Testament witness bears true. It places context on multiple events and persons, and relates them to outside sources.

Class 8: Evidences of the Bible in Prophecy (General Prophecy)

READING: Daniel 2, 7; Matthew 24:1-34

CLASS POINTS: One area that Scriptures seek for us to examine for an evidence of veracity is prophecy. Many times Scriptures foretell of an event with the purpose of verifying the origin of that message and the speaker, often called a “sign” (1 Kings 13:5, Matthew 16:4). Often prophecies pertained to events in the short term (Isaiah telling Hezekiah that the Assyrian king would hear a rumor and leave – Isaiah 37:7). Sometimes prophecies spoke of events to happen centuries later (such as Isaiah predicting the coming of Cyrus of Persia 300 years later – Isaiah 44:28). We will for the sake of time simply look at two prophecies – Daniel’s vision(s) and Jesus’ predictions of the destruction of the temple.

QUESTIONS

1. How does prophecy work?
 - a. Is it clear before it happens?
 - b. What would be an example of an explained prophecy?

2. In Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 two visions occur.
 - a. What is unusual about the source of the vision in Daniel 2?
 - b. About how far apart did the two visions occur?
 - c. What was the main image of the first vision in Daniel 2?
 - d. What were the second images of in Daniel 7?
 - e. Are the visions explained? What are they seeing?
 - f. How specific are the visions in regards to:
 - (1) Leaders
 - (2) Nature of the kingdoms
 - g. Do you know of any extra-biblical information on this event?

2. Jesus prophecy in Matthew 24/Mark 14/Luke 21
 - a. What does Jesus’ prophecy (initially) point towards?
 - b. What are some specifics in Jesus’ prophecy?
 - c. Do you know of any extra-biblical information on this event?

2. Answering the skeptic:
 - a. How might a skeptic respond to these prophecies?
 - b. What are some aspects of these prophecies that refute a skeptic?
 - c. From our study of the NT and history, how does our understanding of the book of Luke help prove the time of this prophecy?

CONCLUSION: There are many prophecies of world events in the Bible. Prophecies were meant often to certify the speaker, although in the case of the Matthew 24 prophecy they were meant to save the listener.

Class 9: Evidences of the Bible in Prophecy (Messianic Prophecy)

READING: Matthew 1-2, Matthew 26-27

CLASS POINTS: The most important concept of prophecy is the theme of the Messiah. This continuity which covers the entire Bible is an important testimony to the veracity of the claims of Scripture to be from God. Scriptures about the Messiah range from generic (His purpose) to specific (where, when and how He would come (1 Peter 1:10). When Jesus was preached by His disciples, they used these prophecies to prove that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 2:27, 8:35).

QUESTIONS

1. Prophecies of Jesus' origin
 - a. From who (multiple people) would the Messiah be descended?
 - b. What three places would the Messiah come from?
 - c. What prophecies exist about the timing of the coming of the Messiah?

2. Prophecies of Jesus' ministry
 - a. What prophecies existed about John the Baptist?
 - b. What prophecies existed about Jesus' miracles?
 - c. What prophecies existed about Jesus' acceptance by the Jews?
 - d. What prophecies existed about Jesus' acceptance by Gentiles?

3. Prophecies of Jesus' death
 - a. What prophecies exist about the trial of Jesus?
 - b. What are some prophecies about Jesus' treatment before His death?
 - c. How was Jesus' prophesied to die and be buried?
 - d. How was Jesus' resurrection prophesied?

4. Answering the skeptic:
 - a. "Jesus did not rebuild the Temple"
 - b. "Jesus did not gather all of Israel back to Jerusalem"
 - c. "Jesus did not usher in a time of peace"
 - d. "Jesus did not spread a universal understanding of God"

CONCLUSION: The exact number of prophecies Jesus personally fulfilled is subject to debate. This is because some consider foreshadows and legal fulfillment as prophetic, while others see only those prophecies specifically cited in the Gospel account as prophetic. This means there are between 40 and 300 prophecies about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Class 10: Evidences of the Bible in Science (Health Laws)

READING: Leviticus 15:1-13

CLASS POINTS: The word “science” simply means “knowledge”. We use it to refer to those studies that are undertaken to increase our knowledge of the world around us. Consider that Solomon was renowned in part as a scientist (1 Kings 4:33). The Bible is clear that the ideology we live by (Spirituality) established laws and rules that nature would follow (Gen. 1:11, 1:16, 1:24 et al). The Bible is clear that man is expected to understand these rules in order to subjugate the earth (Heb. 6:7, Gen. 8:22-9:3). If the Bible is what it claims to be, then we would expect that the message of the Creator will parallel His rules of creation. First we will consider the messages on human health and behavior.

QUESTIONS

1. Consider “science” and health:
 - a. What are some practices (in your lifetime) that were thought to be healthy but are now not seen that way?
 - b. What are some foods that have changed their “health value” in your lifetime?
 - c. What changes in health have occurred in the last 100 years?
 - c. Can you think of practices that were seen as medicinal that were actually deadly?

2. Give three examples of some of the dietary laws of Moses. What would you say was the primary purpose of these laws according to the New Testament (e.g. Mark 7:19-23).
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

3. Give three examples of laws around the birth of children.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

4. Sanitation was often discussed in the Bible (Deut. 23:12-14). What problems with a lack of sanitation arise even today?

5. What might be a modern word for being isolated as unclean?

CONCLUSION: It is ironic that science is constantly changing what it claims to be healthy, and yet most people would still credit it as being a more reliable source of knowledge on health. Many Old Testament health practices have been found to be profitable to human health; none have been found to be detrimental, contrary to the best advices of science for the last few centuries.

Class 11: Evidences of the Bible in Science (The Creation)

READING: Genesis 1-2, Psalm 19:1-10

CLASS POINTS: One of the difficult areas of Biblical evidences are observations of science that seem to line up with Biblical statements. It is difficult because sometimes passages are meant figuratively and interpreted literally, or science has a flawed conclusion (e.g. the “missing day” of Joshua 10:12-13). But when an idea must be true, we should expect that there is evidence present of it to some degree. Important ideas in the Bible (such as the creation) that are literal must be true or they bring all of the Bible into doubt.

QUESTIONS

1. How can we be sure that the story of the creation of all things (Genesis 1-2) is meant to be understood as a literal event based on:
 - a. The understanding of other accounts in the Bible?
 - b. Laws and ruled established during the creation and later?

2. Describe briefly the “General Theory of Evolution” as you understand it.
 - a. What are the reasonable aspects of this theory?
 - b. What are the impossible aspects of this theory?
 - c. What parts of this theory have been observed in nature?
 - d. What parts of this theory have been reproduced in a laboratory setting?
 - e. What accounts for the popularity of this theory?

3. What is “irreducible complexity” and how does it stand as an evidence to a creator?
 - a. What would you *gestimate* the mathematic probability of the basest building block of life (simple protein- 150 amino acids) forming through blind interaction?

4. “Biological information” focuses on the problem of generating living organisms.
 - a. Why is it unlikely that non-organic substances could combine to produce the amino acids that are the building blocks of every living substance?
 - b. Why is understanding the means of passing on information in living beings through DNA important?

5. What is the “fine-tuned universe” observation?
 - a. How does mathematical probability play into this argument?
 - b. What is “suspicious probability”?
 - c. What is the “confirmatory argument”?

CONCLUSION: Why do so many people believe in evolution? The Bible repeatedly makes several claims: first, people believe what they desire to believe, not what logic leads them to believe. Second, that most people are wrong (Matthew 7:13).

Class 12: Evidences of the Bible in Geography

READING: Acts 27

CLASS POINTS: When we consider the many things that give evidence testimony to our Faith, geography is not one we often think about. Yet the geographical accuracy of the Bible is remarkable. The veracity of many other ancient documents has been accepted based on geographic evidences; the Bible has this ability as well.

QUESTIONS

1. Name five major kingdoms/nations mentioned in the Bible and their capital cities:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
2. Why might the Bible so often mention cities people visit while they are travelling?
3. What are the oldest cities mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 10?
4. What city was Paul from? What are some details of that city?
5. What are some of the roads mentioned in the Bible?
6. When Luke recorded the shipwreck of Paul in Acts 27, what details help to confirm the reality of this trip?
7. How does the geographic diversity of the Old Testament and New Testament speak to its reliability?

CONCLUSION: 19th century archaeologist William Mitchell Ramsay began his career with the assumption that the book of Acts contained geographical errors written by someone ignorant of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Many skeptical scholars believed Acts was written in the second century, and Ramsay believed no one could write with accuracy about places where events had occurred a hundred years earlier. He set out to disprove Scripture, but after he traveled throughout Asia Minor, he altered his position. Why? He found the geography presented in Acts accurate in every detail.

Class 13: Dangers of Evidences

READING: Matthew 12:39-45, John 20:25-29, 2 Timothy 3:1-9

CLASS POINTS: Evidences are a testimony to the validity of the Bible. Yet they cannot be the basis of our Faith, and we cannot use them to be the basis of another's faith. As well, evidences are not Truth (John 17:17), and can be false or deceiving. The great danger in using evidences is that we often desire for them to be true, suspending critical judgment and investigation. Even when it is a lie that supports truth, it is still a lie.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the only source of faith?

2. What are the dangers of finding other sources of faith such as:
 - a. Evidences
 - b. People
 - c. Churches

3. People often cite modern miracles as evidence of our faith. Why is this problematic?

4. What are some logical steps to take when given something that appears to be evidence of our faith? In other words, how can we make a proper judgment of their veracity?

5. What are some spiritual things for which we are told there will never be evidence?

6. What are some poor evidences or arguments against evolution and atheism?

7. Why would Jesus say it was evil to seek for a sign?

8. How does the Bible speak of handling those for whom there is no sufficient evidence?

CONCLUSION: The greatest evidences of our faith are love (John 13:35) and hope (1 Peter 3:15). We need to accept that believing is a choice most people will not make (Matthew 7:13-14).