

Faith and Evidence

Evidence for Christianity Session 1

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1. Why this session?
 - a. Because large parts of the Christian community do not believe evidence is important to faith
 - b. Because young people are leaving Christianity because no one gave them evidence, Barna poll
 - The church is overprotective and fails to expose people to anti-Christian ideas
 - The church's teaching is shallow
 - The church is antagonistic to science and fails to help believers interact with scientific claims
 - The church treats sexuality simplistically and judgmentally
 - The church makes exclusivist claims
 - The church is dismissive of doubters

2. What do we mean by "evidence"?
 - a. Something that would give us a reason to believe
 - b. Eyewitness testimony recorded in history, including the Bible as historical documents
 - c. Archaeological artifacts
 - d. Evidence that Christian allegiance to Jesus as Lord makes a difference
 - e. Evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life

3. Why should we give evidence for Christianity?
 - a. Jesus offered evidence
 - b. The Father offered evidence
 - c. The Holy Spirit offered evidence

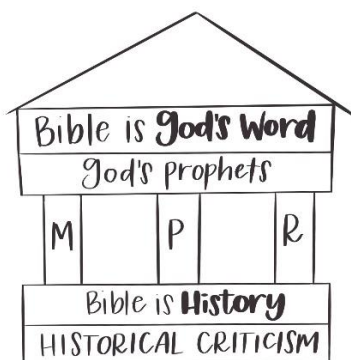
4. Jesus gave evidence
 - a. Miracles
 - Mark 2:1-12 Healing the paralytic - "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins...I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."
 - Jn 20:30, 31. Many sign "... many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."
 - Acts 2:22 Attested by miracles, mighty works, signs - "Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst..."
 - Healing the blind, lepers, raising Lazarus from the dead, feeding 5000.
 - b. Fulfilled Prophecy
 - Luke 24:27. Prophecies about the Messiah – "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."
 - Luke 13:33; Matt 16:21, 17:22; Mk 8:31. Prophesied His own death and resurrection
 - c. The Resurrection
 - Acts 1:3 "... He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God."

5. The Father (Majestic Glory) gave evidence
 - a. Angels at Jesus birth – "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news." Lk 1:19. "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David; and he will reign

- over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” Lk 2:32. “...for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Lk 2:11.
- b. Voice from heaven at Jesus baptism - “Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are my beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”” Mk 1:9-13. See also Matt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21-23; Jn 1:29-34.
 - c. Voice from the cloud at the Transfiguration – “This is my beloved son, with whom I am well-pleased, listen to Him. Matt 17:1-8. See also Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36.
 - d. Peter was eye-witness to this approval at the Baptism and the Transfiguration. II Pet 1:16-21.
6. The Holy Spirit gave evidence
- a. Zacharias prophesying through the Holy Spirit about John the Baptist “And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins...” Lk 1:76, 77. See Mal 3:1.
 - b. Like a dove at Jesus’s baptism - “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him...” Jn 1:29-34.
 - c. Through the Apostles – some examples
 - The Twelve – Acts 1:8 “...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...”
 - The Twelve – Acts 2:43 “...many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles...”
 - Peter & John heal lame beggar – Acts 3:7 “...immediately his feet and ankles were strengthened...”
 - Peter detects Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit – Acts 5:3 “...why has Satan filled your heart to lie...”
 - Peter & John impart the Holy Spirit – Acts 8:15,17 “...prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.” “Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.”
 - Peter raises Dorcas from the dead – Acts 9:40 – “‘Tabatha arise’ and she opened her eyes...he presented her alive.”
 - Paul cast out spirits – Acts 16:18 “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.”
 - Paul’s miracles – Acts 19:11 “God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands Paul.”
 - Paul raised Euticus – Acts
 - d. Through the church – some examples
 - Stephen. Acts 6:8 – “...performing great wonders and signs among the people.”
 - Phillip. Acts 8:13 – Simon the sorcerer “continued on with Philip and he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.”
 - Phillips daughters. Acts 21:9 - Phillips four daughters prophesied
 - Timothy. I Tim 4:14 – “Do not neglect the spiritual gift that is in you, which was given to you when the prophets spoke and the elders laid their hands on you.”
7. The Holy Spirit gives evidence today
- a. Springs of Living Water. “He who believes in me, as the scripture said, ‘From his inmost being will flow rivers of living water.’” Jn 7:38. See Jer. 17:13 where God is called “the fountain of living water”
 - b. Love, joy, peace in the church. “...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control...” Gal 5:22. When the church demonstrates this fruit, it is evidence to the community. Compare “by this shall men know that you are my disciples that you love one another” Jn 13:35.
 - c. Greater works than Jesus. “...whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these...” Jn 14:2.
 - d. Power over unclean spirits. “The seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.” Lk 10:17. See also
8. Several claims are supported by miraculous evidence -- to bring faith (belief)
- a. Belief that Jesus rose from the dead

- b. Belief that in the Father's house are many mansions
 - c. Belief that Jesus's teachings are true, that he has power on earth to forgive sins.
 - d. Belief that Scripture is God-breathed
9. The vocabulary of faith
- a. The Greek noun *pistis* (faith) and the verb *pisteuo* (to believe) are from the same root. So that "I have faith" and "I believe" can be used interchangeably.
 - b. However, "faith" and "believe" are both used in several ways that should not be confused.
 - c. "Faith/believe" can be used of **belief in facts** such as God exists, or Jesus rose from the dead. In this sense the demons believe that there is one God and tremble (Jn 2:19), but that is not saving faith.
 - d. Saving faith involves **personal trust** enough to **accept Jesus as Lord** of life and act on it.
 - e. Therefore, to say "I believe because of faith" is a nonsense statement equivalent to "I believe because of belief."
10. Saving faith comes through hearing (credible evidence) that results in declaring Jesus as Lord. Saving faith involves intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel as well as personal trust in Jesus as Lord.
- a. Rom 10:14, 17 "How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher. ... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."
 - b. Jn 2:19 "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder."
 - c. Rom 10:9 "... if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."
 - d. Illustration: Blondin the tightrope walker balancing a wheel barrow over Niagara Falls.
11. Evangelism involves persuasion
- a. Cor 5:11 "... knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men..."
 - b. I Pet 3:15 "... always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence..."
12. Faith is empty if the events didn't happen
- a. I Cor 15:14 "... if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith is also in vain."
13. Eyewitness testimony
- a. II Pet 1:16-21 "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased"—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So, we have the prophetic word made more sure..."
14. Faith is contrasted to sight
- a. II Cor 5:7 "...for we walk by faith not by sight."
 - b. Jn 20:27 "... reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."
 - c. Jn 20:29 "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."
 - d. Heb 11:1 "... conviction of things not seen."
 - e. Hymn: It Is Well with My Soul – And Lord haste the day when my faith shall be sight

15. Faith is contrasted to doubt
- Jas 1:2-8 Trials produces endurance. "But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."
16. Some common misunderstandings
- Faith in Eph 2:8 is not a gift; the gift is salvation. "For by grace you have been saved, through faith (f), and that, not of yourselves, it (n) is the gift of God..." If Paul had wanted to say that faith was the gift, he would have made the word "it" to be feminine (f) in the original Greek to match the gender of "faith". However, everything is a gift from God, so in that sense faith also is a gift.
 - Faith in I Cor 12:8 is not saving faith but a gift to perform miracles. "Faith" is listed as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Notice that faith is in a list of other gifts such as miracles and prophecy
17. Prophecy is speaking for God
- II Pet 1:16-21 "... no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation (Gk "origin") for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."
 - Heb 1:1-4 "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets ... has spoken to us in His Son..."
 - Luke 24:25-27 "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."
18. The evidence is not circular reasoning. The Bible as history is used as evidence for the miracles, fulfilled prophecy, and the resurrections. These miraculous events are evidence that the writers of the Bible were speaking for God and that Jesus is the Son of God.



Helpful References

Cottrell, Jack. The Reasons for Our Hope. Cincinnati: Christian Restoration Association, 2020.

Halley, Henry. Halley's Bible Handbook: With the New International Version. Completely revised and expanded 25th edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.