

Defend Your Faith

Lesson 2

IS THERE A GOD?

“and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him” (Hebrews 11:6)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. We Must Be Ready To Give an Answer (1 Peter 3:15).

1. Many believers today are afraid to examine their beliefs. Many want to leave the debate for the scholars to answer.
2. Others believe that “faith” does not go together with “proof,” “reason,” or “evidence” (e.g. “a leap of faith”). As the little boy said, “Faith believes in that which you know is not true.” Review Lesson 1.

B. The Importance of This Question.

1. This is one of the most profound questions that man has ever asked. All other questions in life are irrelevant if God does not exist.
2. This is one of the most fundamental questions that man has ever asked. All facets of life are controlled by the answer to this question.
3. This is one of the most difficult questions that man has ever asked. Were you there at the beginning of time? Can you see God today?

C. Why Discuss This Question?

1. For some people, God is real; for others, God is not real:
 - a) Theism and deism = lit. “God”
 - b) Atheism = lit. “no God”
 - c) Agnosticism = lit “no knowledge”
 - d) Skepticism = lit. “inquiring”
 - e) Infidel = lit. “not believing”
2. If God were not real, everything in the world would change. Some consequences:
 - a) **History** – our past is a big question mark; our present has no purpose; our future is certain annihilation.
 - b) **Politics** – government rules over the people with a dictatorship or anarchy; people serve government.
 - c) **Ethics** – man is the highest authority; no absolute right or wrong (relativism); man is not responsible or accountable for his actions.
 - d) **Science** – the universe originated by a “Big Bang”; it is governed by impersonal laws of nature alone; man is subject to nature and science alone.
 - e) **Religion** – the worship of God is a sign of immaturity and wishful thinking; the worship of things and of self is the height of maturity.

- f) **Meaning** – no meaning or hope in life; pessimism; cynicism; suicide (see the quotes by Voltaire, Goethe, Renan, Nietzsche, Ingersoll, Twain, and Russell in *I Believe Because*, Batsell Barrett Baxter, pages 75-78).
- 3. Many believe in “gods” (small “g”), but not the God of the Bible.
 - a) A foundational question is, “What do we mean by ‘God’?”
 - b) The God of the Bible who is a living, loving, personal, transcendent, and infinite Creator, is often not accepted by people today.
 - c) The “gods” of Greek mythology and World Religions (idols) are the products of a vivid imagination.
 - d) The “god” of Pantheism and the New Age Movement is a god who all in all (every particle of the universe is god).
 - e) The “gods” of Science-Fiction are super-intelligent alien beings in UFO’s.
- 4. Many believe God is real theoretically, but not real practically.
 - a) Greek mythology and deism believe in a God who exists but does not touch one’s life.
 - b) There is a modern acceptance of God in our “Christian nation”, but many do not worship God or take the Bible seriously. This is what we would call “practical atheism”. We say, “In God we trust” and “One nation under God”, but many do not live like it (see Psalm 10:4; 14:1ff; 36:1ff; 53:1ff; Romans 1:21,28; Titus1:16).
 - c) How can we make God real in our life?
 - (1) Obey him as creator (Romans 1:20ff).
 - (2) Obey him as provider (Acts 17:25).
 - (3) Obey him as savior (Ephesians 2:12).
- 5. Why are some people atheists?
 - a) Some do not have a wholesome respect for objective authority.
 - b) Some are filled with pride and want to be their own “god”.
 - c) Some want a free morality without laws and rules.
 - d) Some have put their trust in professed believers who in turn become unfaithful and so they distrust all religion.

II. PRESENTING YOUR CASE.

A. The Beginning of the Universe.

- 1. Three questions must be asked:
 - a) Did the universe have a beginning or not?
 - b) Is the universe caused or uncaused?
 - c) Was that beginning personal or impersonal (natural)?
- 2. Beginning or not?
 - a) Many agree that the universe had a beginning. The scientific laws of the expanding universe and the decay of the universe (Newton’s Second Law of Thermodynamics, or Law of Entropy) demonstrate a beginning point in the universe.
 - b) Atheistic scientists (“Big Bang”) and Bible writers (Genesis 1:1; Acts 17:24) are agreed that the universe had a beginning.

3. Caused or uncaused?
 - a) Many agree that there was a cause because everyone sees law and order in the universe. The universe didn't "just happen". The universe did not create itself out of nothing because from nothing comes nothing.
 - b) The disagreement is over the cause: *what* ("Big Bang") or *who* (God)? Many agree that *something* (matter) or *someone* (intelligent designer) has always existed and that the universe did not appear out of nothing. For example, Carl Sagan said, "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be" (*Twelve Compelling Truths*, Dewayne Bryant, page 21). Either *something* caused the beginning or *someone* caused the beginning.
 4. Personal or impersonal?
 - a) Many agree that the universe includes personal beings with personality (thought, emotion, conscience, consciousness, reason, self-awareness, aesthetics, etc.). Did all this come really from just tiny bits of matter?
 - b) Question: How could *impersonal* matter (particles at the sub-atomic level) take on a *personal* nature? If there is no spiritual or non-physical part of the universe, where did personality come from? Since like begets like, some personality had to be present at the beginning to beget personality. The atheistic scientist has no reasonable answer for this. The Bible answer is: "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:1).
 5. Conclusion: The universe had a personal, caused beginning. The two classical arguments discussed below support this conclusion.
- B. Two Classical Arguments (Proofs) of God's Existence.
1. The Cosmological Argument. This is the argument from cause and effect. There can be no effect without a cause.
 - a) We believe in God because every movement has a mover and every effect has a cause. Since from nothing, nothing comes, and there is something (a creation), there must be a cause (a Creator). This is the basic argument of Hebrews 3:4: "*For every house is built by someone, but he that built all things is God.*" Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274) was one individual who set forth this argument in his work, *Summa Theologica*.
 - b) There are only three choices that account for the existence of a universe:
 - (1) It is not eternal, but it created itself from nothing. This choice violates the basic law of non-contradiction. The universe would have to exist and not exist at the same time. Nothing can exist prior to itself to bring itself into existence. For something to *be*, there must be *someone* or *something* to give it the power of *being*.
 - (2) It is eternal, and therefore had no Creator. This choice is held among the naturalistic scientists of our day. According to them, matter has always existed and at one point in time created the universe through a "black hole" and a "big bang". (This current theory was advanced by Steven Hawking on a program called "Curiosity" on The Discovery Channel, 2011.)
 - (3) It is not eternal, but was created by *someone* outside of itself. This choice is held among the creationists of our day (and Bible writers). God did not use pre-existing matter to create the universe (Hebrews 11:1-3).

2. The Teleological Argument. This is the argument from design. Every design demands a designer. Every natural law must have a lawgiver.
 - a) The intricate design in the universe could not have been created by random processes, accident, chaos, or chance (the scientist's "Big Bang"). Consider the design found in a watch, a computer, a cell-phone, an I-Pad, and then apply that concept to the vast, complex, orderly and precise universe around us. Some atheists, like Richard Dawkins, refuse to see this design and instead say that the apparent design in the universe is only an illusion. Other atheists, like Anthony Flew, came out of unbelief by accepting the argument from design (see *There Is A God*, Anthony Flew, Harper One, 2007).
 - b) Intelligible order (design) can either be the product of random chance or intelligent design. However, design is not the product of random chance because *less* order cannot cause *more* order. Design is the product of a mind, a designer; therefore, the universe is the product of an intelligent Designer (God).
 - c) Design is the basic argument of the Psalmist (19:1) and Paul (Romans 1:19-20). Thomas Aquinas also set forth this argument.
 - d) There is evidence of intricate and complex design all over the universe:
 - (1) Design of the heavens (Psalm 19:1-2; Romans 1:20) – size of the Milky Way Galaxy, the distance of the earth from the sun (93 million miles), the earth's axis (23.5 degrees), the distance of the moon from the earth, etc.
 - (2) Design of the human body (Psalm 139:13-14; Proverbs 20:12) – the body systems, the eye, the cell, DNA, etc.
 - (3) Design of animals (Job 38-39) – the Australian mallee fowl, the bombardier beetle, salmon, etc.
 - e) Not only is there intricate design in the universe, but there is also *irreducible complex design*. In 1996, Michael Behe, a molecular biologist, set forth the fact of irreducible complexity found in molecular machines. In his book, *Darwin's Black Box*, Behe demonstrates how a bacteria flagellum operates as an outboard motor to propel the bacteria along. The flagellum is a rotary device that makes use of a long tail (propeller), a drive shaft, a motor, a stator, and a bushing. Like a mousetrap, the bacteria flagellum is a prime example of irreducible complexity.
3. Miscellaneous Arguments.
 - a) The Ethical – Moral Argument. Many believe in God because of the innate sense of "ought" or morality (reason, innate sense of right and wrong, conscience) within each of us (Romans 2:14-15). This unique nature of mankind, which is in no way material, implies a moral creator, God. We have a part of us (the conscience) that is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Morality (coming from mind) cannot come from non-moral (physical) matter. C.S. Lewis set forth this argument for God (see his book, *Mere Christianity*). If the atheist is right and there is nothing but a material universe, how do you account for the following:
 - (1) The origin of morality?
 - (2) The motivation for morality?
 - (3) The defining of morality?
 - (4) The ultimate consequence of morality?

- b) The General – Intuitional Argument. Many defend the existence of God upon the incurably religious nature of mankind. Most of mankind has some belief in a higher being and worships that being. Paul set forth this argument in Romans 1:19ff. Augustine (300-400 A.D.) also set forth this argument for God.
 - c) The Ontological Argument. It has been argued that man cannot have an idea, in the absolute sense, about that which does not exist; there is the idea of God; therefore, God exists (“ontology” is the branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of being or existence). Anselm of Canterbury (A.D. 1033-1109) first set forth this argument.
 - d) The Desire Argument. Many defend the existence of God upon the innate desire in mankind that nothing in the universe can satisfy but God (eternity, life after death, etc.).
 - e) The Esthetic Argument. Many defend the existence of God upon the presence of beauty in the universe and man’s unique ability to appreciate that beauty.
 - f) The Experiential Argument. Many defend the existence of God upon the testimony of the masses that have experienced God in their lives.
4. Evaluation of the Two Classical Arguments.
- a) In my judgment, the cosmological and teleological arguments are the most effective and the ones that even atheistic scientists now recognize as valid.
 - b) These two arguments are also used by Bible writers (Hebrews 3:4; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20; Acts 14:17; 17:22ff).

C. Two Historical Arguments.

- 1. The Bible Argument. Another proof for the existence of God is the Bible itself. If the Bible writers say God is, and they are true, then God is. The Bible writers are true (Luke 1:1-4; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 John 1:1-4); therefore, God is. (See Lesson 3 in this series.)
- 2. The Jesus Argument. Another proof for the existence of God is Jesus Christ. If Jesus is God, then God is. Jesus is God (John 1:1,14; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3); therefore, God is. If God has been seen, then God is. God has been seen in the person of Jesus (John 1:18); therefore, God is. (See Lesson 4 in this series.)

III. ANSWERING OBJECTIONS.

A. Objection #1: I Cannot Believe in a God That I Cannot See.

- 1. For atheists to prove that there is no God, they must have all power, know all things and be in all places. These are the very attributes of God himself! The atheist bears the “burden of proof” that God does not exist. To do this, he must know everything in the universe that can be known. This he cannot do! We don’t give an atheist a free pass on the need for evidence. If God does not exist, give us the evidence of his non-existence.
- 2. Isaac Asimov once wrote: “Emotionally I am an atheist. I don’t have the evidence to prove that God doesn’t exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn’t that I don’t want to waste my time” (*Defending Your Faith*, page 21). “I didn’t see God anywhere in the heavens” (Yuri Gagarin, Soviet Cosmonaut, April 12, 1961).
- 3. Can the existence of God be proved? Yes and No. What kind of proof are we talking about? There are two kinds of proof:
 - a) Scientific proof. God *cannot* be measured in a test-tube or placed under a microscope. There are no scientific, *visible* proofs of God’s being.
 - b) Inferential or evidential proof. God *can* be demonstrated by different arguments and lines of evidence. There is *prima facie* evidence (adequate

evidence) for God. *Prima facie* (literally, “first face”) means that on first examination, a matter appears to be self-evident from the facts.

4. “I cannot believe in something that I cannot see!” What about thoughts or emotions (like love), can you see them or measure them? What about electricity, sound waves, magnetism, or gravity? Can you see them? No, and yet you believe in them because you see the evidence of their operation.
- B. Objection #2: If God Exists, Why Doesn't He Just Show Himself?
1. First, God has already shown himself in nature (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20) and Jesus Christ (John 1:1,14,18).
 2. Second, God does not have to show himself in ways that man requires.
 3. Third, God showing himself will not guarantee that a person will believe in his existence (Exodus 4:1,8,9; Luke 22:67).
- C. Objection #3: If God Created All Things, Who Created God? Or, If God Caused All Things, Who Caused God?
1. At some point in time there must be a first cause. Moreover, the first cause must be self-existent and transcend above the universe. Thus, *something* (matter) or *someone* (spirit) has always existed to be the first cause of our own existence. Which is more reasonable to believe, that matter is eternal or that spirit is eternal?
 2. It is more reasonable to believe that *someone* (God) has always existed (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 90:2; Proverbs 8:22ff; Hebrews 1:10). God is an eternal Spirit (Exodus 3:14; Deuteronomy 33:27; John 4:24; 5:26; Revelation 4:10). God, as Creator, is outside of his creation, and therefore, does not need anyone or anything to create him.
- D. Objection #4: God Is Just A Human Invention Like All of Our Fairy Tale Figures.
1. This objection was advanced by Sigmund Freud in his book *The Future of an Illusion*. Supposedly, mankind wished God into existence because of the fear of nature, fellow-man, or death. This objection has been set forth recently by Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion* and by Dean Hamer in his book *The God Gene*. Many atheists say that God is simply a crutch invented by weak men who have a hard time coping with life.
 2. This objection assumes two things: 1) God does not exist; and 2) beliefs of comfort are false beliefs.
 3. Sigmund Freud's hypothesis was never tested on people who believed in God!
 4. This objection cuts both ways. If the believer wishes God into existence, does the unbeliever wish God out of existence? Man's pride in his accomplishments often leads to self-sufficiency, independence, autonomy and self-worship. He says, “God is dead” or “there is no God” (Psalm 14:1). Some refuse to have God in their knowledge (Romans 1:28).
 5. Desires come from needs that can actually be satisfied with something or someone that is real.
 6. Why would man invent a God who makes ethical demands upon him that run counter to his nature? Why would man invent a God who punishes his sin?
- E. Objection #5: Atheism Does Not Rely Upon A Blind Faith in God. It Relies Upon Science and Facts.
1. The atheist is an unbeliever in God, but he is not a man without beliefs. He is a believer. He has faith. An atheist is a believer in his own set of improvable assumptions. He believes that:

- a) God does not exist. (Remember, he cannot say, “I *know* there is no God.”)
- b) Matter is eternal, or somehow matter created itself - something came from nothing.
- c) Life spontaneously came from non-life (contrary to the Law of Biogenesis).
- d) Design (order) came from random chance, chaos, and non-intelligent accidents.
- e) Conscience evolved from non-conscience, moral evolved from non-moral, and intelligence evolved from non-intelligence.

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. We Must Choose the Path to Travel: Belief in God or Belief in No God.
- B. Either God Exists or He Does Not. If We Believe in a God That Does Not Exist, Then No Amount of Faith Will Create Him. If We Don't Believe in a God That Does Exist, Then No Amount of Unbelief Will Make Him Go Away.
- C. Either Way There is Belief. Which Belief is More Reasonable? Which Belief Has the Evidence to Support It? Belief in God Rests Upon Reasonable Evidence. It Is Foolish To Say That There Is No God (Psalm 14:1).
- D. There Are Basically Three Kinds of People in the World Today:
 - 1. Those who have sought God and found him – they are reasonable and happy (Isaiah 55:6).
 - 2. Those who are seeking God and have not yet found him – they are reasonable, but unhappy (Acts 17:27).
 - 3. Those who neither seek God nor find God – they are unreasonable and unhappy (Romans 1:28).
- E. Seek God, Find Him, and Be Happy Today (Matthew 7:7-8)!
- F. Do You Have the Will to Believe Today (John 7:17)?