

# LECTURE 7: BIBLICAL APOLOGETICS— MATTHEW, LUKE, AND JOHN

---

While most apologetic material in the New Testament comes from Jesus, Peter, and Paul, other biblical writers added unique aspects to the apologetic arguments. Here we notice the particular points made by the Gospel writers Matthew, Luke, and John (Mark was subsumed under Peter).

## Testimony of Matthew

In addition to the statements of Jesus recorded in Matthew's gospel, Matthew himself provides evidences for the truth of the Christian message. Perhaps the most forceful is his continual referring to Jesus' actions as fulfilling OT prophecies (cf. the similar argument from OT prophecies, this time fulfilled in secular history, in John Urquhart, *The Wonders of Prophecy* [1925]). He sees Jesus' life itself as a fulfillment of the experience of the Hebrews in the wilderness, starting from Egypt, being "baptized" in the Red Sea, being sustained forty years in the wilderness, receiving the law from God, and entering the promised land. Many individual events in Jesus' life are specific fulfillments of OT prophecies, recognized so in Matthew's gospel.

Another purpose of Matthew is to show why the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. He shows that this rejection was expected by Jesus and the OT, and led to the bringing in of the Gentiles.

Finally, Matthew deals with the argument of the Jews that Jesus' disciples took his body from the tomb, claiming he was raised from the dead. This same attack was made seventeen centuries later by Reimarus. Matthew relates the account of the beginning of this false rumor (28:11-15), probably upon the information of a converted guard or priest (cf. Acts 6:7).

## Testimony of Luke

Luke's two volume work Luke-Acts was written for an explicitly apologetic purpose (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2), "that you might know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."

Luke makes it a point that his account is based not only on the written accounts of others, but on first-hand testimony and the testimony of other eye-witnesses. He had many occasions to interview such people.

The purpose or purposes of Luke-Acts have been the object of much scholarly discussion. These apologetic purposes seem to be apparent:

- 1) To show that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God, as proved by his life, teachings, miracles, resurrection, and ascension
- 2) To show that the gospel which Paul preached in Rome was the same gospel that began with Jesus Christ in Galilee and Judea and that was preached by the other apostles
- 3) To show that the Holy Spirit guided the apostles in the days after Jesus' ascension
- 4) To show that Peter, as the leader of the Jewish believers, and Paul, as the leader of the Gentile believers, were united in the apostolic tradition
- 5) To show the unity of the church, whether Jewish or Gentile
- 6) To show that Paul was the God-appointed apostle to the Gentiles, and that his gospel was from God
- 7) To show that the early opposition to the church came from the Jewish establishment, and that the Roman government, embodied in its officials, approved of the spread of Christianity

## Testimony of John

John's gospel is organized around the increasing evidence for the deity and messiahship of Jesus, the increasing faith and loyalty of his disciples, and the increasing bitterness and animosity of his enemies. It presents the miracles of Jesus as a series of seven "signs," which are explicitly designed to produce faith in the reader.

John 20:30-31, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

- It is only by the most incredible blindness that Jesus' enemies refuse to believe in him (cf. John 11:47-48). These signs of Jesus thus reveal two things: they reveal truths about Jesus (related to the seven "I am" sayings), and they reveal the state of heart of the people who observe the signs (whether they are elect, or whether they are not; cf. Luke 2:34-35). In this regard, John distinctly teaches that acceptance of the gospel depends on God's effectual calling (as in John 6:37).