

## Fundamentals of the Christian Faith

### 1. Introduction

#### I. Right Theology

- A. Why should I be interested in Christian Doctrine?
  - 1. Because Christianity rests on historical claims
  - 2. Because Christianity is either true or false
  - 3. Because Christianity has a rational basis
  - 4. Because the object of faith, not faith, is what matters
- B. Shouldn't I just focus on loving Jesus?
  - 1. Who is Jesus (I can't love someone I don't know)?
  - 2. Who am I?
  - 3. Why should I love Jesus?
  - 4. What does loving Jesus look like?

#### II. God has spoken (condescension)

- A. God has created. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. 1:1)*
- B. God has spoken. *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 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." (Heb. 1:1-2)*
- C. God has taken action. *"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people..." (Luke 1:68)*
- D. Christianity is good news to be believed. *"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord..." (Rom. 1:1-4)*

#### III. Creator/Creature Distinction

- A. Man has an insatiable appetite for "why?"
- B. Man, by his own initiative, can't know God. Why? *"Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is. 55:8-9).*
- C. If God is to be known by man, He must reveal himself.
- D. God has revealed himself in nature.
  - 1. *"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." (Ps. 19:1)*
  - 2. *"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 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." (Rom. 1:19-20)*
- E. God has revealed himself specially. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).*

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).*

*“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 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. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs”. (Heb. 1:1-4)*

F. Faith – what it is, and what it is not

1. Faith set against reason
2. Faith set against sensory perception
3. Biblical faith is grounded upon reason and sensory perception.
  - a. God calls us to consider historical facts
  - b. The biblical record is an eyewitness account. *“In as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught”. (Luke 1:1-4)*

*“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty”. (II Pet. 1:16)*

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”. (I John 1:1-3)*

G. God has acted

1. Because man is ignorant
2. Because man is sinful
3. Jesus came to save sinners. *“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”. (Matt. 1:21)*

*“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost”. (I Tim. 1:15)*

*“For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost”. (Luke 19:10)*

*So he told them this parable: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders,*

*rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance". (Luke 15:3-7)*

*H. God Speaks – The bible is God's Word for us*

- 1. The preaching of God's Word is one of God's means for us. "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Rom. 10:14-17*
- 2. Through the Law. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.." (Eph. 2:1) "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world". (Eph. 2:12) "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:20)*
- 3. Through the good news (gospel). "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." (Rom. 3:21-22)*