

**Apologetics-Defending the Faith**  
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**More Prominent Questions**  
**About the Christian Faith**

The objective of this session is to address the questions of \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, and on to the ultimate question of \_\_\_\_\_.

**The Question of Revelation:**

*Are There Still Prophets in the World Today?*

There are those who claim to be apostles and prophets by their own word. Others claim it by showing their *signs, wonders, and miracles*. This so-called signs and wonders movement is part of an effort to restore what is understood to be the \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ ministry described in Ephesians 4:11. The concept of the five-fold ministry comes from Ephesians 4:11, "It was he who gave some to be (1) *apostles*, some to be (2) *prophets*, some to be (3) *evangelists*, and some to be (4) *pastors* and (5) *teachers*." Primarily as a result of this verse, some believe God has *restored*, or is *restoring*, the offices of apostle and prophet in the church today. However, the proponents of this movement today are operating under a \_\_\_\_\_ of apostles and prophets of the Bible. The current teaching of the restoration of prophet and the office of apostle is far from what Scripture describes of the men who held the *gift* of prophet and the *office* of apostle. Those who teach the restoration of the office teach that men who claim to be apostles & prophets should never be *spoken against*, should never be *questioned*, because the person who speaks against them is speaking against God. However, everything the Scripture teaches point people to the Bible as the \_\_\_\_\_ authority. So, men who claim to hold the office of apostles and prophets today make themselves the final authority, something Paul and the Twelve never did!

Ephesians 2:20 informs us that the church is "built on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the *chief cornerstone*." Although Jesus Christ is most definitely active in the church today, His role as the cornerstone of the church was completed with His *death, burial, resurrection, and ascension*. If the work of the cornerstone is, in that sense, complete, so must the work of the apostles and prophets, who were the foundation, be complete. The role of the apostles and prophets

was to *proclaim* God's revelation and to *teach* the new truth the church would need to grow and thrive. The apostles and prophets completed this mission by giving us the Word of God. The Word of God is the completed \_\_\_\_\_ of God. The Bible contains everything the church needs to know to grow, thrive, and fulfill God's mission (2 Timothy 3:15-16). Now that the cornerstone work of the apostles and prophets is complete, the office of apostle and prophet is no longer operative. The ongoing work of the apostles and prophets is manifested in the Holy Spirit speaking through and teaching us God's Word.

### A Word About Apostles

During the first century of the church, there was an \_\_\_\_\_ of apostle and there was a \_\_\_\_\_ of apostle (that is not to be confused with the *office*—they are separate). The *office* or *position* of apostle was held by the 12 disciples of Jesus plus Matthias, who took Judas' place. Paul (formerly Saul), was also an apostle. Those who held the office or position of apostle were chosen specifically by Christ (Mark 3:16-19). The Lord confirmed His signs to the apostles' words to show a \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ from Israel and its priesthood to the apostles who were laying down the foundation for a new entity, the church. This unique anointing testified to Israel and to the Gentiles a *new order* of leadership.

Among those who had the *spiritual gift* of apostle were James (1 Cor 15:7; Gal. 1:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; 1Cor. 9:6), Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7), possibly Silas and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:7), and Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6, 9). This latter group had the *gift* of apostleship but not the apostolic "*office*" conferred upon the Twelve and Paul. The word "apostle" means "one \_\_\_\_\_ as an authoritative delegate." Those who had the gift of apostle, then, were those who carried the gospel message with God's authority. This was true of those who held the office of Apostle (like Paul) and those who had the spiritual gift (like Apollos). Though there are men today who are sent by God to spread the gospel, it is best NOT to refer to them as apostles because of the confusion this causes since many are not aware of the two different uses of the term apostle.

### A Word About Prophets

The gift of prophet seems to have been a \_\_\_\_\_ gift given by Christ for the laying of the foundation of the church. The prophet proclaimed a message from the Lord to

the early believers. Sometimes a prophet's message was \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Samuel 3:21; Daniel 2:30, 47) and sometimes a prophet's message was \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 11:28, 21:10). The early Christians did not have the complete Bible and some did not have access to any of the books of the New Testament. Therefore, New Testament prophets "*filled the gap*" by proclaiming God's message to the people who would not have access to it otherwise. So, the Lord provided gifted men called prophets who proclaimed messages from God to His people until the canon of Scripture was complete. The contemporary view of this would be to suppose that prophets simply changed from being *proclaimers* to \_\_\_\_\_, like preachers who elucidate texts for God's word. Thus, prophetic knowledge of God has to now reckon with \_\_\_\_\_.

### Prophets & Prophecy

God is able and still does speak in various ways, yet He has chosen a more explicit but simple way to convey His message. It is by \_\_\_\_\_. Hebrews 1:1 tells us that God has spoken in times past to the fathers by the prophets in many various ways, but in these last days, He has spoken by Jesus Christ. Once the New Testament was completed, there was no longer a need for prophets to reveal God's will or new revelational knowledge. His Son's *words* are all we need.

So, are there true prophets today? Well, *yes!* and *no!* If you mean, "Do people speak with prophetic voices today?" *Yes!* Can God give someone a message to deliver to someone else? *Absolutely!* However, if you mean, "Are there prophets like Israel had in the Old Testament?" *No!* Prophets are not sent, as in Old Testament times, to rebuke; rather the gift is to *console* and *build us up*. Does God reveal truth to someone in a supernatural way and enable that person to deliver that message to others? *Absolutely!* But is this the biblical gift of prophecy? *No!* Whenever a person claims to be speaking for God (*the essence of prophecy*) the key is to compare what is spoken with what the Bible says. If God were to speak through a person today, *it would be in complete agreement with what God has already said in His Word* for God does not contradict Himself.

1 John 4:1 instructs us,

*"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."*

1 Thess. 5:20-21 declares,

*“Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good.”*

So, whether is it a “word from the Lord” or a supposed prophecy, our response should be the same: *Compare what is shared to what the Word of God says.* If it *contradicts* the Bible, throw it out. If it *agrees* with the Bible, pray for wisdom and discernment as to how to apply the message (2 Tim 3:16-17; James 1:5). We don’t need \_\_\_\_\_ prophets and apostles today; We just need to listen more carefully to the \_\_\_\_\_ ones!

## **The Question of Salvation:**

*“Are We Saved by Faith or Works?”*

### Faith Alone or Faith Plus Works

This is perhaps the most important question in all of Christian theology. This question is the cause of the \_\_\_\_\_, the split between the Protestant churches and Catholicism. This question is a key difference between biblical Christianity and most of the “Christian” cults. Is salvation by faith alone, or by faith *plus works*? Am I saved just by believing in Jesus, or do I have to believe in Jesus and do certain things?

The Bible is very clear that salvation is \_\_\_\_\_; God does not save everyone. The one condition for salvation is *faith* in Jesus Christ. Nearly 200 times in the New Testament, faith (or belief) is declared to be the sole condition for salvation (John 1:12; Acts 16:31). Everything necessary to provide salvation of believers was *fully accomplished* by Jesus Himself, who lived a perfect life, took God’s judgment for sin, and rose again from the dead (Heb 10:12). The believers’ salvation depends *solely* upon Jesus Christ. He is our *substitute*, taking sin’s penalty (2 Cor. 5:21); He is our *Savior* from sin (John 1:29); and He is the *author and finisher* of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

The Bible is also quite clear that our own works \_\_\_\_\_ help merit salvation. We are saved “not because of righteous things we had done” (Titus 3:5). “Not by works” (Eph. 2:9). “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10). This means that offering sacrifices, keeping the commandments, going to church, being baptized, and other good deeds are *incapable* of saving anyone. No matter how “good” we are, we can never measure

up to God's standard of holiness (Romans 3:23; Matthew 19:17; Isaiah 64:6). One day, some people asked Jesus what they could do to *please* God: "*What must we do to do the works God requires?*" Jesus immediately points them to faith: "The work of God is this: to \_\_\_\_\_ in the one he has sent" (John 6:28-29). So, the question is about God's requirements and Jesus' answer is that God's requirement is that you believe in Him.

We must also understand that salvation is an act of God's \_\_\_\_\_. Grace is God giving us something we cannot earn or deserve. According to Romans 11:6, "works" of any kind *destroys* grace—the idea is that a worker earns payment, while the recipient of grace simply receives it, unearned. Since salvation is all of grace, it cannot be earned. Faith, therefore, is a *non-work*. Faith cannot truly be considered a "work," or else it would destroy grace. (Rom. 4:1-6; 13-16). To take this a step further, true faith cannot be considered a *work* because even faith is a \_\_\_\_\_ from God, not something we produce on our own (Eph 2:8). "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me *draws* him" (John 6:44). Praise the Lord for His power to save and for His grace to make salvation a reality!

### Faith vs. Works

The question of *faith alone* or *faith plus works* is made difficult by some hard-to-reconcile Bible passages. Misunderstanding the *relationship* of faith and works comes from a misunderstanding of what the Bible teaches about *salvation*. The mixture of works and faith together creates a *works-based* system of righteousness which is totally contrary to what Scripture teaches. James 2:14-26 is sometimes taken out of context in an attempt to create a works-based system of righteousness, but that is contrary to many other Scriptures (Rom. 3:28, 5:1 and Gal. 2:16, 3:24). On the surface there seems to be a polar opposite difference between \_\_\_\_\_ (salvation is by faith *alone*) and \_\_\_\_\_ (salvation is by faith *plus works*).

Paul dogmatically says that justification is *by faith alone* (Ephesians 2:8-9), while James appears to be saying that justification is *by faith plus works*. This apparent problem is answered by examining what exactly James is talking about. James is *refuting* the belief that a person can have faith *without* producing any good works (James 2:17-18). James is emphasizing the point that \_\_\_\_\_ faith in Christ will \_\_\_\_\_ a changed life and good works (James 2:20-26). James is not saying that justification is by

faith plus works, but rather that a person who is truly justified by faith will have *good works* in his/her life. In other words, “Works are not the \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation; works are the \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation.” Therefore, James writes “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). Faith without works is *dead faith* because the lack of works reveals an *unchanged* life or a spiritually dead heart. If a person claims to be a believer, but has no good works in his/her life, then he/she likely does not have *genuine* faith in Christ (James 2:14, 17, 20, 26). Thus, James is clearly making a contrast between two different types of faith—*true* faith that saves and *false* faith that is dead.

Paul says the same thing in his writings. The good fruit believers should have in their lives is listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Immediately after telling us that we are saved by faith, not works (Ephesians 2:8-9); Paul informs us that we were created to do good works (Ephesians 2:10). Paul expects just as much of a changed life as James does: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). James and Paul do not disagree in their teaching regarding salvation. They approach the same subject from \_\_\_\_\_ perspectives. Paul simply emphasized that justification is by faith alone while James put emphasis on the fact that genuine faith in Christ produces good works.

Works come from true faith and a heart that has been justified by God by faith alone. The works that follow salvation do not make us righteous before God; they simply flow from a heart that has been *regenerated* by the Holy Spirit as naturally as water flows downhill. The person who claims to be a Christian but lives in willful disobedience to Christ with a life that shows no works has a *false* or *dead* faith and is not saved. Saying we believe in Jesus does not save us, nor does religious service. What saves us is a life of faith demonstrated by *ongoing obedience* to God. How we live reveals what we *believe* and whether the faith we profess to have is a *living* faith.

### **The Question of Preparation:**

*“Are You Ready to Defend the Faith?”*

1 Peter 3:15 – *“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”*

## Defending the Faith

The classic verse promoting apologetics (the defense of the Christian faith) is 1 Peter 3:15 which basically says that believers are to make a *defense* “for the hope that you have.” The only way to do this effectively is to study the reasons for \_\_\_\_\_ we believe \_\_\_\_\_ we believe. This will prepare us to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Paul practiced what he preached; in fact, doing apologetics was his regular activity (Philippians 1:7). He refers to apologetics as an aspect of his mission in the same passage (v.16). He also made apologetics a requirement for *church leadership* in Titus 1:9. Jude, an apostle of Jesus, wrote that "although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to \_\_\_\_\_ for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (v.3). Jesus was His own apologist as He stated time and again that we should believe in Him because of the evidence He provided for what He taught (Jn 2:23; 10:25; 10:38; 14:29). In fact, the whole Bible is full of miracles specifically being done by God to confirm what He wanted us to believe (Exod. 4:1-8; 1 Kings 18:36-39; Acts 2:22-43; Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Cor. 12:12). Those who oppose these clear biblical teachings and examples may say things like “the Word of God does not need to be defended!” If not, then there is *no reason to believe it*, and if so, then *they have contradicted themselves*. However, as believers, we are \_\_\_\_\_ to use apologetics just as much as we are \_\_\_\_\_ to preach the gospel.