

Russia Seminar Talks



Given October 1992 in Novgorod & Vologda
by Robert C Newman



Does God Exist?

Lecture 1



Introduction

- The most important question any of us can consider.
- Is there a God?
- I suggest there is strong empirical evidence from science pointing to the existence of such a being.

Causation

- ❑ One of our earliest experiences in life is that of cause and effect.
- ❑ A baby playing with its toys in a playpen is getting direct, hands-on experience of cause & effect.
- ❑ The existence of causes (of which none is known to be 100% efficient in energy transfer) implies the existence of a cause or causes of infinite energy at an infinite time in the past.
- ❑ This is consistent with an infinite, eternal First Cause but not with an infinite, eternal universe.

Cosmology

- Even in ancient times, people must have thought of stars as "fires in the sky" and wondered: "Who lit these fires, and who provided the firewood?"
- In the 1700s came Olber's paradox:
 - Why is the sky so dark when in an infinite, eternal universe it ought to be so bright?
 - An early indication that the universe has not always existed.

Cosmology

- In the 1900s came evidence from nuclear physics that the stars are running down.
 - And then the evidence from astronomy that the universe is flying apart.
- These two features, plus the cosmic background radiation, and the fact that gravity dominates all other forces in high-density situations, implies that the universe began in a "big bang" at a finite time in the past.
- This naturally implies that the universe has a Beginner, a Creator.

Design

- It became apparent in the late 20th century, especially after 1970, that one could not have a functional universe (long-lasting, able to support life) unless the values of a large number of physical constants are very carefully adjusted to one another.
- Some examples are the nearly perfect fine-tuning of:
 - Cosmic expansion & gravity
 - Positive & negative charges
 - The strong nuclear force
 - The weak interaction

Design

- There are numerous other such "coincidences" that scientists have discovered.
- The presence of so many fine-tuned values of the physical constants in our universe most naturally points to the universe being designed, and thus a Designer.
- The claim that we wouldn't be here if this weren't so is true, of course, but it is not an explanation in the sense of providing a cause.

Design

- A God-designed universe, however, would naturally predict such phenomena.
- In a random, meaningless universe, this would be an astonishing coincidence.
- Atheists have been reduced to postulating a nearly infinite number of universes to try to get around this problem, for which universes we have no evidence.

Conclusions

- If a God does exist, and we have been living all our lives as though he doesn't, we should not be surprised that we are making a mess of things in this life, and perhaps heaping up much that we will have to answer for when we die.
- For us as individuals and for our society, it is most important that we make the right decision with the evidence we have.
- Does God exist, or does he not?

What Kind of God Exists?

Lecture 2



Introduction

- We suggested in the previous lecture that there is excellent evidence for the existence of God.
- We gave some of that evidence then, and hope to give more of it in this and some of the following lectures.
- But if God exists, what sort of God is he?

Introduction

- Among ancient Western religions, the idea of finite, personal gods is most common, e.g., Zeus, Venus, Thor, etc.
- Among the traditional Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism), the idea of an infinite, impersonal god is dominant.
- Christianity and other religions influenced by the Bible see God as infinite and personal.

Introduction

- So, is God a personal or impersonal being?
- Is God finite or infinite?
- There is good evidence from nature that we live in a universe created by an infinite and personal God.
- Let us see.

Information & Intelligence

- Most people tend to think of science as dealing only with impersonal, natural forces.
- Yet scientists in archeology & astrophysics have tests which look for information (its presence and quantity) in an object by which to recognize signs that the object has been intelligently designed.

Archeology

- An archeologist, looking at a chipped stone, will try to decide whether the chips were made randomly (the stone having fallen from a cliff or been broken by frost & heat) or by design (an arrowhead maker).
- By noting the number & positions of the chips, it is possible (looking at less than 100 chips) to be sure that the stone was designed rather than random.

Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence

- A number of scientists have worked to design simple messages to send out from earth in case other civilizations are out there listening.
- To test for radio messages coming to us, an astrophysicist will look at the signals received by his radio telescope to decide whether the signals are just 'noise' from a natural phenomenon or a message sent by some distant civilization.

Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence

- It would only take a hundred or so signal elements to recognize an intelligent message, even if it could not be decoded.
- A decodable message would be even stronger, indeed conclusive, evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence.
- But living things contain very similar evidence that they are the result of intelligent design.

Design in Living Things

- The simplest living organisms contain an information system for making copies of themselves and for running their internal machinery, which is stored in long molecules called DNA.
- One of the simplest such systems (*E. coli*) has an information content equal to that in a human library of over 100,000 books.
- An intelligent Creator of life is a reasonable inference from this.

Computers & Minds

- Though there are certainly some parallels between electronic computers and human minds, this parallelism collapses when the human operator or programmer is removed from the computer-side of the comparison.
- It is thus not at all obvious that we will be able to produce consciousness and common sense by making bigger, faster computers.

Computers & Minds

- If we cannot, this suggests that mind may be more than computing circuits and that humans are more than just brain cells.
- If we do finally build a computer that has consciousness, this will still indicate that complex design lies behind such phenomena.
- Perhaps this is what is meant when the Bible speaks of humans created "in the image of God."

Right & Wrong as a Clue

- The presence of closely similar moral standards among the various human races, religions and ethnic groups suggests that these are not arbitrarily chosen by the societies involved.
- The fact that these moral standards are less likely to be obeyed when they are viewed as merely a chance result of evolution or the majority vote of a society, and more likely to be obeyed when they are viewed as having transcendent value, suggests that we are here in contact with something objectively real.
- Perhaps this is another feature in view when the Bible speaks of humans created "in the image of God."

Conclusions

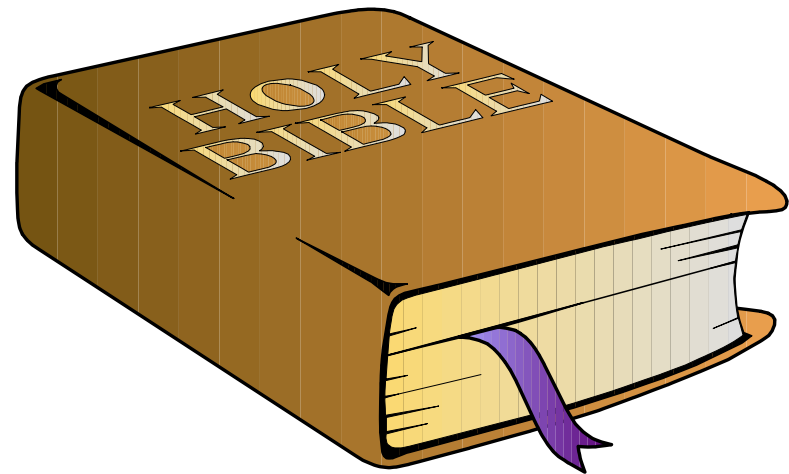
- We suggest that the argument from causation discussed in Lecture 1 points to an infinite God. A finite god cannot do anything over an infinite span of time.
- The presence of "fine-tuning" in inanimate nature and of mind-boggling levels of order in living things points to a God who has intellect.

Conclusions

- The presence of consciousness and initiative in mankind (as distinct from machines) points to a personal Creator who also has these attributes.
- The presence of similar moral standards in the diverse human populations on earth points to a personal God who has implanted within us a standard of behavior that reflects his own desires for mankind and something of his own nature.

Why Believe the Bible?

Lecture 3



Introduction

- If there is an infinite, personal God out there who has designed and made the universe and the life in it, has he communicated with us?
- The Bible claims he has, and that the Bible itself is the text of this communication.
- What is more, the Bible provides evidence that this is not just an empty claim.

Pre-Knowledge of Science

- The Bible indicates that the universe had a beginning.
- The creation account of Genesis 1, though frequently misinterpreted, is consistent with modern scientific evidence on the origin and early history of our planet Earth.

Genesis 1 & the Origin of Earth

- ❑ The earth was originally formless & empty.
- ❑ It was first dark and then became light.
- ❑ The atmosphere & oceans came from within (see Job 38:8-9).
- ❑ The formation of continents produced a separation of land & sea.
- ❑ Vegetation came before clear sky & animals.
- ❑ Man came last, after his environment was ready.

Astronomy & the Bible

The Bible pictures:

- ...an enormously large universe, so big that it would be a surprise that God cares about individuals.
- ...an uncountable number of stars.
- ...a round earth which hangs upon nothing.

All these ideas were rarely believed when the Bible was written, but are obviously true now. How did the Bible get these things right?

Bible Medicine

- Biblical medicine is striking in its concern for good diet, cleanliness, and quarantine, in contrast to so many ancient works of religion and medicine.
- It even specifies that the circumcision operation on baby boys should take place on the 8th day of life, which turns out to be the safest time for such an operation!

Fulfilled Prophecy

- The Bible prophets were spokesmen sent from God. One of the ways in which their messages were validated was by short-term predictions which consistently came true.
- For us in modern times, an even stronger evidence is that they also made long-term predictions which came true, sometimes centuries after the prophet had died.

Twin-City Prophecies

- Various cities among the nations around Israel form an excellent test for this.
- One investigator has looked at a number of significant ancient cities, pairing those which are similar:
 - The Egyptian capitals Memphis & Thebes
 - The Phoenician seaports Tyre & Sidon
 - The Philistine cities Ashkelon & Ekron
 - The imperial capitals Babylon & Nineveh

Memphis & Thebes

- In Ezekiel 30:13-16:
 - Memphis would have its idols destroyed;
 - Thebes, its masses of people.
- In fulfillment of these predictions:
 - Memphis was later used by the idol-hating Muslims as a quarry for their capital city Cairo and its idols were destroyed;
 - Thebes was reduced from a large capital city to a series of small villages.
- If you reverse the city names, there is no fulfillment. But there is with the names as they stand.

Tyre & Sidon

- According to the prophet Ezekiel:
 - Tyre was to have its rubble thrown into the sea, its site becoming a place for spreading fishnets, never to be rebuilt (26:1-14);
 - Sidon was to face war & disaster, but nothing was said about abandonment (28:20-23).
- In the following centuries:
 - Tyre shifted location from the mainland to an island offshore when Nebuchadnezzar besieged it about 600 BC. About 3 centuries later, Alexander used the rubble of mainland Tyre to build a causeway to attack the island city. The mainland site has become a place to spread nets, and has never been a city since.
 - Sidon, though often besieged & conquered, is still a major port.

Ashkelon & Ekron

- The prophet Zephaniah (2:4-7) predicts:
 - Ashkelon is to be reduced to ruins but later inhabited by Jews;
 - Ekron was to be uprooted.
- In fact, both were inhabited till the Crusades, then both were destroyed.
 - Ashkelon's harbor was filled with stones. Since 1948, its harbor has been rebuilt, and the city is inhabited by Jews.
 - Ekron has not even been located for certain, but the best candidate for its site is merely farmland.

Babylon & Nineveh

- The prophets predicted:
 - Babylon was to be deserted, without Arabs or shepherds, to be a home for wild animals, its building stones not to be reused as stones (Isa 13:19-22; Jer 51:26);
 - Nineveh was to be destroyed & left desolate, but it would then become a place for grazing sheep.

Babylon & Nineveh

- Since then:
 - Babylon has been deserted, partly by conquest, partly by a shift in the River Euphrates, leaving its site waterless. The Arabs avoid the place as haunted; the soil is too poor for grazing. The natives use the site for bricks, but burn the stones to make lime.
 - Nineveh, too, was long abandoned, though recently the suburbs of Mosul have grown out to reach it. The name of its largest mound means "many sheep."

Twin-City Prophecies

- Significant predictions have been fulfilled about each city, but these are not just things one could say about any ancient city.
- In fact, if you were to trade the two names in each pair, the prophecies would not have been fulfilled!
- Thus we have an objective test that these fulfillments are not just the imagination of Bible believers.

Hosea's Predictions about Israel

- The prophet Hosea (3:4-5), writing centuries before the time of Jesus, predicted six sociological features that would characterize the Jewish people for a long time:
 - (1) They would lack their own kings of the line of David.
 - (2) They would not even have their own rulers.
 - (3) They would no longer offer sacrifices...
 - (4) ...nor would they use sacred pillars
 - (5) They would have no high priest...
 - (6) ...nor would they worship idols.
- Each of these has characterized Israel from shortly after the time of Jesus until recently.

Predictions about the Messiah

- Other predictions made by the prophets of ancient Israel about the Messiah point to Jesus as the expected one.
- We will say more about this in Lecture 5.

Changed Lives & Societies

- Where the biblical teaching (regarding who God is & what he expects of us) has been accepted, and where the principles of behavior taught by the Bible have been put into practice...
- Individuals have experienced a transformation in which life has become especially meaningful and useful.

Changed Lives & Societies

- They have often been able to handle even great tragedy without resorting to alcohol, drugs, or suicide.
- People trapped in these destructive lifestyles have been able to escape.
- Where large numbers of people have done this, the whole society has been transformed into a place where a balance of freedom & restraint has produced substantial prosperity & opportunity for all levels of society.

Conclusions

- We have sketched only a little of the evidence which indicates that the Bible really is God's message for humanity.
- We offer you an opportunity to try it out for yourself.
- Don't just take someone's word for what the Bible says, read it for yourself.

What's Wrong with Mankind

Lecture 4



Introduction

- In the US some years ago, a book was published with the title *I'm OK, You're OK*, seeking to assure its readers that they could overcome their problems by raising their self-esteem.
- But the prevalence of human problems in our world indicates that something is seriously wrong with this evaluation.

Introduction

- If education and wealth are the solutions to human problems, why were the largest, most devastating wars in human history fought in the 20th century by the wealthiest, most advanced nations on earth?
- Why do educated & wealthy people still have so many problems of their own?
- Why are there so many relatively poor people who live happy & fulfilling lives in spite of such disadvantages?

God's Standards for Really Living

- In the Bible, God sets forth two standards by which we should live our lives (Matthew 22:34-40):
 - (1) Love God with everything we are & have
 - (2) Love our neighbor as ourselves.
- Another way of expressing (2) is "Do to others as you would have them do to you."
- In spite of natural disasters, this planet would almost be heaven on earth if people would only treat others as they themselves would wish to be treated.

We Can't Do It!

- The trouble is, we humans aren't able to live up to these standards.
- If we examine ourselves honestly, we find all sorts of bad attitudes inside:
 - Selfishness, gluttony, laziness, pride, impatience are some of the ones I have trouble with.
 - What about you?

We Can't Do It!

- Many of these bad attitudes & actions can be categorized as our having difficulty sacrificing short-term pleasures for long-term benefits.
- We will not trust God with our lives, that he knows better than we do what really makes for fulfillment & happiness.

We Can't Do It!

- What is really going on is that we are trying to be gods, but we aren't able to do so.
 - We don't know enough
 - We aren't strong enough
 - We aren't good enough
- Not even when we group together as nations are we wise enough.

We Can't Do It!

- The main problem is that we are actually in rebellion against the God who really exists.
- We foolishly think that we know better than he does.
- In any case, we are not going to let him run our lives for fear that he will make us do something we don't want to do, or make us give up some attitude or action we enjoy.

Conclusion

- The misery we see all around us in the world is the consequence of disobeying God's two great commandments.
- We don't want to obey God's rules, so we try to make our own.
- We can't keep these either.
- But if we can't live up to our own standards, how can we live up to God's standards?

Who Is Jesus?

Lecture 5



Introduction

Jesus is God's solution to what is wrong with humanity:

- He is not only our example of what we should be,
- His life provides the obedience we owe God,
- His death pays for what we've done wrong,
- He gives us the ability to begin to be what we ought to be.

Jesus' Claims

Jesus claimed to be:

- ❑ Sent from God (Mt 10:40, Lk 4:18, Jn 10:36)
- ❑ Existing before Abraham's time (Jn 8:58)
- ❑ One with God the Father (Jn 10:30, Mt 11:27)
- ❑ Always doing everything the Father does (Jn 5:19-23)
- ❑ Able to forgive sin (Mk 2:5-12)
- ❑ Unique (Mt 5:12; 11:25-30; Jn 10:7-10)
- ❑ The one who will rule the world in the future (meaning of 'Messiah' or 'Christ')
- ❑ The one who will judge all mankind after this life (Mt 25:31-46, Jn 5:22-30)

Jesus' Miracles

Jesus is reported to have:

- ❑ Changed water into wine (Jn 2:1-11)
- ❑ Fed thousands by multiplying a small amount of food (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-13)
- ❑ Walked on water (Mk 6:45-52)
- ❑ Stopped a storm by his command (Mk 4:35-41)
- ❑ Healed hundreds to thousands of people
- ❑ Raised several people from the dead (Mt 9:18-25; Lk 7:11-15; Jn 11:1-44)

Prophecies about Jesus

- If the Messiah has come, he is Jesus:
 - Light to the Gentiles (Isa 42:6-7; 49:5-6)
 - Born yet pre-existent (Mic 5:2; Isa 9:6-7)
 - Humble yet exalted (Dan 7:13-14; Zech 9:9)
 - Suffering yet reigning (Zech 12:10; Isa 53)
 - King yet priest (Ps 110)

- The Messiah has come:
 - To come while Judah had own rulers (Gen 49:10)
 - To come while 2nd temple stood (Hag 2:3-9)
 - To come after 69th sabbath-year cycle (Dan 9:25-26)

Jesus' Death

- If Jesus is who he claims to be, why on earth would he let himself be killed?
- And why in the very gruesome way that he did die, by being hung on a cross?
- Jesus came to die, not for anything he had done wrong, but to die as a substitute for our wrongdoing.

Jesus' Death

- He actually brought to reality what was only pictured in the animal sacrifices of the Bible and other ancient religions.
- Just as the Jews were required to bring a perfect lamb to be put to death for their sins, so Jesus died after living a perfect human life.

Conclusions

There are really only 3 alternatives concerning who Jesus was:

- (1) He was a madman, who deluded himself into thinking that he was God, sinless, and able to forgive the sins of others.
- (2) He was one of the world's greatest deceivers, who knew that he was not God, but for some reason wished others to think he was.
- (3) He really is who he claimed to be: God, sinless, and able to forgive the sins of others, and he came to offer himself as the sin-payment for all who will entrust themselves to him.

Conclusions

- There is commonly suggested a 4th alternative, but it is not possible, as Jesus did not leave this option open:
 - (4) Jesus was a good, noble teacher, who was misunderstood by his opponents and followers.
- You may wish to select this 4th option, but to do so you will have to reject all the historical information we have about Jesus, both within and outside the Bible—Christian, Jewish, and Pagan. How will that stand up one day when you face God to answer for what you have done with your life?

Conclusions

- Options (1) and (2) cannot account for the fact that Jesus fulfilled OT prophecies, some of which were far beyond the ability of any human to fulfill.
- Likewise, Jesus' teachings do not fit those of a deceiver or madman (Jn 10:19-21).
- What will you do with Jesus? That is the great question you have to settle.

Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?

Lecture 6



The Importance of This Question

- If Jesus rose from the dead, then options (1) and (2) in Lecture 5 are not viable.
- If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then all of Christianity is finally a delusion, no matter how good its ethics may be.
- If Jesus rose from the dead, then God has put his stamp of approval on Jesus' claims.
- If Jesus rose, then one day you too will have to answer for what you have done with your life.

The Question of Miracle

- Clearly, the resurrection is a miracle. If miracles can't happen, then this one didn't.
- If miracles can happen, then (as we shall see below) the evidence for this one is as good as for any other in human history.
- We discuss first some of the common objections to the occurrence of miracles.

Hume's Objections to Miracles

□ David Hume objects:

- Miracles violate natural law.
- Natural law is a reflection of our total experience.
- We believe reports of witnesses to the extent they fit our experience and doubt them to the extent they don't.
- So no miracle should be believed, since witnesses can lie and human senses can be deceived.

□ Response:

- The argument assumes the result, since miracle reports are part of our total experience.
- Hume's procedure would explain away miracles even if they do occur.

Harnack's Objections to Miracles

- Adolf Harnack objects:
 - In ancient times, miracles were thought to be everyday occurrences.
 - The ancients did not know enough about natural law to distinguish a miracle from a natural event.
- Response:
 - Not all ancients believed in miracles, e.g., Sadducees, Epicureans.
 - None of Jesus' miracles are easily explained as natural events.

Bultmann's Objections to Miracles

- Rudolf Bultmann objects:
 - The universe is a closed system of cause & effect.
 - Not even God can break into this closed system.
- Response:
 - We don't know enough scientifically about our universe to know it is a closed system.
 - This claim faces problems in the realm of origins, at the quantum level, and on the scale of the cosmos.

Historical Evidence for the Resurrection

- The New Testament itself is evidence, since all of it was written within 70 years of the event, and it includes the testimony of numerous eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus and his post-resurrection appearances.
- So is the existence of Christianity, which stakes its whole validity on his resurrection, which has changed countless lives, the calendar of most of the world, and has become the world's largest & most widespread religion.

Historical Evidence for the Resurrection

- If Jesus' resurrection never happened, his opponents had an excellent opportunity to crush the resurrection story at its beginning.
 - Jesus' burial was in the major city of Judaism.
 - Its authorities were opposed to the movement from the first.

- The early Christian leaders who claimed to have seen the resurrected Jesus were willing to die rather than give up their testimony, though they gained nothing in this life by their obstinacy.

Alternatives: Fraud

- The Fraud Theory maintains:
 - Jesus' disciples stole the body from the tomb.
 - This is the earliest competing theory.
- Response:
 - Not a very satisfactory theory at the time, with soldiers at tomb.
 - The NT says the soldiers were bribed to say this.
 - Disciples seem too scared to try this.
 - Why die for a fraud? What is there to gain?

Alternatives: Coma

- The Coma Theory maintains:
 - Jesus went into a coma on the cross, was mistakenly thought dead.
 - He revived later in the tomb, got out and appeared to his disciples.
- Response:
 - Walking on nail-pierced feet!
 - Impression on disciples? Guards?
 - Unconsciousness on cross → asphyxiation

Alternatives: Hallucination

- The Hallucination Theory maintains:
 - Jesus died on cross and was buried.
 - Disciples later had (grief-induced) hallucinations that he was alive.

- Response:
 - Problem of the empty tomb
 - The nature of hallucinations vs reported appearances
 - Appearances to an unbeliever & an opponent

Conclusions

- There is excellent historical evidence for the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, as good as for any miracle in history, even for any event in history.
- There is only so much that historical evidence can do.
 - People can doubt anything they want from history (particularly after centuries).
 - No eyewitness can contradict them, at least in this life.
 - But what if there is a judgment to come?

Conclusions

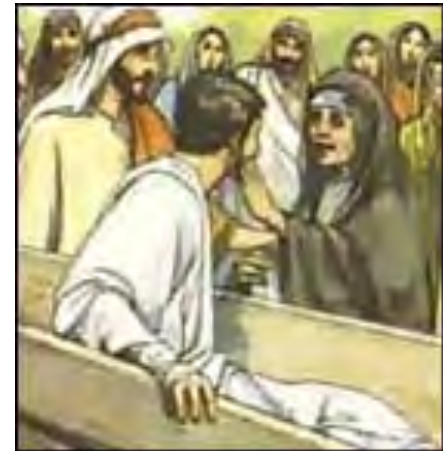
- The response (by Lessing) that we cannot base our most profound beliefs on mere historical evidence misreads the nature of what Jesus has done.
- Jesus has provided a solution to our deepest need and given adequate historical & scientific evidence he is speaking the truth.
- Jesus is offering you an opportunity to escape ultimate disaster.

Conclusions

- If you set the level of proof too high, you will have no one but yourself to blame for not responding properly.
 - Johnstown flood
 - New York twin towers
- What are you going to do with Jesus?

Is There Life After Death?

Lecture 7



Introduction

One of the great questions people have asked over the ages: "What happens when I die?"

- Do I cease to exist?
- Do I get born into another body?
- Do I move to heaven or hell?

What the Bible Says

- We have suggested in previous lectures that:
 - God exists
 - He is the infinite, personal God of the Bible.
- The Bible says:
 - It is appointed to man once to die and after that judgment (Heb 9:27)
 - Being "born again" is not about reincarnation (Jn 3:3 in context).

What the Bible Says

- At death we neither cease to exist, nor come back to earth for another chance.
- This life is the crucial place in which we must make the choices that determine our destiny forever, whether:
 - A life of bliss beyond imagination
 - An existence of everlasting pain & regret

Different Kinds of Life

The Bible pictures two different kinds of existence in the age to come:

- (1) Life with God in the age to come is life indeed, life to the full.
- (2) Separation from God in the age to come is so unlike even this imperfect life here & now that it is called "the second death."

Near-Death Experiences & Such

- What about those reports of people who have experienced death or come close to it, and have come back with stories that indicate it is not so bad even if you don't believe in God?
- Are these an unrepresentative selection?
 - There is evidence of unpleasant near-death experiences which are apparently soon suppressed by those who experienced them.
- Are these experiences fictional?
 - If not all supernatural beings are good guys, how do we know near-death experiences are true rather than "virtual reality" to encourage those experiencing them?

Who Is Doing the Wishful Thinking?

- Christians are frequently accused of wishing their teachings to be true rather than getting them from God. In our English idiom, they are said to be guilty of “wishful thinking.”
- But the real question is, who is doing the wishful thinking?
 - Christians?
 - Reincarnationists?
 - Atheists?

Christians?

- Why invent a God like the God of the Bible?
 - He doesn't need anything from us.
 - We can't do him any favors.
 - We owe him everything.
 - He forgives the worst who turn to him.
 - He rejects even the best who think they are good enough.

- Wishful thinking in Christian circles tends to move away from the teaching of the Bible.

Reincarnationists?

- Nice to have another chance!
 - Nice for the rich & famous to think they deserve what they are getting.
 - Nice for the poor to think that if they work hard they will do better in the next life.
- Hard to see how Karma works by itself in a universe in which:
 - There is no personal God behind it,
 - The impersonal god (who is everything) is both good and bad.

Atheists?

- Atheists do lose the comfort of believing in God.
- But it's nice to think:
 - There will be no judgment.
 - There will be no hell.
 - We can indulge ourselves in this life.

Conclusions

Blaise Pascal, the famous French physicist, mathematician, and philosopher, put it well:

- Life is a great game of chance: We bet our life, which we cannot keep, against an uncertain future:
 - If we bet Christianity is true and are wrong:
 - We have lost, but only a few years, no matter how pleasant.
 - If we bet Christianity is false and are right:
 - We have won, but only a few years to do what we want.
 - If we bet Christianity is false and are wrong:
 - We have ruined ourselves for all eternity.
 - If we bet Christianity is true and are right:
 - We have gained everlasting happiness even if we have gotten ourselves killed a few years early here on earth.
- How will you bet?

How Can I Know God?

Lecture 8



Introduction

- Christianity offers us what few other religions offer, and which none other can deliver:
- The opportunity to have a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe!
- To know God, we need to be saved.
- The Bible tells us how this can happen.

God's Plan of Salvation

One way to summarize this:

- Grace – Salvation is a free gift
- Man – Not able to live by his own rules
- God – Just, cannot ignore our disobedience
 - Merciful, doesn't want us to suffer punishment
- Christ – God's way of being just & merciful
- Faith – to receive God's forgiveness, we must turn away from our rebellion, trust in Jesus as our sacrifice, ask God to forgive us.

God's Plan of Salvation

- Another way to summarize: Four Spiritual Laws:
 - (1) God loves you & has a wonderful plan for your life (love, Jn 3:16; plan, Jn 10:10)
 - (2) Humans are sinful & separated from God (sinful, Rom 3:23; separated, Rom 6:23)
 - (3) Jesus is God's only provision for our sin (died, Rom 5:8; rose, 1 Cor 15:3-6; only way, Jn 14:6)
 - (4) We must individually receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord (receive, Jn 1:12; by faith, Eph 2:8-9; by invitation, Rev 3:20)

Conclusion

- Do you want a life worth living?
- Do you want a life that will count forever?
- You can have it!
- In Jesus Christ!

The End



May this be the beginning of new life for you!