

# Evidence and Faith

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## Why should I care about evidences?

In the year 1799 the Royal Navy cutter the *Sparrow*, sailing in the Caribbean, hailed the American brig the *Nancy*. The British suspected the *Nancy* of illicit trade and piracy, but when they captured the brig they found not a scrap of incriminating evidence among her papers. Rather than release the *Nancy* the British brought the *Nancy* into the port of Jamaica where they presented the case to the authorities.

Meanwhile another vessel, the *Ferret*, which was a tender of the British frigate *Abergavenny*, had been cruising in the same waters. While off the coast of Haiti, the officer in charge noticed a dead bullock in the water, surrounded by sharks. He gave orders for the bullock to be towed alongside the ship. Crewmen then succeeded in catching one of the sharks. It proved to be an unusually large one, and when opened, they discovered in its stomach, a parcel of papers, tied around with string.

The *Ferret's* officer found that these papers (which still can be seen in the Institute Museum of Jamaica) related to the activities of a ship called the *Nancy*, and thinking that they might serve a useful purpose, the officer preserved them till he reached Kingston, which was his next port-of-call. The *Ferret* arrived there just as the case of the *Nancy* came before the court.

The papers were produced in a Vice Admiralty court in Jamaica to prove that the *Nancy* was engaged in activity other than that claimed by her captain. With this evidence the court ruled that the *Sparrow* was entitled to the prize money and the captain and crew of the *Nancy* suffered dismay rather than the joy of release. The papers which they had thrown overboard proved to be enough evidence to convict them of their misdeeds.<sup>1 2</sup>

So, is evidence important? Yes. The captain and crew of the *Nancy* thought it was important enough to throw it

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<sup>1</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (pp. 1118–1119). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Society for Nautical Research, <https://snr.org.uk/tale-nancy-brig/>

overboard in an attempt to conceal their guilt from the captain of the *Sparrow*, but the appetite of a shark and the reliability of the captain of the *Ferret* proved to be their undoing.

The writer's of the Gospels also cared about evidence. They presented their narrations at the risk of contradiction by their opponents and offered their testimony as factual evidence of what they had seen and heard. The Apostle Peter cared enough about evidence to say,

### **God offered proofs.**

Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 “But God raised Him up...

And in verse 29,

**Acts 2:29** “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 “And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS UPON HIS THRONE, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of **the resurrection** of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. 32 “This Jesus God raised up again, **to which we are all witnesses**. 33 “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God,

and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.<sup>3</sup>

- Peter told the multitude on Pentecost that God had performed miracles, signs and wonders through Christ, to prove who Jesus was. (vs. 2:22, “attested” – ἀποδείκνυμι).<sup>4</sup>
- In this speech Peter said that he and the Apostles were witnesses to the resurrection.
- Peter’s appeal to his listeners rested on solid proof.
- For this reason many of them believed.

Note also that Luke, the writer of Acts, cared about the facts:

**Acts 1:1** THE first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. 3 To these 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis mine, author, DLS.

<sup>4</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 340). New York: United Bible Societies. ἀποδείκνυμι<sup>a</sup>: to cause something to be known as genuine, with possible focus upon the source of such knowledge—‘to demonstrate, to show, to make clearly known.’ Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον, ἄνδρα ἀποδεδειγμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς δυνάμεσι ‘Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine mission was clearly shown to you by miracles’ Ac 2:22.

## **The Christian's faith is not naiveté, shallowness, or sensuality.**

In the parable of the sower the Lord mentioned four types of soil into which the seed of the kingdom might fall: soil that is beside the road, the rocky soil, soil among the thorns and the good soil. In the case of the word falling beside the road, this is the person who does not understand. Satan prevents the seed from growing in this person's heart. Seed falling in the rocky soil can gain no depth and so it is easily uprooted. This person abandons the faith when persecution or afflictions arise. Seed falling into a person's heart represented by the thorns receives the word but fleshly desire and temptation choke the word until it has no good effect. Seed falling into the good soil, on the other hand, bears fruit.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, in every circumstance mentioned in the parable it is the word of God that uncovers the condition of the person's heart. The writer of Hebrews said,

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

If a person is naïve, shallow of character or given over to sensuality then the word of God will uncover it.

## **The faith of the Christian rests upon incontrovertible testimony.**

The Bible warns against being too ready to believe. The gospel of Mark says,

**Mark 4:24** And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 13:1-23.

measured to you; and more shall be given you besides.

And John wrote,

**1 John 4:1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

**1 Thess. 5:21-22.** But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.

- Put it to the test; examine it; be convinced of it.<sup>6</sup>

The captain and crew of the Nancy feared lest evidence of their wrongdoing would come to light. The message concerning the Christ is quite different. The good news of the resurrection of Christ from the dead is not hidden; it is fully revealed and evident to anyone who would inquire. God invites us to examine the testimony, inquire about its truthfulness and establish it as genuine.

## How does a person get faith?

**The Christian's faith is "assurance" and "conviction."**

The Old and New Testaments are collections of writings produced by men who offered evidence concerning the truth, or reality, of what they said. Biblical texts claim their source to be God, Himself, and offer in proof examples of incidents in which God through His supernatural ability effected a change in the natural course of the world. Such incidents were provided to mankind in proof of God's ability, verifying His

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<sup>6</sup> "examine": δοκιμάζω .

presence and exhibiting evidence that He did act in the history of the world and continues to act at the present time.<sup>7</sup> The burden on man is that he consider the evidence that God has provided, recognize the truthfulness of the accounts and accept by submission of his own will to the reality of the proofs. The result is an assurance that the testimony he has received is true and through that the promise of God becomes reality.

The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible, and His work, which He performed in the creation to produce it, is necessarily miraculous, but His work in the scriptures has come down to us through intermediaries. These intermediaries wrote it down. Knowledge of it is not instilled into you by birth. You have to read His work in order to know it. Consider that it is also true that the air is the gift of God, but you have to breathe it order to be enlivened by it. So it is with bread, but you have to eat it to be strengthened by it. God has given us water, but you have to drink it to be refreshed by it.

So how does one acquire faith? It is certainly not through the experience of a feeling, for the Bible says, "...faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."<sup>8</sup> It is not for a person to sit down and wait for faith to come upon him with a strong feeling of ecstasy, or enthusiasm, or purpose. Rather, faith comes when we receive the message of the scriptures, and take God at his word. And we might add, when we place our confident trust in what He says.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, there is an element of human decision in the matter of faith. As the writer of Hebrews said about the Jews who fell into disobedience,

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while  
a promise remains of entering His rest,  
any one of you may seem to have come  
short of it. 2 For indeed we have had

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<sup>7</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 672). New York: United Bible Societies. ἔλεγχος

<sup>8</sup> Romans 10:17, NASB95. See also, Hebrews 11:1.

<sup>9</sup> Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1990, p. 133. as amended by the author.

good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

- So, one may hear God’s word and ignore it. In so doing the person comes short of a saving faith.
- But if the word of God is united by faith in the one who hears. That one profits by the hearing.

**For example, some people believe that a person cannot “savingly” believe unless God creates within them a new nature.** In the book *The Five Points of Calvinism* it is stated thus,

“Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit’s assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God’s gift of salvation—it is God’s gift to the sinner, not the sinner’s gift to God.”

“Thus the once dead sinner is drawn to Christ by the inward supernatural call of the Spirit who through regeneration makes him alive and creates within him faith and repentance.”<sup>10</sup>

Yet the Apostle Paul wrote,

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<sup>10</sup> Steele, David N. and Thomas, Curtis C., *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pp. 16, 49.



**Rom. 10:6** But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), 7 or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” 8 But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

**Rom. 10:17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- God accomplishes the acquittal of the guilt of sins. (Vss. 6-7.) We do not do it.
- God has brought His redemption near. He has put it in our mouths and in our hearts. (vs. 8.)
- The miracle is that God has put it within reach.
- The expected response is: belief in the resurrection and a willingness to confess loyalty to Christ as Lord. (vs. 9)
- In this way faith comes from hearing the gospel of Christ.

Peter said that a person is “born again;” that is, regenerated, by the word.

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently

love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

Therefore, it is through the “word of God” that the hearer is regenerated. It is the word of God that is the seed in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13); it is the word of God that Paul and the other evangelists preached (Romans 10:8).

### **It is necessary to examine the evidence.**

Since the word of God has such importance in the regeneration of the sinner it is imperative that the sinner hear and receive the word.

- The testimony of witnesses and historical proof are essential to faith. Otherwise, how would we know what to believe?
- Who could know about the resurrection unless they were told?

Luke wrote,

**Luke 1:1** Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

- Luke investigated everything carefully.

- He reported the exact truth.

Peter said,

**2 Peter 1:16** 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.

Paul said,

**Eph. 3:3** that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 And by referring to this, **when you read** you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ...

- People understand it by reading it.

**1 Cor. 1:21** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased **through** the foolishness of **the message preached** to **save those who believe**. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

- So, hearing the testimony leads to faith, (Rom. 10:17.)
- People are saved by the message. (vs. 21 above)
- Since faith depends upon eyewitness testimony, and a person's reading or otherwise hearing the evidence, it is

imperative that the person examine what has been said by the Apostles.

- Because through belief of the testimony is how a person gets faith.

Paul also said,

**Rom. 10:14** How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

## **Can the human will affect belief in God?**

**The intellect, the emotion, the will and faith.**

**Faith has been described as: emotional, intellectual, volitional, heart.<sup>11</sup>**

Emotional: a feeling of trust or confidence in someone or something. For example, the miracle of the catch of fish had a stunning effect on the apostles. They had fished in the same lake for years; they had learned the techniques of taking fish from those waters, and had seen their own limitations. When Jesus showed them a different way it caused a dramatic and surprising reaction among them. (Luke 5:1-9)

Intellectual: belief; the mind can believe while the feelings are shaken. For example, Peter walked on water until his perceptions were overwhelmed by what his limited reasoning told him. (Matthew 14:28-29)

Volitional: faith as an act of the will; manifested in behavior. For example, Peter lost volitional faith when Jesus was arrested and taken to the palace of Caiaphas, the High

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<sup>11</sup> Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, pp. 30-31.

Priest. (Matthew 26:69-75) But he regained his faith after the resurrection.

Heart faith: faith fixed in the center or root of the soul. For example, the Apostle Thomas after his doubts were swept away by the evidence of wounded flesh in his hands, spoke a confession as profound as is found anywhere else in the scriptures. He said, “My Lord, and my God,” and he meant it. At first he had doubted when told about the resurrection. The evidence of scarred flesh in his hand changed his heart.

**No amount of evidence can convince someone who does not want to believe.**

Human beings do have a free will. Evidence can forcibly argue the truth of an incident, or of a fact, but a person can still refuse belief.

There is the story about a man who had refused belief in the message of the scriptures who went one day to see—but not to hear—George Whitefield. Whitefield was a famous preacher, and he had come that day to preach outdoors to a great throng. So, the curious unbeliever, in order to have a good vantage point from which he could see Whitefield, climbed a nearby tree and put his fingers in both ears. He wanted to see this “mighty preacher” but did not want to hear what he had to say. Then, during the sermon, a fly lit on his nose. He shook his head, but the fly wouldn’t move. He continued to shake but the fly persisted. Just as he removed a hand from an ear to flick the fly away, Whitefield quoted the verse, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15). Then he spoke of the willful refusal of many to hear the Spirit’s voice. The unbeliever was so impressed by what had happened that he opened not only his ears to the gospel, but also his heart.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 745). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

This man came to believe in Christ, but it could be argued that he believed for the wrong reason. He should have believed not because a fly landed on his nose, but because the testimony about the resurrection of Christ is true.

Luke, in his gospel, tells us about the Rich Man, Lazarus and Abraham. In the parable the Rich Man neglected to relieve the suffering of Lazarus who lay at his gate. Eventually the Rich Man died and lifted up his eyes in torment, but Lazarus found comfort in the bosom of Abraham. In suffering, the Rich Man appealed to Abraham,

**Luke 16: 27** ... I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' 29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 "But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' 31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

- They had Moses and the Prophets; i.e., the Old Testament to tell them about God, but we have Moses and the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles to tell us. Some people still refuse the message. Their refusal is willful.

**For someone who is willing to believe there is evidence.**

Nevertheless, for someone who is willing to believe there is ample evidence to convince them of the truth of the resurrection, and of the Person of the Christ, along with His message.

**John 7:17** “If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.

- There is the requirement of being willing.

## **Can the way I think affect my faith?**

### **Objective truth.**

John Cage was an avant-garde American composer who believed that the universe is impersonal by nature and that it originated only by pure chance. In an attempt to live consistently with his personal philosophy, Cage composed his music by means of chance. He used, among other things, coin tossing, and rolling of dice to make sure that no personal element entered in to the final composition. The result was that his music has no form, no structure and, for the most part, no appeal.

While Cage’s professional life reflected his belief that the universe has no order, his personal life did not. His favorite pastime was mycology, the collecting of mushrooms. This was a pastime that he could not approach on a purely by-chance basis. If he chose the wrong mushroom it would be lethal. Gates said, “I became aware that if I approached mushrooms in the spirit of my chance operations, I would die shortly.”<sup>13</sup>  
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Objective truth is something that exists outside and independent of the mind. It involves treating or dealing with facts without distortion by personal feelings or prejudices.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1990, p. 390. As amended by the author.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Cage>.

<sup>15</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus, Springfield, 2007.

- Cage could believe in total randomness until it affected his very life, and then he learned that there is a certain amount of objectivity to apply.
- There is objective truth that exists apart from opinion or belief.

Aristotle said, “The truth is saying what is, is, and what isn’t, isn’t.” This is called the common sense definition of truth. But a better definition is what Jesus said,

The Lord said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life...” John 14:6.

- Objective truth then is first a Person: Jesus is deity. All truth has its basis in Him and is derived from Him.
- The objective truth is not an attitude. Truth is not how we know, but what we know. Sincerity does not mean truth.
- Truth does not mean, “...known by all” or “believed by all” Even if everyone believes a lie, it is still a lie. Truth is not determined by an opinion poll.
- Truth does not mean “publicly proved.” An objective truth can be privately known— i.e., a hidden treasure. Also it could be known without being proved.

**Objective truth is independent of the knower and his consciousness.** For example, “I itch,” is a subjective truth, but the statement that “Luke wrote the Third Gospel” is a reference to an objective truth. The Bible teaches that witnesses may establish truth. The Law of Moses says,

**Deut. 17:6** “On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one



witness. See also, Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1.

- The way to learn objective truth is to examine the evidence for it. Concurrent testimony can establish truth.
- Some people have the idea that faith “just happens,” or “just is.” “If you believe it, and if it’s right for you, then it’s right.” This idea arises from subjectivity.
- The Bible says that faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

### **Modern ways of thinking shun the idea of objective truth.**

**It is popular in this day and age to say that,**

- (a) The Bible is not reliable in a literal or historical sense.
- This idea is false. The Bible has been consistently proved true in a historical sense.
  - The citations in the Bible are literally true, with the obvious exceptions where symbolism might be used by an author. (I.e., Revelations).
- (b) Others may say that religious experience must come through a subjective encounter with Christ, or through involvement in social action movements.

The emphasis is on “relevance” and “fulfillment” rather than objective truth.

- The Apostles had objective encounters with Christ. They saw Him, heard Him, and touched Him. After His resurrection they saw Him eat fish.

## **Modernism promotes “values” rather than morality.**

For example, “values” are standards or principles considered valuable or important in life. Present day use of the term “values” as opposed to “morality” is an indication of the subjective importance people place on right and wrong. In the “values” mode right and wrong are determined by the individual, and not by an objective standard of right and wrong to which all are subject. Each person’s judgment, or opinion is regarded as valid.

- The “values” idea is an outgrowth of subjectivism.
- Nevertheless, the Bible lists morality in commandments that have their origin with God.

## **A person’s perception is affected by worldview.**

For example, there is the story of three men, each of whom went to see the Grand Canyon. One was an archaeologist, another a clergyman, and the third a cowboy. The Archaeologist looked into the Grand Canyon and said, “What a wonder of science this is!” The Clergyman looked at the Canyon and said, “This is one of the glories of God!” A Cowboy looked down into the canyon and said, “Wow! I’d hate to lose a cow down there!”<sup>16 17</sup>

- Our fundamental perceptions are the same, but individual perceptions can be differently interpreted by experience, or professional training.

## **Examples of how worldview affect perception,**

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<sup>16</sup> Hybels, S. and Weaver, Richard II, *Communicating Effectively*, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> **worldview:** *weltanschauung*; a conception of the course of events in [the world] and of the purpose of the world as a whole forming a philosophical view or apprehension of the universe.

If people believe the world is flat, then they will say ships cannot sail over the horizon and return.

The philosophy of naturalism does not permit people to admit to the existence of the supernatural and, therefore, they reject God.

Some people reject the Bible without reading it because they believe it is flawed (i.e., it contains accounts of miracles).

The Jews rejected Jesus—because He did not fit their expectation of a Messiah and His coming heralded changes in the social and political order.

**In the time of Jesus the Sadducees** were known for their conservatism in religion. They denied the permanent validity of any but the written laws of the Pentateuch. They rejected the doctrines of the soul and its after-life, the resurrection, rewards and punishments, angels and demons. They believed that there was no fate (pre-ordination of God as believed by the Pharisees), men having a free choice of good and evil, prosperity and adversity being the outcome of their own course of action.<sup>18</sup>

Jesus answered the Sadducees.

**Matt. 22:23** On that day *some* Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Him and questioned Him, 24 saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘IF A MAN DIES, HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP AN OFFSPRING TO HIS BROTHER.’ 25 “Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother; 26 so also the second, and the third, down to the

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<sup>18</sup> *The New Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

seventh. 27 “And last of all, the woman died. 28 “In the resurrection therefore whose wife of the seven shall she be? For they all had her.” 29 But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God. 30 “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 31 “But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

- Because of their faulty worldview the Sadducees thought they had Jesus trapped.
- Jesus told them they were “mistaken,” and He showed them the truth.

## **Two worldviews that have a bearing on evidence and faith.**

### **Naturalism.**

According to Webster, **naturalism is a theory** that expands conceptions drawn from the natural sciences into a world view and that denies that anything in reality has a supernatural or more than natural significance; specifically, the doctrine that cause-and-effect laws (as of chemistry and physics) are adequate to account for all phenomena and that teleological<sup>19</sup> conceptions (purpose) of nature are invalid.<sup>20 21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Teleology: the philosophical study of evidences of design in nature. Teleology states that ends (purposes) either operate within or remain in the subject

## Theism.

**Theism** is the belief in the existence of a god or gods; specifically, the belief in the existence of one God who is viewed as the creative source of man, the world, and value and who transcends (beyond, over, or above) and yet is immanent (indwelling) in the world (Christian theism).

See Acts 17:24-28; Eph. 4:6.

Biblical faith is the Christian's true worldview.

**Heb. 11:3** By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

- This worldview is the exact opposite of naturalism.

## The consequences of worldview.

- A person's choice of theism or naturalism determines their worldview, and their perception of both reality and the truth.

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considered (immanent, indwell, inherent, intrinsic). Teleology explains phenomena and events by their final causes (i.e., purpose).

<sup>20</sup> [Britannica refers to materialism as “mechanical materialism”, i.e., the theory that the world consists entirely of hard, massy material objects, which, though perhaps imperceptibly small, are otherwise like such things as stones. The theory denies that immaterial or apparently immaterial things (such as minds) exist or else explains them away as being material things or motions of material things.] As defined in the Webster's Third New International Dictionary **materialism** is the doctrine, theory, or principle according to which physical matter is the only reality and the reality through which all being, and process and phenomena can be explained. The Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia defines **materialism** as: any philosophical system maintaining that the final reality of the universe is matter.

<sup>21</sup> Materialism is opposed to **idealism** which is the belief that the underlying reality of the universe resides in ideas, ideal forms, or an absolute. An extension of naturalism is **metaphysical naturalism** which attempts to explain philosophical questions such as origins.

- The person who holds the worldview of naturalism cannot have biblical faith. The Bible says,  
 Heb. 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- So, can the way you think affect your faith? Yes, of course.

## **The New Testament says God has “furnished proof.”**

The Greeks believed in many gods. In their day it was fitting to pay homage to idols of almost any stripe. This tendency motivated the Greeks of Athens to erect a monument to the “unknown god” lest they offend one of which they were unaware. Paul said to them,

Acts 17:29 “Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

- God has offered substantial reasons why man should believe. Faith must rest upon those reasons, and when it does rest upon those a man comes to know the present reality of God and His promises.

**The Christian's faith is based upon historical facts.**

**Paul's defense before Festus and Agrippa.  
Acts 26:22-26.**

In about the year 60 AD Paul offered his defense before the Roman procurator Porcius Festus, and Herod Agrippa II. Among the things Paul said to them was the following,

Acts 26:22 “So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; 23 that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.” 24 While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.” 25 But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. 26 “For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.

And indeed it was not “done in a corner.” God performed his work in Jesus Christ before the eyes and ears of the world where everyone could see and hear. He did not attempt to hide anything.

Simon Greenleaf said concerning the labors of Christ and the location of His crucifixion,

"It would be difficult to select any place or period in the history of nations for the time and scene of a fictitious history or an imposture which would combine so many difficulties for the fabricator to surmount, so many contemporary writers to confront him with, and so many facilities for the detection of falsehood ..." than the time in which the gospel originated.

In a court of law ordinary testimony may be corroborated by two witnesses. God provided hundreds. Jesus stood trial before the highest tribunal of the Jewish state, the Great Sanhedrin, and He told them who He was; they rejected Him. Then Jesus stood trial before the Roman Government in the person of Pontius Pilate; he ordered Jesus to be crucified. They crucified Jesus where everyone could be a witness to his death, and then they put guards on His tomb to ensure that the body would remain buried. But even the Roman Guard could not keep Him in the tomb. Afterward, the world knew the power of God.

He rose from the dead. Let that sink in.

Irwin Linton wrote, "Even as the Bible has no rival in being the only book containing supernaturally given and fulfilled prophecy, so the Christian religion is the only religion based upon and inseparably connected with historical facts—facts of such nature that if established, so also is established the religion based upon them."<sup>22</sup>

Those facts are well established and well attested.

**Faith comes from the word of the Gospel, and salvation accompanies belief in the resurrection.**

The Apostle Paul wrote,

**Rom. 10:9** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the

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<sup>22</sup> Linton, I. H., *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*, p. 36.



dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

**Rom. 10:17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

For your belief that God raised Jesus from the dead to rest on a solid foundation you must examine the facts. God has furnished those facts as evidence. When you have properly established the truth of those facts for yourself you will discover that faith is not something you have in spite of the facts; faith is something you have because of the facts.