

TRUTH APART FROM EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

"Let me explain the problem science has with Jesus Christ." The atheist professor of philosophy causes before his class and then asks one of his new students to stand.

"You're a Christian, aren't you, son?"

"Yes sir," the student says.

"So you believe in God?"

"Absolutely."

"Is God good?"

"Sure! God is good."

"Is God all-powerful? Can God do anything?"

"Yes."

"Are you good or evil?"

"The Bible says I'm evil."

The professor grins knowingly. "Aha! The Bible!" He considers for a moment.

"Here's one for you. Let's say there's a sick person over here and you can cure him. You can do it. Would you help him? Would you try?"

"Yes sir, I would."

"So you're good...!"

"I wouldn't say that."

"But why not say that? You'd help a sick and maimed person if you could. Most of us would if we could. But God doesn't."

The student does not answer, so the professor continues. "He doesn't, does he? My brother was a Christian who died of cancer, even though he prayed to Jesus to heal him. How is this Jesus good? Hmmm? Can you answer that one?"

The student remains silent.

"No, you can't, can you?" the professor says. He takes a sip of water from a glass on his desk to give the student time to relax.

"Let's start again, young fella, 'Is God good?'"

"Er...yes," the student says.

"Is Satan good?"

The student doesn't hesitate on this one. "No."

"Then where does Satan come from?"

The student: "From...God..."

"That's right. God made Satan, didn't he? Tell me, son. Is there evil in this

world?"

"Yes, sir."

"Evil's everywhere, isn't it? And God did make everything, correct?"

"Yes."

"So who created evil?" the professor continued. "If God created everything, then God created evil, since evil exists, and according to the principle that our works define who we are, then God is evil."

Without allowing the student to answer, the professor continues: "Is there sickness? Immorality? Hatred? Ugliness? All these terrible things, do they exist in this world?"

The student: "Yes."

"So who created them?"

The student does not answer again, so the professor repeats his question. "Who created them?" There is still no answer. Suddenly the lecturer breaks away to pace in front of the classroom. The class is mesmerized.

"Tell me," he continues onto another student. "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, son?"

The student's voice is confident: "Yes, professor, I do."

The old man stops pacing. "Science says you have five sense you use to identify and observe the world around you. Have you ever seen Jesus?"

"No sir, I've never seen Him."

"Then tell us if you've ever heard your Jesus?"

"No sir, I have not."

"Have you ever actually felt your Jesus, tasted your Jesus or smelt your Jesus? Have you ever had any sensory perception of Jesus Christ, or God for that matter?"

"No sir, I'm afraid I haven't."

"Yes you still believe in him?"

"Yes."

"According to the rules of empirical, testable, demonstrable protocol, science says your God doesn't exist. What do you say to that son?"

"Nothing," the student replies. "I only have my faith."

"Yes, faith," the professor repeats.

"And that is the problem science has with

God. There is no evidence, only faith.”

The student stands quietly for a moment, before asking a question of his own. “Professor, is there such a thing as heat?”

“Yes,” the professor replies. “There’s heat.”

“And is there such a thing as cold?”

“Yes, son, there’s cold too.”

“No sir, there isn’t.”

The professor turns to face the student, obviously interested. The room suddenly becomes very quiet. The student begins to explain.

“You can have lots of heat, even more heat, super-heat, mega-heat, unlimited heat, white heat, a little heat, or no heat, but we do not have anything called ‘cold.’ We can hit up to 458 degrees below zero, which is no heat, but we can’t go any further after that. There is no such thing as cold; otherwise we would be able to go colder than the lowest -458 degrees. Everybody or object is susceptible to study when it has or transmits energy. Absolute zero (-458 F) is the total absence of heat. You see, sir, cold is only a word we use to describe the absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat we can measure in thermal units because heat is energy. Cold is not the opposite of heat, sir, just the absence of it.”

Silence across the room. A pen drops somewhere in the classroom, sounding like a hammer.

“What about darkness, professor. Is there such a thing as darkness?”

“Yes,” the professor replies without hesitation. “What is night if it isn’t darkness?”

“You’re wrong again, sir. Darkness is not something; it is the absence of something. You can have low light, normal light, bright light, flashing light, but if you have no light constantly you have nothing and it’s called darkness, isn’t it? That’s the meaning we use to define the word. In reality, darkness is not. If it were, you would be able to make darkness darker, wouldn’t you?”

The professor begins to smile at the student in front of him. This will be a good semester. “So what point are you making, young man?”

“Yes, professor. My point is, your philosophical premise is flawed to start with, and so your conclusion must also be flawed.”

The professor’s face cannot hide his surprise this time. “Flawed?” Can you explain how?”

“You are working on the premise of duality,” the student explains. “You argue that there is life and then there’s death; a good God and a bad God. You are viewing the concept of God as something finite, something we can measure. Sir, science can’t even explain a thought. It uses electricity and magnetism, but has never seen, much less fully understood either one. To view death as the opposite of life is to be ignorant of the fact that death cannot exist as a substantive thing. Death is not the opposite of life, just

the absence of it. Now tell me professor. Do you teach your students that they evolved from a monkey?”

“If you are referring to the natural evolutionary process, young man, yes, of course I do.”

Have you ever observed evolution with your own eyes, sir?”

The professor begins to shake his head, still smiling, as he realizes where the argument is going. A very good semester, indeed.”

“Since no one has ever observed the process of evolution at work and cannot even prove that this process is an ongoing endeavor, are you not teaching your opinion, sir? Are you now not a scientist, but a preacher?”

The class is in uproar. The student remains silent until the commotion has subsided.

“To continue the point you were making earlier to the other student, let me give you an example of what I mean.”

The student looks around the room. “Is there anyone in the class who has ever seen the professor’s brain?” The class breaks out into laughter.

“Is there anyone who has ever heard the professor’s brain, felt the professor’s brain, touched or smelled the professor’s brain? No one appears to have done so. So, according to the established rules of empirical, stable, demonstrable protocol, science says that you have no brain, with all due respect sir. So if science says you have no brain, how can we trust your lectures, sir?”

Now the room is silent. The professor just stares at the student, his face unreadable.

Finally, after what seems an eternity, the old man answers. “I guess you’ll have to take them on faith.”

“Now, you accept that there is faith, and, in fact, faith exists with life,” the student continues. “Now, sir, is there such a thing as evil?”

Now uncertain, the professor responds, “Of course there is. We see it everyday. It is in the daily example of man’s inhumanity to man. It is in the multitude of crime and violence everywhere in the world. These manifestations are nothing else but evil.”

To this the student replied, “Evil does not exist sir, or at least it does not exist unto itself. Evil is simply the absence of God. It is just like darkness and cold, a word that man has created to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. Evil is the result of what happens when man does not have God’s love present in his heart. It’s like the cold that comes when there is no heat or the darkness that comes when there is no light.”

The professor sat down.

[The previous was an exchange between a professor in a university in Switzerland and a young Jewish student by the name of Albert Einstein.]

THE BOOK OF THE CAPTIVE PROPHET

Ezekiel's prophetic work was some of the most profound to be recorded in the scriptures, but his book is often overlooked and under appreciated. A possible reason as to its neglect is the effort required to fully understand some of the signs and symbols about which Ezekiel writes. There are many prominent uses of non-literal language found throughout the book and wherein it is possible to know its meaning, the diligence to interpret it does not resonate in many. It, however, is a book from which so much can be learned because the issues Ezekiel faced in preaching to the captive Jews are so similar to those New Testament Christians face today.

There is much to learn about Ezekiel and his book from just the first three verses:

"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity. The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him" (Ezekiel 1:1-3).

First, it is learned that Ezekiel was a fairly young man to be engaging in such a work as prophesying to the sinful nation as he was but thirty years old. Second, Ezekiel indicates the location of his work as he was himself a captive in Babylon, living by the Chebar river in a place called Tel-abib. This distinguishes him from Jeremiah who at the same time was still in Judah prophesying and from Daniel who having been taken away in 606 B.C. with the seed royal was in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar prophesying. Third, Ezekiel refers to his Divine call to rise up and relate unto the people visions provided by God. Fourth, he makes mention of the year it was when this vision came. Ezekiel refers to it as being in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. Jehoiachin was taken away in 597 B.C., thus Ezekiel began his prophetic work in 592 B.C., six years before Jerusalem's fall. Fifth, Ezekiel tells the reader that he was a priest, thus a man already with religious authority. All of these facts play a prominent role throughout the book as Ezekiel begins to unfold his twenty-two years of prophetic work.

The book is easily divided into three sections regarding its specific content. First, Ezekiel 1 records the occasion in which God calls out unto Ezekiel through a vision and hastens him to his future work. In that chapter the glory of God is depicted through four creatures who each had amazing features, yet still were under God's throne and thus subject to Him. Through such God indicates His authority and might, relating to Ezekiel He whom he was to serve. Second, in Ezekiel 2-3 God places before Ezekiel the specific tasks that he is to accomplish in his time among the nation. He first acquires and displays his satisfaction for God's word which he would deliver to the people, then he is told of his chief responsibility unto captive Judah. The Lord called out unto Ezekiel and said, *"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me"* (Ezekiel 3:17). A watchman's role was two-fold: to watch and warn. Thus Ezekiel's job was to realize the state of the people and then tell them what they needed to know in order to escape their terrible plight. Later, the Lord illustrated the extent to which Judah had become evil when He said, *"And I sought a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none"* (Ezekiel 22:30). Then Ezekiel 4-48, the final section, records all that Ezekiel did to and among the people. There is a series of signs and visions that Ezekiel first sees, then relates to them in trying to convince them to repent, but sadly to no avail. He warned them of Jerusalem's coming destruction, but they did not believe him until it was too late. About half of the section deals with judgment, but Ezekiel then ends the book by providing hope unto the nation. He first tells them of God's promise to return them home, but the ultimate of promises came in chapters 40-48 in which Ezekiel depicts the church to come, through which redemption would be made possible.

As with all other books, Christ is a prominent character in Ezekiel as well. Specifically Christ is seen in three specific places in Ezekiel. First, in Ezekiel 17:22-24 He is pictured as a "tender twig that becomes a stately cedar on a lofty mountain." Second, in Ezekiel 21:26-27 He is pictured as the one to whom God would give the kingdom. And third, in Ezekiel 34:11-31 He is pictured as the true Shepherd who would feed and deliver his flock.

Ezekiel's work among a stubborn and hard-hearted people should be a stark reminder of the challenges God's servants should expect to face. Let us all keep this in mind as we meet our daily struggles head-on in our lifelong attempt to live lives pleasing unto our God.

-Andy Brewer