

Proofs of Christianity

John 14:7-11

The argument for Christianity must be presented to our world. How can we give it to others in the most simple and convincing form? As long as there is unbelief in the world the proofs of Christianity will be used to convince. In the passage, Jesus revealed the Father to His disciples by saying "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him". While the disciples still did not totally understand the words of Jesus at this time, Jesus patiently taught them saying, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father". And He offered as further proof concerning the truth the very facts of His miracles and works. We who have never seen Jesus in the flesh can rely upon the truthfulness of the words recorded in scripture. As Jesus said, "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves".

Many years after the events recorded in John 14, the Apostle Peter penned these words, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Many, if not most of the people who read Peter's Epistle had never seen Jesus in the flesh, had never heard Him preach, nor had seen Him perform a miracle. Yet, they had a hope within them. This hope was within them because they were believers in Jesus. Even though nearly 20 centuries have passed between that time and now, we share several things in common with the people Peter wrote to. We also have a hope within us. This hope is in us because we likewise believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Although we have never seen Him in the flesh we believe. We have the same responsibility toward those who do not believe as the people who received Peter's Epistle.

We are to sanctify God in our hearts and give a reason for our hope. In other words, we are to present proofs of Christianity to those who do not have the hope within their heart at the present time. The only way we can do this is in similar fashion to how we received the hope. We must understand the reason of our hope and be able to pass it on to others. We must present the proofs of Christianity.

In 1 Peter 1:3-12, the Apostle gives reasons for his readers to continue in faithfulness. He explains that God has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This was done because of the abundant mercy that God has toward us. Since we have been born again we now have an inheritance reserved for us in heaven. We are kept by the very power of God through faith. Peter then goes on to show that even though his readers had not seen Christ, they loved Him and now rejoice with joy. Peter gives us assurance that we will receive the salvation of our souls.

In 2 Peter 1:12-21, the Apostle tells us about the foundation of our faith. He says he will remind us of these things even though we know them and are established in the present truth. He wants to make sure we have a reminder of the proof after he is gone. His argument progresses along these lines: first, we are not followers of fables, but we follow the teachings given to us by an eyewitness of the things described. Second, Peter reminds us of the proofs of Christ while He was living. Including the voice that came from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17); and the miraculous Transfiguration on the mountain when again God said, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him" (Matthew 17:5). Finally, Peter concludes his argument by saying, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed". For Peter the case was clear, he was an eyewitness to the words, works, and miracles of Jesus and he was a firm believer in the

word of God. He trusted the prophecies found in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, and he believed that Jesus was the fulfillment of those prophecies.

Today, we can follow much the same argument that Peter used. Obviously we are not eyewitnesses of Jesus, but we have the recorded words of the eyewitnesses found in the New Testament. We can offer as proof the words and miracles of Jesus. We can show the prophetic words concerning Jesus and how He has fulfilled each one. Our case rests squarely on the word of God. We can also testify what wonderful things God has done in our own lives. Our lives have been changed because of the truths found in God's word.

In terms of prophecy we know that Jesus fulfilled all that was written in the Old Testament. From His birth (Matthew 1:22-23), through His life and ministry, to His death, burial, and resurrection (Acts 13:29) we hear the constant refrain, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet". In Acts 3:18, Peter exclaimed, "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled." Jesus also utilized the prophetic proofs to convince His disciples that He was who He said He was. In Luke 24:27, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself". When Jesus used Moses, He was using what we know of as the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. The books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy while concerned mostly with the narrative of God's people and the Law of Moses also contain several pertinent prophecies. Of the many found in these books I offer two: Genesis 3:15 and Deuteronomy 18:15. In the first we see the first clear reference to the plan of God for redeeming man, Satan would bruise the heel of Jesus (by causing Him to be put to death), but Jesus would crush the head of

Satan (by rising from the dead and giving eternal life). In the second prophecy Moses speaks of a prophet arising like himself. This Prophet was the one the people should hear. Again, in Luke 24:44, Jesus appealed to the words of prophecy when He said that all things written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Himself had been fulfilled. Taken together these three divisions cover almost the entirety of the Old Testament. The Law of Moses refers to the Pentateuch, the Prophets refers to both the major and minor prophets, and the Psalms refers to the poetic portions. Taken together, Jesus is showing that the entire Old Testament prophesied of Himself.

Turning to the miracles of Christ we can read in the Gospels about all of the wonderful works that Jesus did. He raised the dead, made the lame walk, gave sight to the blind, gave speech to the dumb, allowed the deaf to hear, and cured all manner of illnesses and disease. Jesus explained that these works were to "bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:36; 10:25). These miracles were well known. John the Baptist was in prison yet he heard of the miracles of Christ (Matthew 11:2). Herod, the king heard about the miracles from his palace (Mark 6:14). Jesus said in John 10:38, "though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

We believe in the inspiration of the Bible. We believe the testimony of the eyewitnesses. The Apostle John said, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). The very reason for the writing of the New Testament

was to provide proofs for Christianity. How much more then should we pay attention to the study of God's word?

The Apostle John was quite explicit in his accounts concerning Jesus. He says in 1 John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-". John says we heard Him, we saw Him, and we touched Him. He then continues in 1 John 1:2-4 to talk about the witness he and the other disciples had. The purpose of this witness was that his readers could also "have fellowship" and that "your joy may be full". He says in 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."

We have here three proofs of Christianity, the prophecies made concerning the Messiah, the miracles and works that Jesus performed, and the inspiration of the word of God. A fourth proof of Christianity has been proposed by some, that being the authority of the church. However, the authority of the church can only be used as a proof of Christianity when the church follows the word of God. It is dependent therefore upon the other proofs of Christianity. This being said, the continuing existence and vitality of the church in the world would have to be considered as a proof that Christ is indeed the Son of God.

Unfortunately, there are many people in our time who do not believe that the Bible is the word of God. And, since these proofs of Christianity depend upon the acceptance of the Bible as the word of God in order to be effective in the life of an individual, how then can we present the case of Christianity to them? It has been said by

many that they would rather see a sermon than hear one anytime. I propose that we Christians rededicate ourselves to Christian living, so that we can have an impact even upon those who do not accept the word of God as absolute. We can offer ourselves as proofs of Christianity!