

WHY DO WE NEED TO TEACH CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES?

Jim O'Connor

Jim is a graduate of the Northside School of Preaching in Harrison, Arkansas. He began preaching in 1969. In 2001 he made his 12th journey to Europe and his 28th trip to India. His overseas work is under the oversight of the elders at 39th Street. His labors take him regularly to India, Estonia, Latvia, Philippines, Singapore and Costa Rica. His wife Judy is his co-laborer on many of the evangelistic journeys. They are also strongly involved in correspondence course work throughout the world. Jim has authored many tracts in the International Bible Studies series and also many of the lessons in the IBS Correspondence Course series. He is one of the writers for the International Bible Studies publication. While in the United States he is a frequent speaker on lectureships and gospel meetings.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

These are the words of Luke 1:1-4. Luke says he is writing these “Christian evidences” so that his reader would have opportunity to **“know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed”**. This surely answers the question we are to deal with in this lesson. We need to teach Christian evidences to add certainty to knowledge - or to generate faith (John 20:30-31); and to add strength and stability to the faith already generated (Ephesians 4:14). Evidence generates faith (John 20:30-31), which, in turn, becomes an evidence (Hebrews 11:1).

WHY DO WE NEED TO TEACH CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES ?

Because, for some reason or other, people simply will not apply common sense to a religious subject. Unbelief is a cancer to our world. It is not natural because too many things have to be ignored to obtain it. One must close their eyes to clear evidence in nature to the existence of a “First Cause” - evidence that is undeniable for one working with only a smidgen of common sense. Indeed, *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”* (Psalms 14:1 and 53:1). One can step outside the city lights on a clear night, look up into the heavens, and know there is a God. *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork”* (Psalms 19:1). However, with the so-called “evidence of evolution”, and the damage it has done to the thinking of society, one must assert and prove the obvious, that man is more than an “involuntary act of nature”, but rather, that he is the crowning act in the creation of all things by one we know as the *“living and true God”* (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Paul declared that *“in him we live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:28). Common sense ought to inform us that we did not “just happen”, nor did we “evolve from a lower life form”, but that a higher intelligence created us. Life does not come from non-life. Something does not come from nothing. These are common sense truths that cannot be denied. The “Law of the excluded middle” - that a thing either is or it isn’t (it cannot both “be” and “not be”) - forces us to choose one

or the other, but it also forces us to refuse to believe anything that would violate that law. The evidence is clear, there is a God in heaven who cares about His creation.

We must teach Christian evidences because there are multiple millions of people in the world who believe in God, but do not believe that Jesus Christ is His Son. When Jesus said, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1) he was defining our work. We must not only seek to generate faith in the hearts of men and women concerning the existence of God, his character, etc.; but we must also deal with the evidence which will motivate people to say, as Peter did; “*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*” (John 6:68-69). The very eternal souls of men and women depends upon them believing this. Jesus declared in John 8:24 “*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins*”. The reason for this is that Jesus came “*to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). He came not “*to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*” (John 3:17). Obviously one must conclude from this that to ignore Jesus is to ignore hope, and to reject Jesus is to reject hope. Since he is “*the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6) then to reject him is to reject the way, the truth, and the life.

We must teach Christian evidences because the Lord commanded it. When Jesus told the disciples to go “*into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15), he was commanding that Christian evidences be preached because that is exactly what the gospel is. We are not to expect people to believe something just because we say it. I don't do that, and I certainly don't expect anyone else to. The facts of the gospel (the death, burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearance of Christ - 1 Corinthians 15:1-5) are to be believed because the evidence is clear and undeniable. There were eye-witnesses to every facet of the gospel, and we have their testimony to the truth of the matter, backed up by the miracles they were able to perform to confirm the truth of their word. The writer of Hebrews wrote of this evidence when he asked; “*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?*” (Hebrews 2:3-4). We cannot perform the miracles (nor do we need to) but we can certainly preach the miracles that confirmed the truth, as well as the truth they confirmed. In Acts 15:21, James said; “*For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day*”. Surely none would contend that those who preached Moses parted the Red Sea every Saturday, or turned sticks into snakes, or any such thing. None apparently thought to start an Exodus Church of Moses and pretend to perform the same miracles he performed. (I point this out to the shame of those today who call themselves “Pentecostal” and pretend to perform the miracles of Jesus and the apostles). To preach Moses one would preach what he said, and what he did to confirm what he said. It is the same in preaching the gospel. As we preach “*Jesus Christ, and him crucified*” (1 Corinthians 2:2) we preach also the evidence that proves the truth of that historical happening, as well as the blessings attached to it.

We must teach Christian evidences because it is essential to faith. The book of John is introduced with the words, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men"* (John 1:1-4). This is John's proposition. He then uses the next 19 chapters or so to prove the truth of that proposition. He recorded seven signs or miracles which Jesus did (2:1-11; 4:46-53; 5:1-9; 6:3-14; 6:16-21; 9:1-7; 11:1-46), and then wrote in 20:30-31, *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing ye might have life through his name"*. The Holy Spirit did not expect people to believe what the apostles said just because the apostles said it. He gave evidence of their credibility, which became an evidence of the truth of what they had to say. One should not believe anything without credible evidence. The apostle John gave his inspired testimony in these words - *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life:"* (1 John 1:1) This is empirical evidence (evidence from experience and observation) and is credible as long as the one giving the evidence is credible.

We must teach Christian evidences because it strengthens us as we do so. "He who chops his own wood warms himself twice". The more we teach it the more we will ourselves be reminded of the foundation for our faith. The evidence is sound, and so will our faith be when we preach that evidence.

CONCLUSION

We must preach (we cannot win souls in silence), and we must preach Christian evidences so that our message, wonderful as it is, will be believed by those to whom we preach it. The credibility of our Lord and his gospel is at stake, and so are the souls of men and women throughout the world.