

24-1002wc - Transcript

24-1002wc - *Christian Apologetics, Tom Freed*

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24-1002 Wed. Class - Christian Apologetics

Transcript (0:04 - 24:07)

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Teacher: Tom Freed

We finished up with the last chapter on the feeders. We got one more to go. I'll do a quick review of the Eighth Defeater.

So the Defeaters are questions you come across when talking to people about God. Defeater 1. Christianity is too restrictive. It denies people the opportunity to flourish by following their heart.

I don't know if you guys ever heard that. Christianity is too restrictive. Because it seems like Christianity continually tells us what we can and cannot do.

Many see God as nothing more than a cosmic killjoy. Who wants to listen to all these rules and regulations of the Bible, you know? Even as a Christian, it sometimes is a little too much. Because it seems like Christianity continually tells us... Yeah, okay, but is this statement true? We all know, as Christians, that you can only have true freedom through Christ.

Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. John 10.10. Even though he gives us rules and regulations, it's for our own benefit. As a Christian, you only have true freedom as a Christian.

Defeater 2. The Christian sexual ethic is dehumanizing and Christians are homophobic. That's a big one nowadays with all the homosexual agenda pushed on us. Jesus and Paul both assumed that God's binary design of humans was intentional and that the institution of marriage is a union of man and woman.

So Jesus and Paul both agreed in the Old Testament. There's verses in the New. So, homosexual relationships go against God's design.

And warning us against this type of relationship, God is not seeking to hurt us. He forbids homosexual relationships because He desires us to live according to His good design so that we can be free and flourish. So that's the way God designed us.

You know, like they always say, He made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. So just by nature, you can see that the male and female go together. Male and male are female, female don't.

So, Defeater 3. 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. So that's a huge one.

You know, have you ever been called a hypocrite? I saw a great answer online, this unapologetic type guy. They basically said that, yes, we are hypocrites. You know, everybody's a hypocrite.

Nobody really lives up to their standards. We definitely can't live up to God's standards. So, yeah, we're hypocrites, but so are those other people, you know.

We're all fallen. We're all sinners. So, yeah, we are, in a way, hypocrites.

We as Christians actually realize that we're sinners and we're trying to do something about it. Well, it's not about arrogance, you know, or whatever. It's we're trying to get rid of our sin.

We're trying to do better. We realize that we're sinners. When people say I can't go to church because there are too many hypocrites there, you can always tell them, come on down.

We have room for one more. You can join us. The church is a hospital for sinners, not a country club for saints.

It would be like saying I can't go to the gym because there are too many out of shape people there. Does that make any sense? When people play Beethoven poorly, who do they blame? Do you blame Beethoven? When someone plays Jesus poorly, who do you blame? You don't blame Jesus. Jesus was perfect.

He's an example, not us. We're trying our best, but we fall way short. He said Christianity is not Christians.

Christianity is Jesus. Keep your eye on Jesus. So if anybody is looking at us or accusing you if you're talking to them, then you're looking at the wrong thing.

They need to look to Jesus. The feet are for faith in contrast to reason and science. It's for people who believe things without any evidence.

It is long past time that we move beyond old myths about the supernatural and the divine and seek to discover truth using reason and empirical observation. You ever hear that? Science is facts and Christianity is faith, but that's not true. Bible's full of scientific things.

Things that they're just discovering recently that the Bible talked about thousands of years ago. The Bible isn't against science. It completely agrees with science.

The more science they do, the more it agrees with the Bible. You look at DNA. You look at all the different things in this world, in the universe, on earth.

You know, everything lines up to point towards Christianity. The scientific methods are not based on reason alone. Is it really possible to adopt a theory, 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. The 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. You can't use science to prove that science is the only way to discover truth.

The problem with this narrative is that secularism in all variations actually has its own set of beliefs and values that cannot be proven and therefore requires a type of faith. Prove that the universe exploded a billion years ago from nothing. Can they prove that? Can they recreate that? Can they observe it? You know, it's impossible.

I was the ultimate scientist and the only reason we're able to figure out scientific facts is because he first created them. That's what some of the early scientists believed. Newton and Einstein, a lot of the early scientists, a lot of people, you know, the Christians started discovering a lot of these things.

They could discover them. They knew they could discover them because God first created all this stuff. That's why we're able to discover it.

Number five, I can't believe in a God because there's so much evil and suffering in the world. We do not have all the answers to this question, but we do know that suffering and death came into the world because of sin. The world was perfect until Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned against him, leaving the world in a fallen state.

We can see that all suffering isn't bad. Unlike the various forms of secularism, suffering is not only meaningful, it can teach us and transform us into something magnificent. Second Corinthians 4.17, the C.S. Lewis puts it, for Christians, God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains.

We don't have all the answers. We don't know completely why there's sin and suffering, but for a lot of us, you know, it takes sin and suffering and pain to bring us to Christ. So it can be used in a good way.

The fifth or sixth, I cannot believe in a God of judgment and wrath because God is holy. He stands against the corruption of his good creation because he is loving. He's not indifferent toward the corruption of the world he loves.

God's judgment both flows out of both holiness and his love. It is part of his subtle and active opposition against anything that opposes good. Even though he is a God of judgment and wrath, he also is a God of forgiveness and he sent his only son to die for us.

He has given us a way out and a solution and he's made it easy for us. So we can't be mad at him. You know, he is God, so he doesn't have to punish sin.

He doesn't have to judge and he judges fairly. More than fairly. We don't get punished how we should for our sins, especially if you're a Christian.

Peter 7, the Bible is unreliable and cannot be taken seriously. So many eyewitnesses to the events in Jesus' life were alive and active in the early church until well after the Gospels were written. The evidence suggests that the Gospels are not simply oral traditions that were passed down and altered

during the various stages of transmission.

Rather, they were oral histories that have been guarded by eyewitness testimony. So a lot of them, like I said, a lot of these eyewitnesses are still around when the first books were written. The names present within the Gospels themselves are meant to assure the readers of their accuracy.

Throughout the Gospels, figures are distinguished by use of their proper names. These people were meant to serve as living guardians of the tradition. We even see Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

They're all, they have their names there. You could go to them. They're still alive.

You could question them. Peter 8, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is confusing and illogical. So the rationality of the Trinity might not work within the hard rationalistic framework of the Enlightenment.

It is not illogical. So look at the example last week of Alistair McGrath's account of attempting to get his mind around things such as wave-particle duality and quantum theory while still thinking within the old construct of classical Newtonian physics. Physicists with a classical Newtonian background find quantum theory counterintuitive.

Yet those who are used to working within quantum theory understand its rationality even at an intuitive level. In a similar way, the Christian Trinity will not appear rational if one opposes the hard rationality of Enlightenment. Within Christian theology, the Trinity makes sense and illuminates life.

A very logical universe is love, grounded in the self-giving love of the Trinity. The Trinity and its rationality actually illuminate our understanding of the world. The words of C.S. Lewis, I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen, not because I can see it, but because by it I see everything else.

That's a great quote. The Trinity with the three people, you know, and the godhead lights up everything. It shows us that even before we were created, there was still love for any of the angels because you had three, the Father, Son, Holy Spirit that loved each other.

So we might say that belief in the Trinity illuminates the world we live in. Just kind of recap of chapter 12. We're on the last chapter, and these chapters are somewhat long.

I'm saying they're still going to be possibly a couple of months. I don't know. I'll let Scott know when I'm closer, but the last chapter is making a case.

So it's a widening of the apologetic enterprise. So when the author Josh was growing up in the southeastern part of the United States, there are two dominant religions, baptism and football. So that's like, you know, even here, people are big into football and the Browns.

It would take a visitor a little time to realize which faith had captured the community's heart and elicited their deepest devotion. Go to a SEC, Southeastern Conference College campus on a Saturday in the fall, and you will witness devoted worshippers of all ages citing liturgy, cheers, singing praises, fight songs, and participating in ordinances, tailgates, and other pregame rituals that have been passed down through the generations. You need only to view the reactions of the losing and winning team's fans after the game to realize how many of them wrap up their identity in their team's success.

Josh, the author, has witnessed highly educated and respected church leaders almost physically fight over a game. The hostility and resentment between different fan groups still amazes him. Idols are powerful forces.

They appeal to us in profound ways at multiple levels. His point is not that college football is evil. Anything can become an idol.

But if you spend a few weeks around this football culture as an outsider or take a step back as a devoted fan, it may seem bizarre to you. Why are so many people so intensely devoted to a group of 20-year-olds throwing a leather ball around? That makes a great point. I sometimes think of that with the pro teams, too.

It's like, man, you know, why are people so invested in it? College football followers would rarely think to make an appeal to the skeptical by simply listing player stats or reasons you should become a fan. Instead, they would tell you hero stories of legendary players from yesteryear or perhaps some human interest stories about current players. They would explain the long-standing traditions associated with a game day.

Or they would just invite the unconvinced to a game. As a newcomer joins the faithful fans for a ritual-filled and boisterous pep rally the night before, the communal tailgates of mourning and the sing-along with the band and the game-time nears, they start to feel a twinge of excitement. Then, after they're ushered into the stadium with an electric atmosphere of 90,000 fans hanging on every play, it isn't long before they find themselves high-fiving a random woman in front of them and hugging the stranger beside them.

For most fans, it was these kinds of experiences that led them to conversion. True conversion is never simply an intellectual experience. That's a great point.

You know, it does help to list facts and different things with Christianity, but it's not just intellectual, you know. There's emotions. There's a deep connection.

You know, your heart's involved. Just like with a game, you're not convincing. It makes a great point.

You're not convincing them to watch football because of player stats or certain things like that. And a point to emphasize in this book is that the Christian persuasion should be holistic. Either the responses to defeat or to the previous chapter, or any of the arguments for Christianity surveyed throughout should be abstracted from the genuine discipleship and worship of the Church.

The Church is both a living apologetic appeal and a formative context out of which apologetic arguments are supported as plausible. To use another analogy, imagine trying to convince somebody to enlist in a war on behalf of a distant nation they're antagonistic toward. You approach them and say, I have five airtight arguments for you to leave your current way of life.

All the things you love and join us in battle. They would probably say something like, I don't care how good you think your arguments are. I have absolutely no interest in them.

Imagine if they call on us to go fight for Ukraine or even Israel, what they might do. Are you going to jump, even if they had five great things, are you going to leave your way of life and go risk your life and say, okay, I'm going to sign me up? It's not even plausible for them to imagine doing what you're asking of them. They are not interested in hearing whatever supposed rational reasons you might be able to produce for taking such actions.

Logic alone is incapable of inspiring us to risk our lives for a cause. The similar way people find Christianity implausible for a variety of reasons that we cannot adequately address by simply giving them what seems to be, giving them what seems to some Christians to be five airtight answers. I'm sure some of you have done this and thought, man, I got these great answers to give somebody.

You know, make complete sense to us, but the unbeliever, you know, they don't always, a lot of times they don't accept it. As Christians living in the modern era, we should not simply give an unbeliever logical arguments and then walk away imagining we've done our job, our apologetic job. As philosopher Charles Taylor reminds us, we are all, we are in fact all acting, thinking and feeling out of backgrounds and frameworks, which we do not fully understand.

As we have seen, it is these frameworks that we must learn to interact with, even when they are difficult for us to understand. And as in normally the case, have not been given much thought by the person we are trying to lead to the gospel. So in light of a holistic understanding of how humans decide and the importance of our unarticulated frameworks, we have outlined a vision for the multidimensional approach to apologetics.

Apologetic that the cross calls the church to one, live out an apologetic that undermines misconceptions of Christianity and embodies a more compelling and eutiphic vision of life, chapter six through eight. Two, help others see the problems within their own backgrounds and frameworks that cause them to approach Christianity as implausible, chapters nine and 11. And three, offer intelligent responses to objections and reasons for committing to Christ, chapters 12 and 13.

Apologetic that the cross is not a narrowing of an apologetic task, but a broadening of the enterprise. Developing the multiple kinds of seeds within the Bible, chapters one and two. And retrieving the insights from the rich sources within Christian tradition, chapters three through five.

With that in mind, the final chapter turns to the task of offering a survey of reasons why Christianity makes sense. In other words, as we discussed in chapter five, we're offering examples of arguments that can be used when drawing apologetic maps for others. The survey is only an introduction to the arguments that have been detailed in more narrowly focused books.

Finally, the inside out model continues to serve as helpful until scaffolding, both as a broader backdrop that this chapter fits into and as an approach that enables constructive interaction with competing explanations of our lives and the world around us. You can stop there. Yeah, we could finish up here and continue next week.

Kind of gives us an idea of putting everything together. It does make a great point of it's not all just about, sometimes I think, oh, if I got these facts and all these scientific things or whatever great arguments you think might work to convince somebody, it doesn't always work that way. Sometimes it takes more.

Once in a while it will, but a lot of times you have to go deeper than these facts and certain truths or arguments that you think are airtight. Well, I'll finish up with a prayer. Thank you, Lord, for this night to study your word.

Thank you for everybody that made it. Watch over those that didn't make it, who are on the phone.

Watch over the sick, Bob Jordan. Help him. Watch over Tracy. Help her find a new place to live. Help her taking care of Joyce. Watch over the rest of us. Watch over all of us.

You know our problems and our struggles. Help us, you know, make it through every day. Help us to feel good and prosper.

Keep blessing us in Jesus' name. Amen.