

Evangelism - Part 7

Discerning Different Belief Systems

December 1, 1996

- **Review & Introduction**

As we discussed earlier in this series, one of the common obstacles to overcome in evangelism are rabbit trails. Many times, your conversation will get dragged away to a discussion of minor issues that, even if you were to agree on them, would be of no value when the primary issues are not settled. Our purpose in this message is to determine what the primary issues are.

- **The Nature of God**

- **Self-Existent** - God has always existed. He did not create Himself nor was there a time when He was not. The notion of something being self-existent is not only rationally *possible*, it is rationally *necessary*. Again, reason demands that if anything is, then something must have, within itself, the power of being. Otherwise there would be nothing. Unless something existed in itself, nothing could possibly exist at all. (Psalm 90:2; John 1:1-5; Acts 17:22-31; Colossians 1:15-20; Revelation 1:8)
- **Holy** - In the Scriptures, the word "holy" has two meanings. The first is the concept of being separate and distinct in that God is like no other and that he has no peer. The second usage of the word holy is that of pure, perfect or righteous. (Exodus 3:1-6; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 99:1-9; Isaiah 6:1-13; Revelation 4:1-11)
- **Triune** - The term Trinity describes a relationship not of three gods, but of one God who is three persons. The term person does not mean a distinction in essence but a different subsistence in the Godhead. A subsistence in the Godhead is a real difference but not an essential difference in the sense of a difference in being. Each person subsists or exists "under" the pure essence of deity. Subsistence is a difference within the scope of being, not a separate being or essence. All persons in the Godhead have all the attributes of deity. There is also a distinction in the work done by each member of the Trinity. The work of salvation is in one sense common to all three persons of the Trinity. Yet in the manner of activity, there are differing operations assumed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father initiates creation and redemption; the Son redeems the creation; and the Holy Spirit regenerates and sanctifies, applying redemption to believers. Watch for modalism and tritheism. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2)
- **Creator** - All things that exist do so because He has made them or are manifestations of His divine attributes. (Genesis 1; Psalm 33:1-9; Psalm 104:24-26; Jeremiah 10:1-16; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 11:3)
- **Omnipotent** - God is all powerful. This also applies to His sovereignty. God controls and rules over all things. There is no realm of His creation where He is not Lord. This does not mean that there is nothing that can't *do*. The Scriptures tell us plainly that there are things which God cannot do. (Genesis 17:1; Psalm 115:3; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 1:3)
- **Omnipresent** - God is all places simultaneously. (1 Kings 8:27; Job 11:7-9; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Acts 17:22-31)
- **Omniscient** - God knows all things even that which is "unknowable". (Psalm 147:5; Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 15:18; Romans 11:33-36; Hebrews 4:13)
- **Loving, Wrathful & Just** - God has revealed to us plainly, that He is the source of all true love, and yet His hatred for sin cannot be alleviated. His wrath was turned aside from the elect but was still poured out upon the propitiation. (Genesis 18:25; Exodus 34:6-7; Nehemiah 9:32-33; Psalm 25:8-10; Psalm 100:1-5; Psalm 145:17; Romans 8:28-39; Romans 9:14-33; James 1:17)

- **The Nature of Man**

- **Created in Image of God** - Man is a created being and as such, cannot be like the uncreated. (Genesis 9:6; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:42-57; Colossians 1:15)
- **Totally Depraved** - Man's nature is one of being in bondage to sin. Man *naturally* rebels against his creator and therefore has nothing within him that makes him able to commend himself to God. Without divine intervention from his creator, man is unable to reconcile his position before God. (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 8:11; Ephesians 2:1-3; Ephesians 4:17-19)

- **The Nature of Sin**

- **Inherited from Adam** - (Genesis 3:1-24; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-26; Romans 5:12-19; Titus 1:15)
- **Lawlessness** - (Romans 2:1-11; Romans 3:10-26; Romans 5:12-15; James 1:12-15; 1 John 1:8-10; 1 John 3:4)
- **Brings Eternal Judgment** - The wrath of God is a topic that many religions will dispense with but is a primary, necessary tenet of the Christian faith. Without the judgement of God salvation becomes superfluous. (Matthew 8:11-12; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 16:19-31; Hebrews 6:1-3; Jude 1:3-13; Revelation 20:11-15)

- **The Nature of Salvation**

- **According to the Purpose of God** - God has initiated a covenant of redemption which He began to reveal to us immediately after the fall. The reason that salvation is even granted to some is because it pleased Him to do so not because He became obligated to do so. (Proverbs 16:4; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-13)

- **Gracious Gift Through Faith, Not of Works** - Most religions have as their basic presupposition that the way to please God is to do pleasing things. The more one does these pleasing things, the more God is pleased with him/her. God can become so pleased that He will want to extend salvation. But true Christianity declares that salvation is by grace through faith. Grace is not a wage, it is a gift which is undeserved and unable to be earned. (John 15:1-8; Romans 4:1-8; Romans 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7)
- **Efficacious** - Those whom Christ has purchased (redeemed) have been fully saved. There is nothing that can end their eternal life once it has been granted. Christ did not die to secure an opportunity, he actually paid the price to take ownership of those whom the Father would give Him. (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:7-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; Hebrews 7:25)
- **Limited to the Elect** - (Matthew 1:21, John 3:16; John 10:27-30; John 17:9-12; Acts 20:28; Romans 8:30)
- **The Nature of Revelation**
 - **Mediate vs. Immediate General Revelation** - Mediate general revelation is where something other than God declares His attributes or instructs. (i.e. the heavens, the creation) Immediate general revelation is where God does not use a mediator but reveals Himself directly. (i.e. He writes His law upon our hearts, places eternity in our souls)(Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 4:8-18; Acts 17:16-34; Romans 1:18-23; Romans 2:14-15)
 - **Specific Revelation and Scripture** - The Scriptures are God's specific revelations to us attested to by prophetic authority, messianic authority, and apostolic authority. These specific revelations are things which are not proclaimed in the general revelation. (Psalm 119; John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)
- **Examples**

Element	Humanism	Mormonism
<i>Nature of God</i>	Non existent or is the will of man.	Once an exalted man dwelling on earth; flesh & blood; Polytheistic
<i>Nature of Man</i>	Self actualizing, hedonistic	Pre-existent, not created;
<i>Nature of Sin</i>	Non-existent or is simply poor choices	No original sin
<i>Nature of Salvation</i>	Unnecessary	No judgement; all saved, not all equally glorified
<i>Nature of Revelation</i>	That which we can discover or imagine.	Scripture only partially reveals and is polluted, Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine & Covenants provide complete revelation along with Living Prophets