

# 24-0814wc Transcript

**24-0814wc - Christian Apologetics, p68, Tom Freed**

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## 24-0814 Wed. Class - Christian Apologetics, p68

Transcript (0:04 - 23:32)

### Transcript

**Teacher:** Tom Freed

We're doing a study on apologetics. Mainly off the book Apologetics from the Cross. So, we're almost done.

Like I said, maybe Scott will do the next study. We're wrapping it up. We've got like a chapter and a half to go.

We've been looking at how to deal with defeaters, which are tough questions and objections people have towards Christianity. A lot of people object towards Christianity, especially nowadays. You know, they have all these things they come at us with, if you are a Christian.

You know, it's only getting worse. So, we're going to talk to others about Jesus. I'm sure you've already heard some of these questions.

So, we already looked at defeater number one. Christianity is too restrictive. It denies people the opportunity to flourish by following their heart.

What we all know as Christians, God's rules aren't to restrict us, but to give us a more abundant life. Well, it may seem restrictive, but he only gives us the rules so we can live a better life. We follow his rules, you know.

Our life is way better. It's more peaceful. Things go our way.

Look at this country that wants to stop following God's rules. It's going downhill really fast before our own eyes. We looked at defeater number two.

The Christian sexual ethic is dehumanizing, and Christians are homophobic. You ever heard that, that Christians are homophobic? You know, there are some Christians that probably go overboard and protest and go too far one way, but the Bible does clearly say that homosexuality is wrong. Most of us aren't homophobic.

We're just trying to follow God's rules, his laws. I don't have anything against gay people, but, you know, it's any sex really outside of marriage that's wrong. But homosexuality is a big topic nowadays, and they're getting more militant.

You can see the agenda's being pushed. So Paul and Jesus both stated it was wrong through scriptures, among other verses. So we also looked at defeater number three.

Christians are a bunch of hypocrites. This includes many of the individuals I meet today and the way the church has collectively mistreated people throughout history. You ever heard that, that Christians are hypocrites? Some Christians are.

I mean, we all are in a way. None of us are perfect. I felt like a hypocrite before because I sin and do things I shouldn't.

But that's life. None of us are perfect. Only Jesus is.

The three relevant points can be made regarding the failure of individual Christians to live up to Christianity's high standards of virtue. One, just because someone claims to be a Christian and does something bad doesn't mean Christianity is bad. God made a church perfect, but when humans get involved, things get messed up, like every other institution.

Look at any institution. They have problems, you know. Look at the government.

Look at the teachers. Look at anywhere. They have issues.

When people get involved, you start having issues. But God, Jesus was perfect, and the church he made was perfect. So point number two, according to Christian theology, individual Christian growth takes place over time.

You don't instantly become the perfect Christian. It takes years. You never become perfect.

It's up and down, but hopefully we progress upward over time. Number three, sometimes people convert to Christianity out of abusive or unstable, dysfunctional situations. So not everybody comes from a great childhood or family environment.

Some people have a lot of work to do to grow spiritually than others. Also, we looked at it last week, many will bring up the church history of slavery and segregation. You ever hear that brought up? You know, the Bible had slavery.

First of all, the Bible does not develop or advocate a pro-slavery theology. Yes, it was allowed under certain circumstances, and even though the Israelites had slaves, they did have laws that treat them better than those in the world around them. So it was acceptable, but there were certain circumstances.

But God had rather have His people free, and that is why He freed the Jews from slavery in Egypt. And also concerning Onesimus, who was a slave, Paul said he was better off free by *Leman 116*. No longer as a slave, but better than a slave, is a dear brother.

He is very dear to me, but even dearer to you, both as man and as a brother in the Lord. But God said it's better to be free. God, you know, He freed the Israelites from Egypt because He knew, obviously, that being free is better than being a slave.

He did allow, like I said, under circumstances, like paying off debt and other things, and you weren't allowed to kidnap people and do certain things when enslaving people. But God definitely is not pro-slavery. So when God made man and woman in His own image, in doing so He assigned all people inherent worth and dignity.

So it was Christian men and women who, realizing that the image of God, theology, the Bible, ultimately played a pivotal role in undermining and abolishing slavery. The movement to end slavery was led by Christians who used arguments rooted both explicitly and implicitly in Scripture. Look at our country.

You know what this country is based on, that every man is free and every man has rights because they were created by God, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The same could be said about segregation. It is apparent the leadership of men and women such as Martin Luther King, Jr., James Lawson, Fannie Lou Hamer, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Bob Moses, the biblical revelation and Christian faith were driving focuses in the desegregation movement.

They believed in God's presence in the world and used nonviolent protest to overcome their oppression. So we can see that the Christians led the desegregation movement. Martin Luther King, Jr., I mean, he was a... His speeches always talked about God.

He was a Christian. And they used nonviolent means. So they had hope in the coming kingdom where there would be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free.

It motivated them to bring aspects of that kingdom into their present existence. Jesus is the ideal picture of humanity, and he's represented by imperfect disciples. That's a great point.

Even the disciples and the apostles were imperfect. Jesus was the perfect one. So people, they need to look to Jesus, not to us, if they want to decide to be a Christian or not.

So people want to focus on what we've done, but they're looking at the wrong thing. We'll look at the fear number four. Faith in contrast to reason and science is for people who believe things without evidence.

It is long past time that we move beyond the old myths about the supernatural and the divine and seek to discover truth using reason and empirical observation. Did you ever hear that? You know, that, well, I believe in science. You know, you just believe in religion.

They act like being a Christian is anti-science. I mean, there's scientific facts in the Bible from thousands of years ago that people have just discovered. God is the ultimate scientist.

The only reason we can discover science is because there was a creator who made everything that we can actually discover. But they do come at that with, oh, you know, I believe in science. I believe in a reason.

You just go off of faith. So we can identify the coming-of-age narrative that lies behind this defeater. One of the unchallenged axioms, many moderns subscribe to following this narrative.

Nonreligious people have had the courage to embrace the cold, hard facts that science has presented mankind with. They have chosen to let go of comforting, childless religious beliefs and have grown up taking an adult stance on reality. While this might make for a powerful coming-of-

age story, it is based on mistaken assumptions.

Scientific methods are not based on reason alone. Is it really possible to adopt a theory for discovering truth that doesn't require faith? The initial problem with scientism is that the central claim it makes that science is the only criteria for discovering truth cannot be justified by science and therefore undermines itself. In this way, the view is ultimately incoherent.

A question to ask then in a conversation with somebody who ascribes to scientism might be, how can science prove that science is the only source of truth? That would really confuse them. How do they prove that, that science is the only source? Because modern science is unquestionably an important enterprise in grasping truth, we should be quick to affirm how thankful we are for it, for its countless discoveries and world-changing inventions it has made possible. What we must take issue with, however, is the claim that science is the only means by which to obtain truth, which some people claim that science is the only way.

When you encounter a person who makes this claim, you can help them better understand your position by prompting them to reflect more deeply on the assumptions that modern science is necessarily predicated on. It is likely that the person with this objection to Christianity has embraced what Charles Taylor refers to as subtraction story, the false narrative that secularism is a neutral position that is left over once all religious and supernatural beliefs have been canceled out. The problem with this narrative is that secularism, in all its variations, actually has its own sets of beliefs and values that cannot be proven, and therefore require the type of faith.

I mean, honestly, it takes more faith to believe in the Big Bang or evolution that nothing exploded billions of years ago than it does, I think, to believe that a creator made everything. Where is the science? How can you go back a billion years? How do you observe that? How do you test that? So there's a lot of things that require faith that they claim is science. For example, two of the assumptions essential to modern science, the rationality of the universe and the reliability of the cognitive faculties, cannot be proven by science.

They must first be believed. So often people assume that scientific method only uses basic logic and empirical facts to solve a problem, but they are mistaken. This allegedly neutral methodology cannot actually avoid faith and intuition.

One simply cannot observe significant facts and then form a hypothesis to solve a problem. After all, what makes a fact significant? How can one determine if the problem, the facts, are being used to solve is worthwhile? There is no scientific way to determine beforehand what problems are worth solving and what facts are significant. Faith has to be placed in intuition and personal experience or some other source beyond science in order to proceed.

Moreover, what are the rules of performing a hypothesis once the data has been examined? The history of science teaches us that accepted theories are not the straightforward result of the accumulation of facts. Imagination, intuition, and historical circumstances are all involved in successful hypothesizing. The scientism undercuts itself.

Another problem with the secular view that some form of materialism is what is left after other sources of truth like religion are subtracted. When they're subtracted out, it's difficult. It has a difficult time of grounding and justifying our reasoning capabilities.

So how can materialists scientifically prove that they can trust their reasoning ability? What makes

them so certain that their reasoning is directed toward truth? So if the goal of evolution is survival, then why aren't human reasoning capacities directed toward simply surviving rather than discovering truth? And if we're just made from a bunch of atoms that just form randomly, how can we trust what our mind thinks? How can we trust that our reasoning is correct? So these sorts of questions have led well-known Christian philosopher Albert Plotkinka, along with many of his unbelieving peers, to a problem that plagues many atheists. Taken together, naturalism and evolutionary theory are self-defeating. The scientific method cannot account for much of reality.

While modern science has given us important knowledge about the world, the scientific method cannot prove or even explain a wide range of knowledge and experience that nearly everyone would agree were fully justified and taken to be true. The scientific method cannot, for example, account for logical and mathematical truths. It must simply assume them.

It cannot prove many basic beliefs we all take for granted, such as the idea that other minds exist and that our memories actually happen. It cannot account for beauty. Aesthetics is outside its purview.

It cannot make ethical statements. One cannot, through scientific methods, determine if certain actions are morally wrong. Consequently, science cannot account for justice, human rights, or good and evil.

If we all thought to apply this absolutizing view of science consistently, we wouldn't be able to accept many important truths. Moreover, science proceeds by assuming only natural causes, and it cannot actually touch on the question of God. If someone proceeds in science on the basis of methodical naturalism, experiments can only seek to answer questions about this world.

They cannot answer questions concerning things beyond the natural world. The implication of this is that, within these limits, it is not just belief in God that requires a form of faith beyond the answers science can provide. Disbelief in God does as well.

We've seen some of the internal shortcomings and inconsistencies of seeking to use science to attack religious beliefs. But part of the task of responding to this defeater is helping others see that all assumed truths that cannot be sustained by reason and empirical evidence alone. In actuality, skeptics, just like everyone else, believe what they do about the world for a variety of reasons, many of which are not provable.

Like I said, I like to watch some of these guys on YouTube who are great at arguing and debating, which I'm not very good at, but I enjoy watching some of these guys, and one guy said, you can't prove anything. You can't prove that we are standing here right now, or ten minutes ago, that you and a buddy had a conversation. You don't go around and prove every single thing.

When you get a pill or something from a doctor, you don't go and test every single thing you get and use a scientific method to prove everything. You really can't prove anything in life. You just have to go off facts and evidence.

For Christianity, there's plenty of facts and evidence. So that's what we base our belief on. We don't base it just on blind faith.

You have order and creation. You've got prophecy. You've got the moral laws.

You've got even universal laws. Even just look at nature. The list goes on and on.

So the takeaway from responding to this defeater is this. Unbelievers should not inconsistently demand a standard of proof for God that can never be applied to some of their most basic commitments. So they ask us, you know, to they tell us they have a standard higher than the atheists come up with for their own beliefs.

So science and its limits. Scientific truth is characterized by its precision and certainty of its predictions. But science achieves these admirable qualities at the cost of remaining on the level of secondary concerns, leaving ultimate and decisive questions untouched.

Biblical faith is not believing in something without good reason. This defeater also misrepresents Christianity. To believe in Christianity is not to have blind faith.

There are many valid historical, rational, experiential and societal reasons for the Christian faith. And in fact, as we explained in chapters 11 and 13, the Christian account of reality offers a more livable and wide-ranging explanation of reality than the accounts offered by secularism. That's 100% true.

If you know the Bible, it explains reality perfectly. It explains everything. How we were created.

How the world was created. Why there is sin. Why there is suffering.

You know, why the world is like it is. You know, atheism, it doesn't come anywhere near the explanation Christianity does. And that's because Christianity is the truth.

The Christian framework was actually a key factor in providing the soil of modern science to grow in the first place. To initiate a conversation with an unbeliever about this, you might ask them, what do you think was the framework or view of the world that made modern science possible? As part of the Christian framework, the following three beliefs were vital in the rise of modern science. One, the doctrine of creation.

By implying that there was a regularity and orderliness in the universe, led to the confidence that nature could be studied and understood. So God, having created everything, has allowed us to discover his creation. The conviction, number two, is a conviction that the investigation of nature would inspire a greater appreciation for God, who was an important motivation for the study of nature.

And three, the doctrine of original sin led to a suspicion of pure reason and to the view that experimentation was necessary to gain knowledge about nature. The Christian framework also gives us reason to expect that our cognitive facilities will match up with the world around us, whereas naturalism has no reason to expect such a fit. Like I said, what makes an atheist believe that their mind and reason is right and they can trust it? We can do it because God created us.

You know, he's the ultimate reasoning being and he's created us in his image, so that gives us faith to be able to reason and think. This is why Alvin Plotinga argues there is actually deep concord between science and theistic beliefs. As the historian Rodney Stark has shown, there are religious reasons why modern science emerged in Christian Europe and not in sophisticated societies as China, ancient Greece, and Islamic nations.

For example, when the cosmos is viewed as an emanation of the absolute spirit, as in some other religions, modern science is unable to get off the ground. Among other factors, it was a Christian belief that the universe is contingent formed by a personal and sovereign creator who ordered the universe that enabled science to mature. Thus, far from being a deep conflict between science and faith, it was a Christian faith that provided, as Alastair McGrath writes, a conceptual framework within which science could flourish.

So we can see that science is Christian. You know, for them to claim that Christians is unscientific if you're a Christian is far from the truth. We believe in science.

We believe in the ultimate Think about how, what God, what a great scientist He is to create the world, to create all the laws, to create us with a sun, you know, to heat us. If we're slightly closer, we would burn up. Slightly farther away, we would freeze.

The moon, everything, it lines up perfectly so we could have life. There's like 20 factors in the world alone, with the water, the food, the atmosphere. All these things have to line up perfectly and it would be almost impossible just by chance for all of it to happen.

We'll finish up with that, Defeater. We'll look at number five. There's seven in total, so we're almost done with the Defeater questions, but Defeater five we'll look at next week is I can't believe in God because there's so much evil and suffering in the world.

So, we'll stop now. If there's any questions or comments, I'll close in a prayer. Thank you, Lord, for this day, this time to study your word.

Thank you for all of us who got here safely. Watch over those who couldn't make it, who are on the phone. Help us to spread your word.

Help us to be bold and tell others about you. Watch over this country and nation as we struggle and have issues with sin and evil. Take care of us through the week and get us back here safely on Sunday in Jesus' name.

Amen.