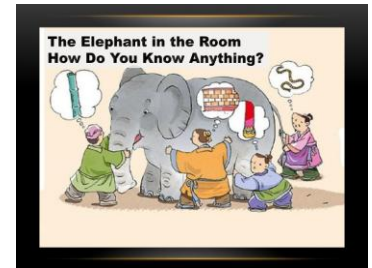


Thru God's Eye: Life in the REAL World

The Elephant in the Room: How Do You Know Anything?

Crossroads, September 18, 2011 - Mark Bickel

TEACHING NOTES



Intro:

Psalm 96:4-5

*For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.*

1 Timothy 2:5-6

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time*

PRAY

- “Thru God’s Eye” Video
- Series Goals
 - Goal 1: See Through God’s Eye – See world / life not from world’s perspective, but God’s!
 - Goal 2: Life in the REAL World - as we see the world from God’s perspective that will form an anchor for our soul and will have very profound yet practical applications to the life we live in this world
 - Goal 2’: Help Others Understand Life in the REAL World - Deeply enter into the lives of other people, helping them to see the world and themselves as they really are
 - Goal 1’: Seeing Other People’s Eyes Opened to God - Trusting in God to open the eyes of our friends, family, neighbors and co-workers so that they would see, repent, and turn to the one True God
- Series Notes / Tonight
 - **Series about:** Worldview ... also World Religions
 - **Common questions:** Who is God, Who are we, What went wrong, How solve problem, Can religion really help? What happens after death?...
 - **TONIGHT:** Before all those questions, we need to ask how we know anything ... how is it we will go about determining the answers to the other questions ...

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Poem by John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)

Graphic by WordInfo (see endnote)

Based on a popular fable from India

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind



The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"



The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"



The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"



The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he;
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"



The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"



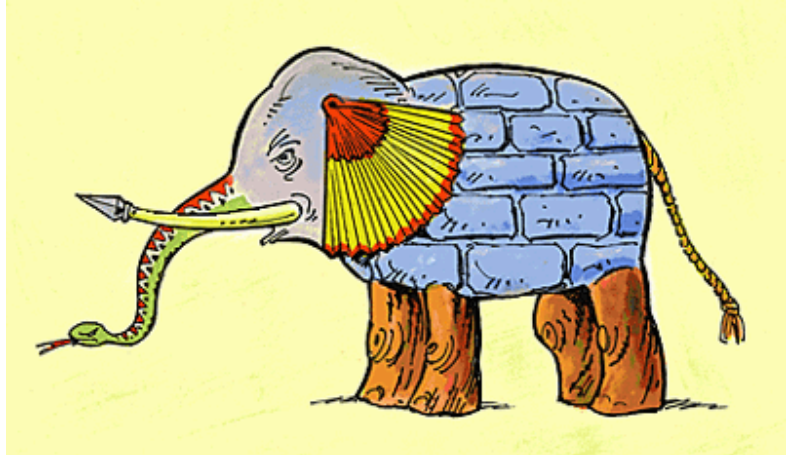
The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"



And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

Moral:

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!



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Small Group Discussion: break in groups of 4-6 where you are sitting

This story often used to show all religions are actually like blind men describing God – all see parts of God, but none sees the whole. And thus we should not fight and argue over who God is, rather encourage one another as one day when our eyes are opened we will all see the elephant as it is.

- What do you think of this story and the interpretation – is it right or wrong?
- Can you think of any Scripture that might relate to this illustration?

1) "Is there Truth?" or "Do all paths lead to God?"

A. Example: Moral of "The Blind Men and The Elephant"

- a. **Claim:** all feel part of God, none see all ... so none should arrogantly claim they are right ... in the end all had some aspect right, but overall picture wrong
- b. **Add 7th Blindman** –not feel any elephant so conclude elephant not exist ... WRONG, there is an elephant!
- c. **Elephant speak** – explains he is an elephant ... Those claim he is wall, snake etc. not entirely, willfully WRONG
- d. **Elephant actually on the move**, heading to man claim he does not exist ... WRONG will get RUN OVER!

B. Bible

- a. Bible claims **there is a God** ... and so any claim to there being no God is FALSE

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Bible talks of God on virtually every page

- b. Bible makes the claim **God speaks to us**, and that **He speaks in the Bible** ... so claims he is silent, or that Bible is manmade, or any claim to God that contradicts Bible are FALSE

II Timothy 3:26

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Bible gives many attributes and pictures of God – any view of God that only includes a select portion of those and denies any of the rest is also a false God

- c. The God of Bible says he is **Only God**, and **Jesus says he is only way to God** ... and **all other gods are worthless** ... so if Bible is true, all other paths to God are excluded ... and if Bible not true it is then not a path to God ... thus in either case “all paths lead to God” is False

I Timothy 2:5-6

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.

John 14:6

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Psalms 96:4-5

*For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.*

*For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.*

- d. God has said we need to **proclaim him to others**... and that **he will judge all** ... so claims it does not matter to me, or that it I have no right to tell you what to believe are FALSE

Psalms 96:1-3, 6-13

*Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.*

*Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.*

*Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.
Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.
Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.
Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound, and all that is in it;
let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them.
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy;
they will sing before the LORD, for he comes,
he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples in his truth.*

2) "What Parts of Life Does God Impact ?" or "Can I Separate Church and State, God and Science...?"

A. Example: Sociology Claim: Can study people and how interact without reference to God

- a. Drexel "Classical Social Theory" - Deterministic or Volunteristic world – does not matter if God is first cause or not, same end results, and so study without reference to God

B. Example: Three Pots

- a. *3 vases on bench ... Describe ... Why here? ... Where come from?*
 - i. I can see some things with my eyes ... but what of creation
 - ii. Can I fully describe vases without reference to a creator?
 - iii. What of purpose ... why made, why here now?
- b. *Knock one vase on floor ... why broken pieces on floor*
 - i. Science can tell about gravity, why vase break instead of floor...
 - ii. But why fall from bench? ... can not say without ref. to my hand
- c. *Conclusions*
 - i. At Best: things I can not know without reference to creator / unseen hand moving things
 - ii. At Worst: come up with false theories ... dirt and water and pigment all come together themselves, gravity act on vase in way to pull it off bench, vase jump, other vases jealous.
- d. *Further Thought*
 - i. Even if I allow for creator / mover there are still unanswered questions – why these specific vases? Why here? What is their purpose? Why middle one smashed?
 - ii. Only one way to definitively answer – creator / mover has to tell us

C. Bible

a. Potter and Clay

Isaiah 45:9-12

*“Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker,
to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground.
Does the clay say to the potter,
‘What are you making?’
Does your work say,
‘He has no hands’?
Woe to him who says to his father,
‘What have you begotten?’
or to his mother,
‘What have you brought to birth?’
“This is what the LORD says—
the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Concerning things to come,
do you question me about my children,
or give me orders about the work of my hands?
It is I who made the earth
and created mankind upon it.*

Isaiah 64:8-9

*Yet, O LORD, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD;
do not remember our sins forever.
Oh, look upon us, we pray,
for we are all your people.*

Romans 9:19-25

*One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?” But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?
What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? As he says in Hosea:
“I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people;
and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,”*

b. **God created ... for a purpose ... and still interacts today**

Genesis 2 (selected) (notice everything the LORD does!)

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. .. no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth ... for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth... the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Now the LORD God had planted a garden ... he put the man he had formed. ... the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow ...

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them..

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

Throughout the rest of the Bible God is constantly talking to man, either blessing and coming to his aid or coming against men ...

c. **Those claims effect everything** ... can not do science, sociology, psychology, ... even art, math, nursing, parenting ... anything at all without God in the picture.

God sends rain, God owns cattle on 1000 hills, God made and sustains the heavens and earth, God will one day make a new heaven and earth, Christ upholds all things by the breath of His mouth, God made us and knows us and directs us, God addresses our hearts and actions ... can not study science, sociology, psychology without Bible

God talks of money, and employers and employees, and fair business practices. He talks of serving the **poor and needy**, widow and orphan, being compassionate, he gives life and death – can not talk about business or job or medicine without God

Even if Art – is beauty in the eye of the artist or the eye of the beholder –neither, God is the ultimate creator who made us creative, who is himself beautiful and makes beauty, and who all things should glorify – so beauty is in the eyes of the Creator! (example – what flowers to put here? Best to make it ones I as maker, owner and sustainer of pot likes, if I like I may make it centerpiece, if not I might just destroy it!)

- d. God has created the universe with observable patterns / laws, so **it is helpful to study** gravity, or sickness, or computer programming ... but the Bible claims God created all, for a purpose, and he is still active in executing that purpose today ... so just as the vase can not be fully explained, or any part even properly explained, apart from me, and any attempt to do so will end up further from the truth, **so with every aspect of life**

3) "How Can I Know Anything at All?" or "How Can I Know God?"

A. Basis for Knowing

- a. Science
- b. Rational Thinking
- c. Society / Culture
- d. Autonomous Self
- e. God

B. Bible

a. God Said it ... I Believe it ... That Settles It

- i. NO – God Said it, That Settles it ... true is true whether you believe it or not!
 - ii. Example: what if I disbelieve in gravity, and walk off 10 story building?
- b. Bible claims **God is from before all time** and **will be for all eternity**, and that he created all, sustains all, sees all, knows all ... **He is Truth**, by definition

Revelation 1:8

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Romans 9:19-20

One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"

- c. **Sounds circular** ... because it is ... **BUT if there is a God in the universe He is by definition greater than us**, and thus by definition the one who determines truth, not us
- d. Now, if He is true, we would certainly **expect to see evidence of it**, but looking around to confirm what Scripture says is very **different than me claiming to be the final arbiter and judge of what is true**
- e. Whoever decides what is **ultimately true is by definition God!** Do I get to define God and Religion or is it God that defines the universe and me?

- f. **When I die it is not God who will stand before me for questioning** on why He did not show himself more clearly, it is I who will stand before him, on why I did not believe what He did say and show of Himself!

II Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

- g. **NEXT WEEK:** We will look more closely at who God claims to be and how that stacks up against the claims of athiests, agnostics and those of other religions ... today's point is that we need to turn to God to define himself, rather than letting anything else define Him or judge what is true.

Summary / Application:

- A. **God of Bible can never be one of multiple ways to God**, thus Christianity never one of multiple religions to believe in – either exclusively true, or utterly false
- B. **Science, Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Art ... all have to do with God** – the there is a God he is foundational and vital to every study, thus cannot study these without God, and must go to Scripture to fully understand each, use each in God's way and to His glory or using it wrong
- C. **Bible does not 'prove' God, it assumes and claims God ... I must do the same as I talk with people.** Certainly if the Bible is true than we will see evidences of it, but the starting point never creation, science, etc but God and Bible ... and the final arbiter of truth is God not me, so in the end it is not about belief, and not about me, but about Truth and about God. I am called to believe, and will answer for that belief ... but it is not the belief that makes it true or false, and not some blind faith or any faith at all that God will honor – it is only Faith in God through Jesus Christ that saves, because all others are to believe falsehood and deny the true God.

PRAY

Recommended Reading (each week have 2-3 books on topic)

"Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept" by James Sire

"The Defense of the Faith" by Cornelius Val Til

NEXT WEEK: Who Is God? And Why Does It Matter?

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