

# WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

## SHORTER CATECHISM

### LESSON # 2 (Q1LES2) - REASONS FOR FAITH

1. Prayer
2. Bible Reading: Heb 10: 38 – 11:40
3. Introduction: Today I want to talk about faith. Sometimes there is an misunderstanding of what kind of faith is required. For a long time I did not understand what is required of me as a member of God's elect. The more I have studied our religion, the more I find out about its requirements. The process is called sanctification, but that is another lesson.
4. Why do you believe in God? What is the basis of your faith?
5. What is the faith required of the Bible?
  - a. Remember last week I said how important words are. We are now going to look at the meaning of faith, and some associated words that are applicable. An understanding of the meaning of faith is extremely important to how we look at the rest of the material which will be presented in this class. It is the reason that we are taking up this subject now, at the beginning of this class.

Let us look at two examples:

- **(Matt 4: 18 – 22 <sup>“(18)</sup>And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. <sup>(19)</sup>And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”)**

Blind faith?

- **(Matt 9: 28 – 29 <sup>“(28)</sup>And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this: They said unto him, Yea, Lord. <sup>(29)</sup>Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.”)**

Faith through knowledge?

- b. What is biblical faith? The New Testament concept of faith is compatible with reason. The Greek word for faith is *pistis*, which is related to the verb for *to believe*.
- **Heb 11:1** Provides a biblical definition of faith. (***“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”***) Substance of things hoped for. Evidence of things not seen. It is used in the context of “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”
  - **Heb 11:6** adds this to faith. (***“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”***)
  - Later, when we discuss prayer, we will learn that we are suppose to approach God as “children to a father”. How does a child approach his parent? With a faith that is based in a knowledge that the parent will be there for him, because they have always been there for him.
  - It is never used in the context of believing six impossible things before breakfast.
- c. Would someone look up **1 Peter 3:15** ***“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:”***

Important verse, let’s discuss the three key words (underlined)

- d. The first word I would like to talk about is heart. In the quote above, Christ’s chief apostle, Peter says: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts”*
- In the Bible, the word “heart” is used 75% of the time to mean the mind or intellect. The ancient Semites understood this use, not the modern Hollywood feel goodyness.
  - The Bible frequently contrasts the heart and lips, as sincerity vs. hypocrisy (**Gen 6:5** ***“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”***) and (**Psalm 14:1** ***“The fool sayeth in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.”***)
- e. Now let’s look at the next significant word in the passage from 1 Peter 3:15. This is answer. Peter says in this verse ***“be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh”***. Many of you will be familiar with this word. The Greek word used here, “apologia”, is derived from the word meaning “out of logic/reason”. From this word comes the familiar term “apologetics”, which is a term used for the defending of biblical doctrine.

- f. Next, let's look at the word "hope", as in "the hope that lies within you" from 1 Peter 3:15. The word used here is "logos", and in this context meaning "evidence that provides rational justification for one's belief."
- g. Does the Bible anywhere ask us to accept things blindly, without reason?
- Jesus tells the Sadducees, in Matt 22:29, that they are in error because they do not know the scriptures.
  - Paul frequently asks the question "know ye not".
  - Philip asks the Ethiopian eunuch "Do you understand what you are reading?"
- h. So is the faith required of the Bible a blind faith? Does it say simply, "I believe because I believe". No! It is a faith based on a firm foundation.
- i. Not only are we to have a basis for what we believe, but we are to have an understanding which will let us convince others that what we believe in is righteous and true. Paul says in **2 Cor 10:4 – 5** <sup>(4)</sup>***(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [of this world], but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) (5) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;***) and Jude 3 says: ***"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."***

6. Where does this faith come from?

- a. From God's Word (With the help of God's Spirit). I think I've heard the Pastor mention this on several occasions. We are to know our Bible well enough to understand ourselves, the doctrines contained in God's Word. Over the next year, we will attempt to obtain a knowledge and understanding of what man is to know concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. And in just a few weeks, we will take a good look at God's Word.

Not only does the Bible contain God's doctrine, but God designed His Word to be able to defend itself. One example is prophecy. I'm not going to go into a detailed discussion of prophecy, but a few examples from an article by Dr. D. James Kennedy, which appeared in the Christian Observer issue of December 12, 1994. Remember, to be a prophet, you have to be 100% correct, one goof makes you a false prophet. (sorta lets Jean Dixon out). Let's examine a few of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the life of our savior.

According to Dr. Kennedy:

- The Old Testament contains 333 prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, which include 456 specific details, all written between 1400 to 400 BC.
- Odds of all these prophecies coming to pass have been calculated. In *The Case for Jesus* we are told that Professor Peter Stoner of Westmont College calculated the odds of 48 of these prophecies coming to pass is  $10^{157}$  (10 with 157 0's after it) It has been calculated that the odds of greater than  $10^{50}$  are considered a statistical impossibility.
- These are not just general prophecies, but specific.
- Over 500 years before Christ was born, Daniel told exactly when Christ would be anointed. Jesus ministry began in 26 AD. Daniel says in 69 weeks of years, (483 years) this would take place. Exactly 483 years later Christ took up his ministry. The details are contained in Dr. Kennedy's article.
- The Bible tells where Jesus will be born. **Micah 5:2** says ***"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*** And to make things better, there were two Bethlehem's in Judah. One was in Ephratah and one in Zebulon. So the Bible not only predicted that Bethlehem would be Christ's birthplace, but the right Bethlehem.

b. From extra biblical sources. What is there out there that will help us to respond to the statement I'm sure you've heard before, to the effect that "how do you know what is in the Bible is true?" or "All your doctrine comes from one book, without that you have nothing." There is a wealth of information out there and available if you look, and you do not have to look too far.

What would be some of the extra biblical sources which we can use to substantiate our faith?

- Archeology – archeology in the holy land continues to validate. To borrow some examples from a recent book titled The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel.
  1. Luke has been proven to be a very accurate historian. Several things which he stated in the two New Testament books he wrote have been questioned, but have later turned out to be true. In **Luke 3:1**, he refers to Lysanias being the tetrarch of Abilene in about A.D. 27. For years scholars pointed out that Lysanias was the ruler of Chalcis half a century earlier, therefore, Luke was wrong. An inscription has now been found which indicates that Lysanias as the tetrarch in Abila, near Damascus, just as Luke had written.
  2. The accuracy of the Gospel of John has been questioned because he sometimes talks of locations which couldn't be verified. In John 5: 1 – 15, Jesus heals an invalid at the pool of Bethesda. John notes that the pool had five porticoes. Guess what recent excavations at the Pool of

Bethesda have discovered. Even though it was buried 40 feet below ground level, it was discovered to have five porticoes

3. Where is Nazareth? Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament. Nor is it mentioned by Paul, in the Talmud, or by the first century Jewish historian Josephus (more on him later). For years it has been used by detractors of Christ as proof the Bible was wrong. After the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., priests were no longer needed in Jerusalem, so they were sent out to various other locations. Archaeologists have found a list in Aramaic describing the list of priest relocated. Guess where one of them was sent. Nazareth.
- An article in the Sept/Nov 1998 issue of Creation magazine, by Harold Hunt, is titled The Sixteen Grandsons of Noah. Did these grandsons really live? Were the biblical names correct? Can their descendants be traced after the dispersal after the tower of Babel? This article says yes. An example: One of Noah's sons is Japheth (**Gen 10:1 – 2**). Japheth's first son is Gomer. Ezekiel locates the early descendants of Gomer in the north quarters. In Turkey is an area which in New Testament times was called Galatia. The Jewish historian Josephus records that the people who were called Galatians, or Gauls, were previously called Gomerites. They migrated west, to France and Spain. Northwest Spain is called Galicia to this day.

7. Our faith is not to be a faith without a foundation. If you look, there is a multitude of evidence to support the existence of our God, and to verify his Word. It is our job to find and use that information. We will try to do more of this in the coming weeks.