

## WHY I AM A CHRISTIAN - Part three

Sunday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #1216

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### WHY I BELIEVE IN THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

**Hebrews 1:1-2** - "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."

**1 Peter 1:3** - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...."

This is the third in a series of messages dealing with "*Why I Am A Christian.*" There are solid reasons for faith in this age of unbelief. This series sets out to elaborate on why *I* am committed to the Christian faith. I hope it helps many of you establish your **own** commitment to faith in an age that wars against God and, I think, especially commitment to Jesus Christ, God the Son.

In the first message we examined the false hope of **relativism** - the idea that truth and morality are in the eye of the beholder. We started there because there's really no point in investigating any claim to truth if absolute truth is an illusion. In other words, it really makes no difference where you throw the dart if you can simply paint the bulls-eye wherever the dart sticks.

Relativism has no way of **defining** what is true or untrue, right or wrong, up or down. Not only does the Christian faith not function in the climate of relativism, but, if one is absolutely consistent, nothing else does either.

Then, in the second message, we looked at the reasons for belief in God. We looked at the issue of the existence of the universe all around us - why there is **something** instead of **nothing**. We studied the complexity and order of the **design** of the world we live in. We studied the **moral nature** of human beings - all human beings.

All of these factors point to an intelligent, moral designer and creator. These are some of the reasons, along with others, the Bible says "**The fool says** [continuous present tense] **in his heart, 'There is no God.'**" (Psalm 14:1a). Maintaining disbelief isn't easy. To maintain disbelief the fool must **play dumb** toward God. He has to **tell himself** ("**...the fool says in his heart...**") there is no God, when, at least initially, he knows better. The fool, according to the Apostle Paul, must, at least initially, "**suppress**" what is obvious about God in this world. Disbelief isn't so much **ignorance** as it is **rejection**.

Today I want to take this argument much farther. I want to move beyond merely establishing reasons for belief in God - **any** God or **supreme Being** - to belief in the God of the **Bible** - the God of the **Christian** Scriptures and faith.

#### 1) GOD'S GENERAL REVELATION OF HIMSELF STILL GOES OUT UNIVERSALLY AND CONTINUOUSLY

**Psalm 19:1-4** - "To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. [2] Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. [3] There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. [4] Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun...." There you have it. The heavens and all they contain reveal God. This is not a **verbal** message ("**There is no speech...**" 3), but it is a **universal** message. There simply are no places that don't come under the category of being under "**the heavens.**" The Psalmist says this revelation is extended through "**all the earth**" (4).

Not only does this general revelation of God reach **everywhere**, but it is **continuously** spreading the message - "**The heavens declare the glory of God...**" (1). The heavens are continuously telling of God's glory to **all** people in the **present tense**. This message comes fresher than your morning newspaper with each new sunrise. Every time a star glows or a tomato grows, God is advertizing. God is the best advertizer in the whole world. He reveals His glory anew every moment of every day.

#### 2) BY THEMSELVES, ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE FROM GENERAL REVELATION MISREPRESENT

## THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR THE EXISTENCE FOR GOD AND HIS INVOLVEMENT IN OUR LIVES

If God is revealed through His creation *everywhere* and *continuously* why are so many people still unconvinced as to His existence? Is it because, while there may be *some* evidence, there is simply not quite *enough* evidence? You might be under that impression. In fact, if all we had to go by were the kinds of arguments we looked at about the *existence* of our world, the *design* of the world, and the *moral nature* of our own beings, you might conclude that our ability to *find* God depends on our ability, much like a detective, to *deduce* God from whatever evidence we could find around us.

And this is precisely where the revelation of the God of the *Christian Scriptures* comes into full significance. He is the *"God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 1:3). That is a phrase full of meaning and profound impact. The God of Biblical revelation and Christian faith is not merely the best *deduction of human reasoning*. He is not the projection of our own human initiative. He *acts* and He *speaks*. Those are the two most important things you can know about the Biblical God.

Not only is He not hard to *find* - He actually *intrudes*. We don't have to *discover* this God. He *comes* to us. He *initiates* contact. The Bible says He *speaks*. He *seeks us out!* This is what the writer of Hebrews was trying to say: **Hebrews 1:1-2** - "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."

This is one of the primary things we affirm about the God of the Scriptures - the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - *He has spoken*. Do you remember how the Psalmist described the general revelation of God found in the existence and nature of the world around us? He said something very important:

**Psalm 19:1-3** - "To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. [2] Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. [3] *There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.*"

There are no *words* in that general revelation. But God has not left us trying to figure out this wordless revelation of Himself. The writer of Hebrews says we don't have to try to *deduce* truth from this silent, general revelation.

Hear what is central to the Christian understanding of God: God has not only *created*, He has *spoken*. He has spoken through many prophets. He has spoken through His Apostles. He has sometimes spoken through angelic messengers. And, most completely, He has spoken finally and decisively through His own Son, Jesus Christ.

So we don't have to *deduce* our way to God through all the philosophic arguments, as true as they may be. God *speaks*. God *initiates*. God *communicates*. With the God of the Scriptures we are brought face to face, not only with what we can *contemplate* about God, but with what God has *said* about Himself and us.

So the revelation from God is full and complete. Why are so many people - like those described by the Psalmist - telling themselves in their own heart there is no God? What has gone wrong here? Why doesn't *everyone* know God?

Those questions bring us right up to the *core* of the true meaning and relevance of the Christian message for today's world:

### 3) GOD IS ONLY KNOWABLE WITHIN CERTAIN SPIRITUAL AND MORAL CONDITIONS

It is simply not possible to theorize about God's existence at an impersonal distance. God has not made access to Himself possible under those conditions. Because of our sin and rebellion *against* God mankind always *distorts* the content of general revelation *about* God. The revelation of God in creation and our own nature is not used *honestly* because of our sin. The fault is not in the *evidence*, but in *ourselves*:

**Romans 1:18-23, 28** - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known

about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles....1:28.... And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”

God’s general revelation of Himself in creation and our own nature doesn’t *function* as it would if we were not sinners. Now, because of his sin, man must *replace* the God of creation with gods of his own making. As Paul says, he “...*exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles*”(Romans 1:23).

In other words, as Carl Henry wrote in his brilliant old book, Notes on the Doctrine of God: “*Man the sinner can live a ‘comfortable’ existence only by making the evidence of general revelation point to something less than an almighty, holy God who condemns his moral revolt.*”

Remember those words because they fit *exactly* with David’s description of the man who denies God in His heart - Psalm 14:1 - “*To the choirmaster. Of David. The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’* [And then we see the *reason* for this self-deception] **They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.**”

That’s why general revelation only serves to *condemn*, never to *redeem*. That’s why people will never come to God through theistic proofs for his existence. God can’t be reached that way by sinful people because, while they may want to deal mentally with the *concept* of God in their *minds*, they don’t want to submit their *wills* to God.

Here’s what this all means: God is only knowable in the context of human *repentance*. If you are looking for God this morning, you won’t find Him in the stars or the trees or the theories of our deepest minds. There is nothing *wrong* with these arguments. If they were presented to people *without* sin they would carry considerable weight because then we would be people needing only *information*.

But we *are* sinners. The reason the sinner can’t *find* God is the same reason the shoplifter can’t *find* the police. Sinners aren’t honestly *looking* for God. Like the Apostle Paul said, they distort and remake God on their own terms. That’s why *information* alone (while logically consistent) can’t, by itself, bring us to God. We need *redemption*. We need the God and Father of our *Lord Jesus Christ*. Because we’re sinners, we can’t know God apart from Jesus Christ - “*No man comes to the Father but by Me.*”

If you want to know God this morning, you will have to know Him in the context of *repentance* and *faith in Jesus Christ*. He will not be known on any other terms. This is the message of the church for the religions of the world. This is why we must take the gospel to people already committed to their own religion. Hear it loud and clear. Christianity *is*, and must always *be*, a *proselytizing religion*. This is the message for the intellectual struggling with how to *find* God, and who can’t understand why all his theories and proofs are leaving his soul unconvinced and his heart empty.

What the Scriptures are saying is this: Your problem and mine isn’t one of merely *proving* God. Because God has *spoken*, and God has *acted* redemptively in this world, we must all do the same two things to know God:

- a) ***We must listen to what God has said.*** God has not only *created* - He has *spoken*. We must give His message proper weight in our minds and hearts. You can’t survive on someone else’s religious faith. Hear God speak for yourself. Know and heed His word. Allow His Word to *displace* your sinful rebellion and prejudice against Him.
- b) ***We must come to Christ and forsake our sin.*** There is a *moral component* to knowing God. And there is only one solution to our sin. If you want to know God, you must come to Him *through* Jesus Christ: 1 John 2:23 - “**No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the**

**Father also.”**

If you are searching for God this morning, if you don't know Him, He has much more to give you than proof of His existence. He offers you His love and grace. He wants to give you His pardon and His peace. He brings eternal life as a gift. But you can only know Him through Jesus Christ. If you reject Jesus Christ this morning, you will never come to find God. Open your heart today. He will fill, not only your mind with truth, but your heart with His forgiving mercy and renewing love.