

Apologetics-Defending the Faith
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What About Other World Views?

The objective of this session is to address the questions concerning different _____, different _____, and teachings concerning the _____ of Jesus Christ.

The Question of Religion:
Aren't All Religions Basically the Same?

Before one tackles the question of religion, it is important to understand the significance of the term, _____.

Definition of Worldview:

Worldview provides a framework for *generating, sustaining, and applying* _____ – it is ones' *general view of the universe and our place in it* which affects one's *conduct*. Worldview is one's system of *beliefs*; their *ideology*; it is *how one sees the world*. Everyone has a world view, whether or not they can articulate it. This means everyone possesses their own theological system of beliefs. For this reason, *theological apologetics* not only focuses on systems of theology that challenge the centrality of Christianity's core essentials, but it also addresses the position that must be taken in respect to the *seven (7) major world-views* in relationship to God:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Atheism - God does not exist; if He does exist, we cannot know anything about Him.

Polytheism - There are a multitude of Gods.

Panentheism - God comes from the world, and the world comes from God.

Finitism - God is not all-powerful and is limited in nature, because evil exists.

Pantheism -Everything that exists is God.

Deism - God is known only through reason and nature.

Theism - God is the one who created all things and sustains all things.

After the establishment of a *foundational* worldview, the choice or consideration for a particular *religion* can be made which best fits that world view.

Religious apologetics focuses on addressing the origin of religion, with a major emphasis and contrast of the *five (5) major world religions* of our age.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

In addition to the five (5) major world religions Christian apologetics must also defend against the teaching of secular _____. The *worldviews* associated with these *major religions* are as follows:

Atheistic Worldview: (Buddhism, Humanism)

- *God does not exist*
- *The universe is a “brute fact”*
- *The universe did not have a beginning – it is eternal-past*
- *Jesus was just a man – if he existed at all*
- *There is no spiritual realm*
- *There are no supernatural causes*
- *Miracles do not happen*
- *The virgin birth and resurrection events are not real historical events*
- *We are mere matter*
- *Life is the result of chance + time + energy*

- *The universe may appear designed, but isn't*
- *Morality is relative: simply the product of socio-evolutionary processes*
- *We cease to exist at the grave*

Pantheistic Worldview: (Hinduism)

- *“God is all” – not personal*
- *The universe is (or part of) God (Hindu -> Brahman is the material & efficient cause)*
- *The universe is eternally recurring, cyclical*
- *Jesus is God – and so are we!*
- *All is spiritual*
- *All cause/effect is God*
- *Miracles irrelevant – all activity is divine*
- *Jesus was not virgin-born and did not rise from the dead*
- *Matter is illusory – there is only spirit (some pantheists separate body and soul)*
- *A biogenesis is left open – some pantheists believe evolution is divine mechanism*
- *The universe is not designed*
- *Morality is objective and tied to the divine Unity (for some tied to nature)*
- *No immortality (absorption) – others (soul separates from body)*

Theistic Worldview: Theism is taught by three (3) of the world's religions:
(Judaism, Islam, & Christianity)

Islamic Worldview

- *There exists a God (Allah) – He is not triune*
- *Allah created the heavens and the Earth (seven universes in layers)*
- *The universe had a beginning from a solid mass of water*
- *Jesus is not the son of Allah but a great prophet – Muhammad is the greatest and last prophet (570-632AD)*
- *There is a spiritual realm*
- *Natural causes are not the only causes in space-time*
- *Miracles happen*
- *Jesus was virgin born, spoke in the cradle but was not crucified (Allah “lifted him up to his presence”)*
- *We are matter and spirit*

- *Life is not the merely result of chance + time + energy*
- *The universe is designed*
- *Morality is universal and objective based on the commands of Allah*
- *Our existence does not cease at the grave*

Judaism Worldview

- *There exists a personal triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)*
- *God created the heavens and the Earth*
- *The universe had a beginning (it is not eternal-past)*
- *Jesus is the Son of God*
- *There is a spiritual realm*
- *Natural causes are not the only causes in space-time*
- *Miracles happen*
- *The virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus were real events in history*
- *We are more than just matter – we are spirit and matter*
- *Life is not merely the result of chance + time + energy*
- *The universe is designed*
- *Morality is universal and objective based on divine command*
- *Our existence does not cease at the grave*

Christian Worldview

- *There exists a personal triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)*
- *God created the heavens and the Earth*
- *The universe had a beginning (it is not eternal-past)*
- *Jesus is the Son of God*
- *There is a spiritual realm*
- *Natural causes are not the only causes in space-time*
- *Miracles happen*
- *The virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus were real events in history*
- *We are more than just matter – we are spirit and matter*
- *Life is not merely the result of chance + time + energy*
- *The universe is designed*
- *Morality is universal and objective based on divine command*
- *Our existence does not cease at the grave*

Note: Two individuals holding to worldviews that possess _____ overlap in their core beliefs will have a *difficult time* relating to each other.

The Question of Sects: *Why Are There So Many Denominations?*

Why Are There Denominations?

Even though God only gave one Bible with *one gospel*, people do have *different* ideas of how to _____ and _____ it. When churches identify with one another on *common ground*, they *band together*. When they disagree on points of _____ or _____, they tend to *separate*. This disagreement is not because of *ambiguity* in Scripture, but often it is because of *sinfulness* or *ignorance* in people. Sadly, many Christians primarily identify themselves not as *Christ followers*, but by their *denomination*. While association with like-minded people is important, we need to be careful to keep our priorities right, and ensure that our devotion to *Scripture* is higher than our devotion to *denomination*. To further answer this question, we must also *differentiate* between denominations within the body of Christ and non-Christian _____ and _____ religions. *Presbyterians* and *Lutherans* are examples of *Christian* denominations. *Mormons* and *Jehovah's Witnesses* are examples of cults (*groups claiming to be Christian but denying one or more of the essentials of the Christian faith*). *Islam* and *Buddhism* are entirely separate religions.

The rise of denominations within the Christian faith can be traced back to the _____, the movement to “reform” the Roman Catholic Church during the 16th century, out of which four (4) major divisions or traditions of Protestantism would emerge: _____, _____, _____, and _____. From these four, other denominations grew over the centuries.

The *Lutheran* denomination was named after *Martin Luther* and was based on his teachings. The *Methodists* got their name because their founder, *John Wesley*, was famous for coming up with “methods” for spiritual growth. *Presbyterians* are named for their view on church leadership—the Greek word for elder is *presbyteros*. *Baptists* got their name because they

have always emphasized the importance of *baptism*. Each denomination has a *slightly* different *doctrine* or *emphasis* from the others, such as:

- the method of *baptism*;
- the practice of an *open* or *closed* Lord's Supper,
- the *sovereignty* of God vs. *free will* in the matter of salvation,
- the existence of the “*sign*” gifts in the modern era, and so on.

The point of these divisions is _____ *Christ as Lord and Savior*, but rather honest differences of opinion by believers seeking to honor God and retain doctrinal purity according to their *consciences* and their *understanding* of His Word. Denominations today are many and varied. The original “*mainline*” denominations mentioned above have spawned numerous offshoots such as:

- Assemblies of God,
- Christian and Missionary Alliance,
- Nazarenes,
- Evangelical Free,
- Independent Bible churches, etc.

Some denominations emphasize slight doctrinal differences, but more often they simply offer different styles of _____ to fit the differing tastes and preferences of Christians. But make no mistake: as believers, we must be of one mind on the _____ of the faith, but beyond that there is a great of *latitude* in how Christians should worship in a corporate setting.

The Downside of Christian Denominations?

There seems to be at least *two* (2) major problems with *denominationalism*. First, nowhere in Scripture is there a *mandate* for denominationalism; to the contrary the mandate is for *union* and *connectivity*.

The second problem is that history tells us that denominationalism is the result of, or caused by, *conflict* and *confrontation* which leads to *division* and *separation*. Jesus told us that a *house divided against itself* cannot stand (Luke 11:17). This general principle can and should be applied to the church. Some of the *problems* we are faced with today as we look at denominationalism and its more recent history are the following:

1. Denominations are based on *disagreements* over the _____ of Scripture. An example would be the meaning and purpose of baptism. *Is baptism a requirement for salvation or, is it symbolic of the salvation process?* There are denominations on both sides of this issue, and have used the issue to separate and form other denominations.
2. Disagreements over the interpretation of Scripture are taken _____ and become points of *contention*. This leads to arguments which can do much to destroy the *witness* of church.
3. The church many times chooses to resolve its differences _____ the body. Today the media uses our differences against us to demonstrate that we are not *unified in thought or purpose*.
4. Some denominations are used by men out of _____ - _____ and thereby, find themselves in a state of *self-destruction*, being led into apostasy by those promoting their *personal agendas*.
5. The value of _____ is found in the ability to pool our *gifts* and *resources* to promote the Kingdom to a lost world. This runs *contrary* to divisions caused by *denominationalism*.

So, what is a believer to do? Should we ignore denominations; should we just not go to church and worship on our own at home? The answer to both questions is an emphatic, *No!* What we should be seeking is a body of believers where the Gospel of Christ is *preached*, where individuals can have a *personal relationship* with the Lord, where they can join in biblical ministries that are *spreading the Gospel* and *glorifying God*.

The *selection* of a church home should be done on the basis of its *relationship to Christ*, how well it is serving the *community*, where the pastor is *preaching the Gospel without fear*, and is encouraged to do so. As believers, there are certain *basic* doctrines that we must believe, but beyond that there is *latitude* on how we can serve and worship; it is this *latitude* that is the only good reason for denominations.

What Is a Non-Denominational Church?

This question really has *several* answers, and they can be either *simple* or *complex*. The *simplest* answer is that first, a non-denominational church is defined as any church which is not part of a _____ denomination. A denomination is a church organization that exercises some sort of _____ over the *local churches* that comprise it. Examples of denominations are *Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist, Episcopal, Wesleyan, Methodist*, etc. Non-denominational churches go by many *different names* and hold to a *wide variety* of beliefs. Another major reason why so many churches choose to have a non-denominational status as a major consideration is the *freedom* to direct the *ministry* and *teaching* of the local church without interference or _____ from without. When we look to the Bible, the evidence points to each church as *self-governing* and *answerable* directly to God Himself. The measure of any church, whether inside or out of a denomination, is not how it is organized nor what name it is called, but rather *how faithfully it adheres to the teachings of the Word of God!* No church is *inerrant*, because churches are made of people who are capable of *error*. Even the apostles, with all the gifts God gave them, were not without error. For this reason, all believers need to be like the *Bereans*, checking what we are taught against the Word of God to find out if those things are so (Acts 17:11).

The Question of Exclusivity:

Is Christ Really the Only Way to God?

Every religion makes exclusive claims. That is what makes them *distinct* religions. Some people believe that each religion is like a *different* road leading to the *same* place. However, the answers to *who Jesus is* and *what must be done to attain salvation* differ from religion to religion.

It may be that *Hinduism* is perfectly open to accepting Jesus into its _____ of gods. It may be that *Buddhists* are willing to allow Jesus is someone who attained _____. It may be that *Islam* is willing to admit Jesus was a great _____. But for *Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam* to accept *Jesus*, they must _____ much or all of what Christ taught about Himself and the world.

The acceptance of Jesus by other religions does not reveal the *exclusive* nature of Christianity. This exclusive nature is what we mean when we say something is true. *All truth* is exclusive by definition. *Contradictory* statements cannot each be true *at the same time* and *in the same way*. This is why people do not *adhere* to more than one religion *simultaneously*. In order for people to change their religious beliefs, they must convert their thinking about *God, themselves, and the world* from one way to another.

Lastly, if Jesus is not the exclusive avenue to salvation, but just *one of many* ways, then *why did He die?* Or for that matter, *why did He live at all?* For what possible *reason* would God become *incarnate* in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, live a life of *perfect obedience, service, and self-denial*, suffer *torture* and then *execution* in one of the most horrible ways imaginable, if there were plenty of other *avenues* to God? The teaching that salvation is available through *Christ alone* permeates the New Testament (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). This means that one must believe *specifically* in Jesus in order to be saved (Romans 10:9-14). Consider the *most powerful statements* in Scripture that support the *exclusivity* of Christ.

- Jesus claimed to be the _____ of _____ in an exclusive and absolute sense (Matt. 11:27)

He claims to be the only one who can reveal the Father to men.

- Jesus claimed to be the _____ avenue of access to God (John 14:6)

Jesus' claim of being the sole avenue of access to God as well as God incarnate are not just an important part of His teaching, but it is the foundation on which all His teachings rest. They are the primary distinctions that separate Him from other religious leaders such as the Buddha, Muhammad, and Moses.

The Apostle Peter testifies that _____ can only be found in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12)

Yes, Jesus is the only way to God, but it is *more than that!* By teaching us to *pray* in His name, Jesus is claiming to be in the position of _____ or _____ between man and God. It is only through praying in Jesus, name that believers can have _____ to God. This is not to say that invoking the name

of Jesus itself is some inherently *magical incantation* that obliges God to hear and answer prayer. Rather, it is belief in the *work* and *person* of Jesus that allows believers to come before a righteous and holy God.

Many people *sincerely* believe false things, but that does not change the *faultiness* of what they *erroneously* believe. The object of _____, the *content*, is what determines whether a religion is *true* or *false*, not the *sincerity* of its advocates.