

The Making of An Atheist

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[0 : 00] The message this morning is the making of an atheist. And I've looked over the two scriptures that we'll be reading this morning.

And I think they really speak to the subject. Please turn at this time to Psalm 14.

Again, Psalm 14.

The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt. They have committed abominable deeds.

There is no one who does good. The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

[1 : 15] They have all turned aside. Together they have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one.

Do all the workers of wickedness not know? Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord.

There they are in great dread. For God is with the righteous generation. You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted.

But the Lord is his refuge. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion, when the Lord restores his captive people.

Jacob will rejoice. Israel will be glad. Then I'd like you to turn to the book of Romans.

[2 : 22] Romans 1. Romans 1. Romans 1.

Verses 14-23. Romans 1. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. Romans 1.

Romans 1. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Because that which is known about God is evident within them. For God made it evident to them.

For since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes, his eternal power, and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse.

[4 : 17] For even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks. But they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

I suspect that subject matter like we are going to be talking about today might seem a little strange for a Christian congregation, because, after all, we who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have nothing to do with and no real interest in atheism or that kind of thinking.

In fact, we are very much convinced that there is a God, so why are we talking about what it is that makes atheists? And the answer is quite simple, because we hope to equip, to arm, and inform you as to what it is that drives the atheists, so that if and when you have opportunity, you may have occasion to offer something that could be of real substance to them.

Because, as the Apostle Paul said, and Gary just read from Romans chapter 1, we are obligated.

We are debtors. We are debtors to everyone who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 10] And that includes atheists, Muslims, and anybody else. Because God is concerned that all be able to hear the gospel and make an intelligent decision.

And that's partly what we are about, or we are supposed to be about. After all, this good news is something that deserves to be shared, and people, whether they realize it or not, are in desperate need of the truth that is available in the person of Jesus Christ.

So, while the making of an atheist may seem like an unusual and an unlikely subject to be discussing in a church, we've just given you the two main reasons for doing so.

Both atheists and Christians tend to paint each other with too broad a brush. For instance, it's not unusual to hear Christians think in terms of all atheists being people who are somehow detestable and vile and profane and self-centered and selfish and all the rest of it.

And to be sure, there are atheists who are like that. But, there are also atheists, some of whom outwardly seem to live a better moral life than some who profess Christianity.

[7 : 38] Some atheists are deeply caring people, generous and thoughtful as regards the needs of others, always willing to help however they can.

Sometimes they are pillars in the community. And they are not to be painted with that broad brush that some Christians paint them. In other words, an atheist may be a really nice guy who just lives next door to you.

It just so happens that he does not believe that there is a supreme being. Now, we, of course, are theists. And that is T-H-E-I-S-T-S.

Theists. A theist is simply someone who believes that there is a supreme being, a God. And an atheist is what you get if you just put the alpha prefix before the word theist.

Then you get atheist. And in the Greek, of course, that negates that which follows. And it means no God, or one who believes there is no God.

[8 : 47] In fact, many people who are theists, let me put it this way. All Christians are theists. But not all theists are Christians, of course.

Some are Muslim. Some are Buddhists. And by the way, Buddhism is an unusual kind of religion in that it represents hundreds of millions of people in the East.

And you do not even have to believe that there is a God in order to practice Buddhism. In fact, many Buddhists are atheists. So, we've got quite a mix here that we're going to be talking about.

But the thing that we really want to get at is to attempt to answer the question, what makes an atheist an atheist? How in the world did they arrive at that position?

And by the way, I might say that is probably the most beneficial and penetrating question that you can ask someone who lets it be known to you that they are an atheist.

[9 : 47] Your response should be something like this. Well, now, that's really interesting. I certainly haven't met too many atheists. And I would really be interested in knowing. How did you arrive at that conclusion?

What is it that makes you convinced that there is no God? And then listen to them. And you just may be able to identify some of the dynamics that we're going to be talking about this morning and be able to share it with someone like that.

I am satisfied that the vast majority of people who consider themselves to be atheists have never really actually considered the evidence.

It has never been presented to them in a way that they could actually log it, go over it, think about it. They just pick it up. Well, we'll get there from the various things.

I've garnered about eight or ten avenues that I think can lead to atheism. And each and every one of them is the same kind of thing that can lead a true believer into doubting their faith, suffering a lapse of faith, not being at all confident or sure that there is a God in heaven and that he is interested on their behalf.

[11 : 08] In fact, I doubt very seriously if there is a true Christian anywhere, maybe a few but not many, who haven't really asked themselves the question, is there really a God?

And then you may even follow asking the question with a burden of guilt or shame for even questioning it because you think if you were any kind of a Christian at all, you wouldn't even think like that.

You wouldn't even wonder that way. But I submit to you that I think this is the purview of everyone who is really engaged in serious thinking. Is there really a God?

Or have I just been sold a bill of goods that I bought into because of the crowd I travel in and because I was born into a Christian family that went to church, that sang the hymns, that read the scripture and all the rest, and I just kind of melded into that and picked up on it and actually I'm a Christian because I was born into a Christian family.

There are lots of people like that. And the same thing could be said for Muslims, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses or whatnot because we do tend to pick up on whatever it is that our parents trained us in

beginning at a very early age.

[12:27] That's only natural. It's just part of the training. So what I want to do is go through a litany of what I think are likely avenues that people have traveled in order to arrive at the idea that there is no God.

And we've already touched on the first one, the birth and the rearing in a family of atheists. I'm reminded of Marvin Olasky, one of my favorite writers.

He usually writes a page article in each edition of World Magazine, fine Christian publication. And he shared his personal testimony in about three different issues in three different parts and it was quite fascinating.

Marvin Olasky, Jewish, was born into an atheistic communist family. I mean, these were card-carrying communists fully, thoroughly committed to the whole concept of communism. And if you know anything about communism, you know what has to be the very first tenet of communism is there is no God. Communism is incompatible with the idea of God.

[13:42] Man is his own God and he makes his own fortune, as it were. So, as a young man, he heard the gospel and eventually came to faith and he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I consider him an intellectual among intellectuals and he writes very stimulating columns in World Magazine. Many of them we've copied and distributed to you. So why was he that way? Well, that's what he was born into and it's only natural. Some think that being born in a Christian family makes you a Christian. But, of course, we know that it doesn't.

Someone has said that while God does have children, he has no grandchildren. And that's a thought to contemplate. So, second possible reason is that we are dealing with an issue that has driven almost everybody to deep thought and contemplation.

And scholars, theologians, and philosophers call it the hiddenness. The hiddenness of God. Why is it that this God who supposedly exists doesn't present himself in a more convincing manner?

[15:09] And why is it that he allows things to go on that may affect millions of people even resulting sometimes in the depths of tens of thousands of people as if he didn't exist?

If he does, where is he? And these, at least insurance companies, call them acts of God. Well, it doesn't go over very well with people who have an atheistic bent because they are dealing with this issue, this struggle that exists between good and evil and they are at a loss to explain how can a good God who is supposedly all-powerful allow these kind of things to happen.

Tsunamis where tens of thousands of people are wiped out. What did they do to deserve that? And where was God when the world trade towers were coming down?

And where was God with the tornado? And where was God in Texas? And where was God in Florida? Thinking people have a problem with that. If this God is supposed to be good, then he must not be all-powerful or he would have done something about it.

Or if he's all-powerful, then he must not be good or he would have done something about it. But he didn't. So how do we justify the existence of a being in his hiddenness like that?

[16:43] Thomas Jefferson, our third president, and generally considered the author of the Declaration of Independence was frequently referred to as a deist. A deist is someone who, that's D-E-I-S-T.

A deist is someone who believes that there is a God, there is a creator, and the best way he can be described is that he created the world and he wound it up like you would wind up a clock and then he let it go.

But he does not intervene in any way, shape, or form. He just lets it run down and run its course.

That's a deist. And I don't know if you're familiar with Thomas Jefferson's Bible or not.

I've got a copy of it. It's called the Jeffersonian Bible. And he went through the New Testament and he was very, he was very fascinated with the person and the morals of Jesus of Nazareth.

But not his miracles. Because, in addition to being a deist, Thomas Jefferson was also a son of the Age of Enlightenment. and the Age of Enlightenment completely discounted the introduction of the supernatural.

[18:05] The supernatural doesn't actually exist. There is an explanation behind everything that appears to be supernatural. And so convinced was Jefferson of that that he took his penknife to the New Testament and he excised all of the miracles that Jesus performed in the Gospels because he considered them to be unworthy of Jesus.

That they really didn't happen. And where they might have appeared to happen it was only because people misunderstood and they didn't know how to interpret what had taken place.

And the Jeffersonian Bible is quite an interesting book. Towering intellect though he was, he completely excluded the supernatural as it related to Christ.

And then, in connection with this very same theme of being unable to explain these things, there is the incident regarding Charles Templeton and it is something that everyone ought to be aware of. The name probably doesn't mean anything to you unless you're familiar with the story. But I'm sure the name Billy Graham means something to you. And Charles Templeton and Billy Graham were close friends.

[19 : 34] Preaching the Gospel together and we're talking about the 1940s. This is before Billy Graham was actually discovered and put on the front page of newspapers across the country.

Became the evangelist whom we know and love who, by the way, is now entered into his 100th year. He's just turned 99 a few weeks ago and he's headed for 100.

Charles Templeton was considered to be the better preacher. Billy Graham considered Charles Templeton to be the better preacher. Both of these young men were in their 20s at the time and they often had opportunity to preach the Gospel throughout the South and they would go and conduct their meetings in tents and so on in churches and wherever they could as young, up-and-coming evangelists.

Billy Graham would preach one night and Charles Templeton would preach the next night. And that went on in several venues and they had numbers of people come to faith in Jesus Christ. And one day, Charles Templeton picked up a magazine.

I don't recall whether it was Life or Look, but it was one of those famous national publications. And on the front page of that magazine was a picture of a little African child, forlorn-looking, distended belly, which is a typical sign of malnutrition and starvation.

[21 : 09] And the caption went something like this. This is a typical child in such and such a country in Africa. Charles Templeton was so stunned by that.

It was almost like a dose of reality, like a glass of cold water hit him in the face and whoa. He was so deeply exercised by that, he actually came to the conclusion, there is no way that there can be a God in heaven who would be willing to stand by and allow something like this to go on for multiple children who are completely innocent, who've committed no crime, who've done nothing, deserve no punishment.

Where is this God? And his conclusion was, he cannot exist. He does not exist. And by the way, some atheists give themselves away sometimes by saying things like, no, I don't believe there is a God and I hate him.

But, this is emotion that is speaking and you know we are all capable of this kind of thing. and Charles Templeton and Billy Graham had a long conversation and Billy did the best that he could to convince him of the reality of the deity and the gospel that they were preaching and everything else. And Templeton walked away from it. He never did return. And many, many years later, after he had become a Canadian citizen, Lee Strobel, whom many of you know about, who was, by the way, himself an atheist, who came to faith in Christ because his wife came to know the Lord and he decided that he was going to, he decided he was going to rescue his wife from this fantasy that she was following about Jesus and Christianity.

[23 : 15] And the best way that he could do that would be to really bone up on the subject and show her where Christianity is all wet and only those people who are less competent actually embrace it.

So he began an extensive research program and he got a little too close to the truth and it grabbed him. And Lee Strobel became a devout believer in Jesus Christ.

And at the time, he was the legal editor for the Chicago Tribune newspaper. He became fascinated with following up this thing called Christianity and pursuing it and he became quite an apologist. He's authored a number of books, some of them are on the tables back there. Many of you have read them. And as a lawyer, he's presented a number of books in the venue of the case for, the case for Christ, the case for grace, the case for the Bible and so on.

And he goes into methodical detail in a very scholarly way and makes his arguments. And when he heard about Charles Templeton and Billy Graham and what had happened, he decided he'd be a fascinating person to interview if he could find him and if he were willing for an interview.

[24 : 30] And he located him. Charles Templeton was living in Canada and he learned that he was in the early stages of Alzheimer's.

But he invited him to come up to Canada and said he would be happy to give him an interview. And he did. And some of you men remember seeing this because we showed the video clips at our Thursday morning Bible class and it was quite enlightening.

Everybody really enjoyed it. And as he sat down with Templeton and asked him his questions, he recounted that magazine that he saw and the picture of the starving child on the front cover. And when asked if he had ever regretted his decision, he said, no, he said, I'm still, I'm still a committed atheist. I still do not believe that there is a God.

But I must admit, I do miss Jesus. Huh. Quite an interesting statement for someone like that to make. And I do not know if Charles Templeton survives to this day or not, but if he does, he's about as old as Billy Graham, it's very possible that he has passed on.

[25 : 46] So, I want you to think about these things from the standpoint of trying to put yourself in the shoes of other people and see how and why they arrived at some of the decisions that they did.

And there are a few others that we can consider and we're going to, but I want to make sure that I allow some time for Q&A; because I expect you may have some very good questions or comments to make.

So, the problem of evil and the hiddenness of God is a major problem and Christians, too, have difficulty with that. And then, personal adversity. Personal adversity.

Where is God when you need Him? When you are going through great pain or suffering or trials and you pray and your prayers seem to go no higher than the ceiling.

Where is God and why doesn't He answer your prayers? And you read about the prayer testimonies found in the Bible, miraculous answers to prayer that you may see on television and some of the talk shows and so on.

[26 : 47] You say, well, it doesn't work that way for me. And what did I do to deserve this? And doesn't God know what's going on in my corner of the world? These are the kind of things that can drive a person to doubt.

At least, a thinking person because you start wondering, isn't God a God of love? Doesn't He care for us? Then, how do you explain this? And then, in addition to the personal adversity, there are hypocritical Christians.

That's enough to turn off any atheist. There are atheists who have viewed Christians, professing Christians at least, in their hypocrisy and in their inconsistency.

And they say, if I became a Christian, would I be like one of them? And that's a major turn off.

They don't want anything to do with that. So, it's a bad advertisement for the gospel on the part of some Christians. And as we've also said a number of times, the greatest asset that God has going for on this planet is a believer in Jesus Christ who is walking in the Spirit and living a consistent Christian life.

[28 : 13] That's God's greatest asset. And God's greatest liability is one who professes to be a Christian but lives just like the world and you can't tell any difference between them and those of the world.

that's God's greatest liability. And there's a generous amount of both classes in this world. And people are looking and watching both of them. And then, there is the atrocity argument.

Who can deny that those in the name of Christ carrying Christian banners with the cross and the music charging into people, slaying people right and left, dispatching them, major bloodshed, and they're doing it in the name of Christ?

Are you serious? This has gone on. It's undeniable. tens of thousands of people were put to the sword during the Crusades in the 10th, 11th century, 12th century, all in the name of Christianity. These people were sent by the Christian Pope to reclaim lost territory that had been taken by Muslims or by Jews or whatever and the idea was to go forth with the banner of the cross and they were responsible for the mutilation and the slaying of thousands and thousands of people all in the name of Christ.

[29 : 53] Now, we are persuaded, biblically speaking, theologically speaking, Christ didn't have anything to do with it. Then the answer arises, why then did he allow them to do that?

And in his name. That's a very big item and a very important one. And I probably won't get to it in this session, but I deliberately made this making of an atheist to be in two parts and our second part

will be next week, the Lord willing.

Atrocities by atheists, crusaders, the inquisition, etc., these are all contributing factors. And then you have the dramatists like Charles Templeton.

I'm sorry, not Charles Templeton, but Robert Ingersoll. Robert Ingersoll was probably an apostle of atheism in his day.

He was born in 1833, died in 1899. He was a very articulate, well-educated lawyer. lawyer. He served at least one term as the attorney general for the state of Illinois.

[31 : 12] And he was very gifted and very articulate, held audiences in a spellbinding fashion. And one of his favorite antics was, he would go into a venue where, understandably, there would be a lot of people, especially even a lot of Christians would be drawn to it, to hear this man speak, because he had a national reputation.

And he would stand before the crowd and take out his gold pocket watch and wave it before the people and say, I don't believe there is a God.

And if there is a God, he ought to be able to show himself. And I am inviting this God, whom you say exists, to kill me.

I give him five minutes and the clock is ticking. And of course, the people say, why is this? And the women in the audience are going, oh. And as the clock ticks away, he keeps, come on, God, where are you?

Where's your bolt of lightning? Show yourself. Strike me dead. I dare you. And after five minutes pass, he notes the clock, the time, puts it back in his pocket and says, does that say anything to you about your God?

[32 : 43] And at least one of these venues, a gentleman dressed in his farmer bib overalls, standing in the back of the audience, shouted out, Mr., mankind has been trying the patience and long-suffering of God for 5,000 years.

You think you can do it in five minutes? Put the whole thing in a different perspective. But these are the kind of foolish things that people are given to.

people are going to do it in a world. And I must admit, I probably, if I were God, I know I wouldn't have been able to pass up the opportunity.

I would have sent that bolt of lightning. But you know, God is far more long-suffering than I am. And I'm sure he has his reasons for not doing so.

And by the way, that too is something that we will be considering in part two. Because God has deliberately, deliberately veiled himself so that there not be a concrete evidence of his existence.

[34 : 07] And he has done that for a very important reason. And we will share that with you as well. So, everyone contends with these issues.

At least thinking people do. And today, we've got, in addition to what I've already mentioned, we've got academia that is hard at work espousing atheism.

I've made mention of this before. I don't know how aware you are of it. I know that regular grace people are aware of it. but our colleges and universities today are absolutely inundated with socialistic communist, and yes, I said communist professors.

These are not in the closet. They are out in the open. They are admitted, publicly avowed communists, committed thoroughly to the socialistic system, and they believe that the United States of America, and capitalism is the major problem with the world.

And there are Christian people who are paying \$40,000 a year to send their children to schools like that, where they are indoctrinated with that kind of stuff.

[35 : 29] When these young people come in there as freshmen, they are vulnerable. Most of them come from churches where there is very little teaching.

A lot of times it's just a lot of ritual and a lot of repetition and nothing that really sticks to the spiritual ribs of these kids that allow them to stand up for their faith or to even know exactly why they believe what they do.

And this is one of the burdens that we've had here for a number of years. It is not sufficient, it is not at all sufficient, for you to know what you believe. You need to know why you believe it.

What is the rationale for that? And if you believe it just because, well that's what my church teaches, well, la-di-da, how many churches teach different things and how are you supposed to know which one is right?

The only thing that they all have in common is that each one believes that they are right and the other fellows are wrong. That's the only commonality. apologetics is something that every believer ought to be grounded in so that you know why you believe what you believe.

[36 : 41] And the watchword for that is what Peter expressed in 1 Peter 3.15 Set Jesus Christ apart in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason for the hope that is within you.

Why do you believe what you believe? We ought to be able to articulate that and tell people. And if you can't do it you shouldn't stop until you are able to do it. You have that obligation.

We all do as Christians. So academia contributes to that and of course and by the way when we showed a video here several months ago about Ray Comfort interviewing these university professors at different schools about creation about evolution about macro evolution as opposed to micro evolution you may recall that and I well remember I well remember Ray Comfort putting the microphone to this lady's lips and he asked her are you an atheist?

And her response was of course. Implication? Of course. I'm a professor at a leading university. How can I not be an atheist? Of course. The implication? Any thinking person is going to be an atheist. And this is an institution that specializes in thinking.

[38 : 12] Of course I'm an atheist. And she wasn't alone. There were others with similar answers. And there are those atheists in the academic community that consider people who do believe in God as naive, gullible, country bumpkin type, obviously never had much opportunity for education or advanced education or they could never believe that nonsense about there being a God who is active in the affairs of men.

So academia plays a very, very important part and along with that think of all of the books that have been written. The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins.

It's a bestseller. New York Times bestseller published in a couple of different languages. Richard Dawkins is very articulate, very smooth, very clever, very accomplished writer, very convincing, very compelling.

So that if someone picks up a book by Richard Dawkins and they're on the edge, it's not difficult at all for them to be swayed. This guy is really smart.

And he doesn't believe that there is a God. And you would be surprised how many people line up with a certain position just because somebody else does. Especially do we see this in the pop culture with rock stars.

[39 : 45] I don't know what it is about a rock star that makes him an authority on global warming. But the positions that they take, you'd be surprised, is adopted by a number of people just because of who identifies with it.

And we decry that from the standpoint of preachers. I don't want anybody to identify with the position because, well, that's what Pastor Marv believes.

And if Pastor Marv believes it, that's good enough for me. Well, it shouldn't be. It shouldn't be. It needs to be good enough for you only if you have considered the evidence, you weigh it, you evaluate it, and you conclude this is true.

That's why I believe it. Not because he does. Or not because the church does. Truth is truth no matter where you find it. Whether you like the source of it or not, truth is truth.

And as I've mentioned in the past, there are only three possible sources of information. With this, I'm going to conclude. I want to open it for a few moments of questions and comments.

[40 : 54] There are only three possible sources of data or of information. And it's really important that you know and understand this. And the first one is by far and away the most common. The most common.

It is the human source. That includes our own brain, and the brains and minds of others, both from history and current. People have ideas and they express these ideas in books, in print, in speech. And some of them are very compelling and people identify with some of the things that are said. They buy into it. That's the source of information. There is a human source and that, as I said, it is the most common source.

Most people have more confidence in what they themselves think in their own mind than what anybody else thinks. That's part of the human ego situation, but that's the way it is.

And then the other possible source of information is satanic. And I realized that there you were talking about what to some people is fantasy, because I've often said that Satan, one of his principal

titles is the deceiver.

[42 : 10] And he is so adept and so accomplished at deception that he has convinced a lot of people that he doesn't even exist. So why would anybody fear or object to someone that they believe doesn't even exist?

Yes, there is the principle, the idea of evil, but it's not personified in a person. So, of course, I suppose they would think that when Jesus Christ did battle with Satan 40 days in the wilderness and all of the gospels, but John, Jesus must have been hallucinating or dreaming or something. But Christians choose to believe that there is a real devil and that Jesus confronted him and bested him there in that desert. But he is a source of information. And the Bible tells us in 1 Peter 5.8 that Satan is like a roaring lion who walks about the earth seeking whom he may devour. He's a recruiter, just like Nimrod back in the book of Genesis. He recruits people to his side. He recruited the third of the angels, we are told, in the creation, and they followed him. So that's the second source of information, and the only third source that remains is God. So, whatever it is you believe and cling to and are convinced is true, you either got it from other people, their speech or their writings, or you got it from the devil himself in the form of a lie, which may have taken several venues, or you get your position and you take your ideas and your authority from the Bible.

[43 : 58] And if anybody can think of a fourth source, I would appreciate knowing it. Those are the only three that I can think of. And it is a sobering, sobering thought to contemplate. What exactly is it that I believe and where did I get that idea?

How did I formulate that belief? When did it start? How did I arrive at that conclusion? Where am I now? What is the source of my authority? authority? Is it human? Is it Satan, God forbid? Or is it divine from the scriptures? Atheists come into atheism for any one of these several reasons that we've mentioned.

And there are others that can be dealt with as well. Each of them is very formidable. And each of them influences and impacts people's thinking and causes them to reach certain conclusions. So nobody is born an atheist. You arrived at it some way. And even if you are a believer in Christ, there is every likelihood that you have had reason to question whether your faith is really genuine.

[45 : 12] Whether you really do believe this, or is it just because you were influenced by others and you thought, well, I guess I'll be that as good as it being anything else, so that's why you bought into it.

And if you are a true Christian, the likelihood is that you have at one time or another doubted your salvation, doubted whether you believed, doubted whether you believed right, doubted whether you're really going to heaven, doubted whether there really is a God, I want you to know these are commonplace.

This is part of the human condition. We do have lapses of faith. Abraham did, David did, Peter did, John the Baptist did, and several others.

So it is not unusual for us to have a lapse of faith or to question whether this stuff is really real. But it deserves investigation and thoughtful consideration and that's what we want to do for the next session that we'll have together.

All right, there's a question or comment now. Get a pair of young legs with that microphone and he'll just scoot around there and nothing flat. Okay, right up here, a question. Joe?

[46 : 30] A comment. A comment. Okay. I mean, you answered it there towards the end. I mean, right here is the truth, you know, and this is what you have to believe, the word of God.

And in Genesis, it tells us why we've got all these problems. You know, the fall of a man, the sin of a man. God is not ruling this world. Now people think God's in control.

God's not in control. The devil's in control. This book tells us that. God won't be in control until the second coming when Jesus comes. You just got to read the whole word. My question for you, though, is why would Billy Graham and Charles Templeton, who was supposedly reading the same book, how could Templeton come up with that conclusion when the book tells us exactly why there was this girl like she was?

The Bible tells us that why she was that way, why she was sick and malnourished, why there's murders in the world and all this. The sin was brought in by Adam and Eve at the beginning, and he goes on through it, tells you that.

How could he? He just didn't believe the word. That's the only thing. He stopped believing the word. Well, I think that was probably at the crux of his problem, because as we've so often said, authority is the issue.

[47 : 41] Always has been, always will be. It started way back in Genesis 3 with the issue of authority. And by the way, we ought to really keep this in mind, because it is absolutely, absolutely critical.

And that is the volitional factor, and I'll introduce that in our next session, because this is where the water really gets muddied. And you will discover, if you haven't already, that the Bible and the Bible alone is the only source that actually explains why the world is as it is today, how it got that way, what caused it, and where it's going.

You will not find that information anywhere else on the globe, but in the scriptures. And I trust we'll show you that next week as well.

We've got a full week coming next week. Other comments or questions, anyone? Feel free. John has a question, comment. I think he believed God was like him, and his God was very small.

Yeah, well, that's true. About 40 years ago, you told me that one time, that, you know, your God's not big enough, and I had to think about that for quite a while, actually.

[49 : 10] And it wasn't. He wasn't. And I think Templeton probably had the same situation. He thought that God was like him, and, you know, he was a small God, and he just gave him up.

I appreciate your insight. I think that is very, very true. You know, one can be articulate, glib, well-spoken, clever in their speech, and still not have the theological base that is needed to understand adequately what it is you're preaching.

It isn't sufficient to preach the good news without knowing why the good news is good news. And you have to understand that the good news is designed to combat the bad news.

And you would be amazed how many people can speak about religious issues, if you will, and sound very convincing, but they lack the doctrinal theological underpinnings to really sustain them with solid information.

And when they see something like this little starving child on the front page of this Life or Look magazine, it just bowls them over. They don't have the sufficient comprehension and background of the plan and program of God.

[50 : 39] And if I may just put in a little insert about hermeneutics, which we've dealt with in Christianity Clarified, volumes, I think, 31, 30 through 35, with 20 sessions on each one, that's designed to combat this kind of thing.

Was there another question or comment? George? So being a parent, in the middle of parenting, I tend to relate these things to children, too. But I wanted to talk for just a second about the doubt.

God programmed us asking the question why. You can tell that by interacting with a little child, right? They'll ask why once they start to see the cause and effect of the world. One of the characteristics of a cult is that a cult requires unquestioning belief.

And Christianity is not a cult. Christianity is a thinking man's belief. Amen. And so I want my children to express their doubt, and I never want to shame them for questioning why we believe something.

Right. That's right. And it's very common for Christians to project this shame about doubting, that somehow our faith is lacking because we might question why, or is this really true?

[52 : 02] And I think it is valid. I think Christians ought to critically think and evaluate why they believe what they believe. Absolutely. Absolutely. God can handle your doubt.

Let me put it this way. God loves a sincere doubter. He is not insulted by your doubting him. And doubts can be a wonderful thing because when you get those doubts resolved through information, that is spiritual growth and development, and it's a powerful thing.

It's wonderful. Okay? Yeah, so I'm reading up about this recently, or last year. The number of people who identify themselves as atheists is pretty small.

One, two, three percent, something like that. But they keep talking about this group they call the nuns. These are the people that just, you know, I don't have anything.

No faith at all. They're not thinking. Yeah. And I think the primary reason for this is, you know, atheism provides, it doesn't provide intellectual, intellectually rigorous system.

[53 : 13] It's not compelling, but it provides an opportunity. community. And there are so many people, and I think the primary reason for a lot is sin.

And there is, there's the way that I want to live my life without having to really conform to an authority like God.

And atheism or evolution or all these things provide an opportunity for me to decide that I don't have to consider these things. I don't need to see what my responsibility is to my creator.

Thank you. Blaise Pascal, a theologian of some note, and a mathematician in the 1700s, made the observation that there is ample evidence for those who wish to believe.

And I think that's true. And do you know something? There is no such thing as enough evidence for those who do not want to believe. They cannot be satisfied.

[54 : 15] I don't care what you come up with. They always have a yes, but. And these are people who, in contrast to an intellectual difficulty, they usually have a moral difficulty.

And I want to close with this illustration because it really spells out what we were talking about.

Many of you remember Art Crawford, who's a pastor of Riverside Bible Church. Riverside, Art was, in addition to being a pastor of Riverside Bible Church, and he served on the board of the Ford Motor Company and so on.

He was also a nuclear physicist. And he worked in a huge laboratory over in Columbus. And one day, he and a co-worker had to go up to drive from Columbus to Cleveland to attend to a business item in connection with a project they were working on.

And Art told the fellow, he says, I'll pick you up at your house at such and such a time. The guy said, okay. So he picked him up and he got in the car and he started out. And this fellow turned to Art and he said, well, he said, we've got a two or three hour drive ahead of us.

Why don't we just have some kind of an interesting conversation while the time and the miles away? And Art said, okay, fine. What would you like to talk about? And I said, well, I understand that you're some kind of a preacher on Sundays and you believe all this stuff in the Bible and everything and they're telling me about you.

[55 : 42] So why don't we just talk about what is it that you consider the really most important thing about your faith, about Christianity?

And Art said, well, that's kind of easy. That would be the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because if there is no resurrection, then it's all over and forget it. Nothing matters. And the guy said, well, good.

He said, I don't believe in any of that stuff. He said, to me, that's just out of the question. Dead people won't come back to life again. So why don't we talk about your reasons for believing this? And the implication was, I don't understand how somebody who supposedly could be so intelligent could possibly believe in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. But anyway, so Art laid out his reasons, probably a half a dozen or so, why he signed on to the resurrection of Christ and what the scriptures had to say about it.

And as they pulled in the parking lot of their destination up in Cleveland, parked the car, turned off the key, and Art says, well, he said, that's about all I have.

[56 : 48] What do you think? And the guy said, well, I can't believe it. He said, what do you mean? He said, well, I can't refute what you said.

He said, it really, it really makes sense. I have to hand it to you, Art. I concur. I believe you're right. And he said, you do?

And he said, well, yeah. He said, you presented a pretty ironclad case and I don't have any basis for disputing it. And he said, well, then, are you prepared to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior?

Oh, no, no, wait a minute, wait a minute. I don't want to do that. And Art said, well, I thought you just told me that you believed in me.

Oh, I do, but I don't want to make a commitment like that. That would mess up my whole life. Think of it.

[57 : 50] That would mess up my whole life. Little did he know, it would be the one thing that would straighten out his life. Because Jesus Christ is not in the business of messing up anybody's life.

When he said, I am come that man might have life and have it more abundantly. That's exactly what he meant. And nobody is entitled to get the bang out of life like a believer in Jesus Christ.

You've got everything in the world going for you and everything in the next world as well. Would you stand, please? Father, we recognize that there are many areas here that have been left untouched, unaddressed, and there are a number of things for which we have no answers.

But answers that we do have and answers that have been confirmed through history, we want to share. And we thank you for each of these dear folks for their patience and understanding with the subject matter.

we trust that you will use it in a way that educates and edifies at the same time. And thank you most of all for being the God of heaven who cannot lie.

[59 : 06] We are grateful in his name. Amen. You are dismissed. What do we have joyous tocast
■■ Weil and him?

Thank you, member of the as- as- he's working on our■■- on Twitter, as- can- please at the end of the end of the ■■ sociale, ■