

Valuing what God Values

Part 1: Introduction

PETER DEWITT
AGATHOS CHURCH
APRIL 3RD, 2017

Full Text (for reading on your own)

Valuing what God Values

God goes to great lengths to prepare sermon series for our church. It's not just a matter of picking a sermon series topic – there really is a divine leadership that directs, confirms, and develops a topic that is on His heart for us! Consider how Jesus had specific messages to deliver to specific churches in Revelation. In addition, consider Jude verse 3 in which we see *“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”* It sounds like Jude had planned to write about our common salvation, but God directed him to write about contending for the faith! The whole letter that follows is about contending for the faith. God has specific messages to deliver to us, and Peter believes this series (Valuing what God Values) is by the clear lead of the Lord. In fact, Pastor Brad had wanted to teach a series like this for a few years as well, but always felt like other things needed to come first. Well, now we are here!

In this series, Peter is going to be addressing about five or six “controversial to the world but not controversial to God” topics. We are going to address those topics from the Word of God, and where helpful, Peter is also going to pull in some empirical evidence to help us see just how true the Word of God proves (Ps. 18:30).

The first topic we are going to address is creation – and therefore we will also address evolution.

Why this Series?

You may ask yourselves, “Peter, can't you just let dead dogs lie? Why do you have to stir the pot? Why do you have to address these issues? Can't you just leave them alone?” Peter is planning on addressing evolution, homosexuality, abortion, and a whole host of secular humanist concepts that we will also address from the Word of God because they are pro-actively robbing the world of what God has for them.

Peter is also planning on addressing a couple of topics from inside the church where there is actually controversy within the church – although, again, there is not controversy with God. Those two topics are grace and cessationism.

Many of us know that we must “always be ready to give a defense” (1 Pe. 3:15) but let’s look at the surrounding context of that phrase in 1 Peter 3:14-16. And as we look at this verse, consider topics like abortion, homosexuality, grace, cessationism, etc. *“But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”* Anyone who desires to live Godly will suffer persecution. Not an option.

If you desire to live Godly, you will suffer persecution. Said differently, if we go a decade thinking we are living Godly and we don’t suffer persecution, chances are we are a little like salt that has lost its taste. The Lord said that a light shouldn’t be put under a stand – it should be set on top of a table so that people can see the light! And light looks pretty different from darkness! Ephesians 5:8-11 says that we should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather expose them – by shining brightly, not by hiding under a bushel! We are supposed to be salt. What’s that about? Salt preserves things. What does salt preserve? Dead meat – so it doesn’t rot! Do you realize that the whole world is in decay unless the believers salt it by living righteously – and perhaps suffering persecution for doing so? We are supposed not to lose our saltiness so that we can preserve a rotting world until it can receive Jesus! (Said with no negativity.) This is part of our service to the world. We cannot be halfway salty. What good is salt if it has lost its saltiness? This is why we are addressing these topics of societal import – because we are not to be afraid or troubled about talking about these issues. They are not controversial to God.

Let’s continue with verse 15 (from 1 Pe. 3). *“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.”* When this verse says “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,” what that means is to set the Lord apart in our hearts. Make Him Holy or separate in our hearts. About 8 years ago, Peter heard the Lord speak to him while exiting the highway, saying, “your mind has been on the throne of your heart, and I want to be.” That’s what verse 15 is talking about. So long as our minds are on the throne of our hearts, we won’t set the Lord apart in our hearts, which is going to cause us not to give a defense for the hope that is within us.

So, Peter is saying “give a defense,” which is a lawyer-type term. A legal-type defense. This is apologetics-type talk. In fact, the Greek for defense is “apologeia.” We are supposed to be able to give a legal defense for the hope that’s within us. Note that it says we should be ALWAYS ready to do that

and to EVERYONE. Many of us feel like we could share the gospel with a teenager, but would we be comfortable sharing the gospel with an evolution professor? (Here Peter's 6-year-old son yells "YES!" This childlike faith comes from the Lord being truly sanctified in a 6-year-old's heart! The world has no hold on him!) Likewise, if you meet someone who is homosexual and antagonistic towards the gospel, we ought to be ready to give a defense. Perhaps in talking with them, you discern you shouldn't say too much that day other than to love them, but we ought to be ready to give a defense. Part of that readiness comes from setting the Lord apart in our hearts!

Look at how Peter continues in verse 16: "...*having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.*" Those who revile our good conduct in Christ are to end up being ashamed. This is not how we normally think, but this is what the Word of God says.

If we don't know what the Word of God says on these matters, we will have what the Word of God calls a "weak conscience." Let's look at 1 Corinthians 8:1-8 to see what a weak conscience is. In this section of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, he acknowledges that some of the Corinthians had a revelation that meat sacrificed to idols was not a big deal, because GOD (not an idol) is the big deal! In other words, he was saying "some of you have a conscience that can take going to a neighbor's house and eating meat that was sacrificed to idols because although people say there are lots of gods, there is only one God."

Paul was saying that wasn't the problem, though. He was saying that some of those who had that knowledge in the Corinthian church didn't have love to go along with it, in that they may have had brothers or sisters in Christ who didn't have that revelation and therefore were getting really tripped up by the fact that you were eating meat that was sacrificed to idols. So, Paul said (v. 7) that if you have liberty in your conscience to eat that meat and are around a brother or sister who has a WEAK CONSCIENCE, don't eat the meat around them or else you may defile their conscience and trip up their faith – which would not be operating in love! It is important to guard your conscience – and the conscience of other believers (particularly those younger in the Lord).

Let's look at verse 7 more closely. "*However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.*" What we have in verse 7 is a scriptural concept called a "weak conscience." Notice that this is different from the "evil conscience" talked about in Hebrews 10:22. There, we see that an evil conscience needs sprinkled clean by the washing of the water of the word so that a born-again believer can awaken to who she is in Christ and sin not! (1 Cor. 15:34) That is not what this is about. That is

an EVIL conscience. This is a WEAK conscience. This has nothing to do with sin. A weak conscience has nothing to do with sin.

Let's look at an example of a weak conscience. Peter is a pastor. If he were out to dinner with his wife for a date, had a glass of wine with dinner, ran into another pastor who remarked "you drink wine?" and Peter's conscience were weak about what the Word of God says about wine drinking as a believer, his heart would melt like wax within him at that interrogation. However, if Peter really knows what the Word of God says about wine (not just like "I think I heard someone talk about that before..." but truly KNOWS what the Word of God says about wine) then he has a strong conscience. So, if Peter KNOWS that wine is no problem for a believer, but being given to drunkenness is, then in response to the accusatory interrogation from another pastor, he says, "yes, I am drinking wine; what's the problem?" and starts to consider how he might be able to minister freedom to the other pastor if possible.

So, what's the difference between a weak conscience and a strong conscience? That you know the Word! When you know the Word of God on the matter, that's what gives you a strong conscience! The reason we may faint at the thought of talking with someone about abortion, homosexuality, evolution, and other secular humanist concepts (or about grace and cessationism) is because our conscience on those issues is not strong in that area. Again, this is NOT talking about an evil conscience. This has nothing to do with sin. It is about having a STRONG conscience. We must be CONVINCED of what the Word of God truly says about these issues so that you can give a reason! So that you can give a defense for the hope that's within you.

There's a freedom that comes with this! You stop walking around being worried that someone is going to ask you "so do you think that homosexuality is a sin too?" You stop being worried about those questions! Peter remembers witnessing on campus, and the young man he was witnessing to said "so do you think Jesus is the only way?" Perhaps the young man figured that was going to be a difficult question for Peter. Now if Peter's conscience had been weak on that – on what the Word says about Jesus being the only way – then his heart may have melted with the thought, "oh no, he's going to think I'm a bigot."

But, Peter said, "I'm not the one saying that He is the only way; Jesus is the one that said He is the only way." Knowing the Word of God makes you bold! Peter was saying, "if you have a problem with Jesus' being the only way, you don't have a problem with me; you have a problem with Him, because He said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:16).

So, how do you get your conscience to strengthen in these “controversial to the world, but not controversial to God” topics? You need to know what the Word of God emphatically says, and when you know that, you will have more freedom in your life to simply speak the truth in love!

Philosophical Backdrop for this Series

Peter believes that in practical terms, a philosophy is basically a value system. It’s where you place your emphasis. It is the lens through which you view things. Philosophy. For instance, an applicant for a teaching position may often include a “philosophy of education” – what he values in education, what his main emphasis is, what’s the lens he sees the educational process through; that’s his philosophy. Correspondingly, you could have a philosophy of parenting or a philosophy of governance – all of which simply indicate where you place your energy and focus; what you value. Notice that this series is titled “Valuing what God Values.” In other words, you can pretty much title this series “Christian Philosophy.” Both titles would be relatively equivalent.

Now, let me ask you a question. What did Jesus value? Life – for sure. The Father – yes. Love – absolutely. Kingdom – oh yes. Humility – 100%. Children – “let them come to Me!” All true.

Let’s dig a little deeper, since what Jesus valued should be expressed by where His focus was – where He applied His energy and effort and attention. Let’s look at John 5:19-20 “*Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.*”

Jesus says that He does nothing except what He sees and hears from the Father. The core focus of Jesus’ life was to imitate the Father. Out of that, we see He had a value for life, humility, true love for all people, etc. The focus of Christ was what He said in John 5. In saying, “the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do,” He is saying that there was NOTHING that He was doing that was not born out of that singular focus! That was Jesus’ singular value system – to do what the Father was doing, and to say what the Father was saying.

In other words, this was Jesus’ philosophy. It was His value system. Jesus’ philosophy of life was to do what the Father was doing, and say what the Father was saying.

Let’s look at Matthew 10:24-25. There is a great humility in Jesus’ philosophy of life. My prayer for you is that you would catch this humility from the Word of God! There is a level of humility that is going to bring a tremendous freedom in our lives that Jesus modeled perfectly. “*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a*

servant like his master.” It is enough. This is enough. You don’t need to add to this; it is enough for a disciple to be like His teacher. It’s enough that we would be like the Father! It’s enough for us to be like our master. It’s enough :)

Philippians 2:5-7 (ESV) speaks to this as well: *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”* Paul was saying to think like this – to let this be your philosophy. He went on to say, “this mind that I am about to tell you about is yours in Christ – you already have this mind. You’ve been given the mind of Christ.” When you read 1 Corinthians 2:16 about the mind of Christ, realize that the mind of Christ is not a laundry list of facts. This is the mind of Christ: “I can do nothing of Myself, but what I see the Father do; for whatever the Father does, I do in like manner. It’s enough for Me to be like Him.” *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”* Have this mind among yourselves. Look at the beautiful humility of our Savior!

Let’s also look at Matthew 11:28-30. *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* A recent radio broadcast opened this scripture to Peter on a different level. We all want rest and freedom from anxiety. If we are heavy laden, Jesus tells us “take my yoke upon you.” So, what is Jesus’ yoke? It says it right there – He is gentle and lowly in heart. Jesus’ yoke is humility! This is the yoke of the Lord – that we would simply say what the Father’s saying and do what the Father’s doing. That was Jesus’ philosophy. Our Lord and Savior, His philosophy was John 5:19-20. “I can’t do anything apart from what the Father is doing.” That’s the start and the end of it.

Think back to Genesis 2 and 3. In Genesis 2:17, we hear God say, *“but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”* God was saying “in the day that you eat of that tree, you are going to die. That will not give you life and life abundantly; that will kill you.”

There are two operating systems in the world for our thought patterns. There are two philosophical operating systems available to us. The one was subscribed to (through deception of the serpent) by Adam and Eve. What they did was they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had said, “I’m giving you a free will because I want you to be able to choose to love Me if you choose to

love Me, but please for your own sake don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for I never made man to be able to discern good and evil for himself." In fact, as a man, if you try to discern good and evil for yourself it will destroy you." And THAT was the root of all sin. A desire to discern good and evil for ourselves was the root of all sin.

But Jesus was not like the first Adam. Instead, we hear from Jesus, "*I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do.*" I can say nothing of Myself other than what I hear the Father say. That's it. There are two philosophies for life. The one is "I am going to discern good and evil for myself." The second philosophy is "what my Papa says is what I say." The second philosophy says "I've decided that it's enough for me to be like the Father."

All of this is THE ROOT of Christian philosophy. That is Christian philosophy. You mean a value system – a philosophy – that is like Christ? Exactly! That's the root of Christian philosophy.

The Mind of Christ

1 Corinthians 2:16 says that we (as believers) have "the mind of Christ." The mind of Christ is what we were just talking about! Jesus was saying, "here's how I operate: I say what He says, and I do what He does." So, what's the mind of Christ? To operate like that!

And we have the mind of Christ! It's how we were made when we were born again – to operate with the mind of Christ! With His law written on our hearts. You say what He says, and do what He does. And praise God that we have the written Word, which shows us what He is saying, always in addition to hearing Him in prayer, etc.

Consider the start of 1 Corinthians 2:16 "but who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" Do you see how it is contrasting the knowledge of good and evil with the mind of Christ? God is saying "which of you is able to truly discern good from evil? Are you going to instruct Me about what's right and wrong? Are you going to tell Me about what's good for you and what's not good for you?" Who's known the mind of the Lord that you can instruct Him about what's the best way and what's not the best way. Of course, that is what Adam and Eve did.

What many of us have done is use the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as the "operating system" for our entire lives, and what we've done is taken the Word of God and put it into that operating system as a program. And the Lord is saying "I want My Word and My ways to be the whole operating system – not just a program." For some of us, it is time for an update to our operating systems!

When the Lord spoke to Peter seven or eight years ago, while Peter was exiting a highway, He said “your mind has been on the throne of your heart, and I want to be.” This is that!

Pastor Brad taught on humility a couple years ago. This is a follow-up to that humility series. THIS is humility. It’s saying, “I know I have a right to have my own thoughts; I just choose to have His.”

Can you guess why this is the philosophical foundation we’re laying before we jump into “controversial to the world but not controversial to God topics?” We’ve got to have this mind.

Intro to Creation vs. Evolution

From Peter: “My major was actually evolution and ecology! I have an honor’s bachelor’s of science in evolution and ecology. As part of that major, I took a high-level evolution class at my university and scored an ‘A’ in that class – not an ‘A-’ but a full ‘A.’ This was a 400 or 500 level course. I understand evolution. In fact, I then taught evolution for 5 years. I’ve truly seen the creation/evolution conversation from both perspectives.

“For the first five years or so of my walk with God, I tried to reconcile evolution and creation. So, let me just go ahead and pull the Band-Aid off about where the Word of God falls on this matter, and then I will develop this with you guys. The Word of God and evolution are completely, totally, 100%, entirely irreconcilable as it relates to explanations of origins. That pulls the Band-Aid off (not to show you where I stand but to show you where the Word of God stands).

“In fact, when I was a new believer (perhaps a year old in the Lord), I was in a capstone course for my major. There were about 20 of us in this small, conversational class with an evolution professor. After class one day, I talked with my professor. At this point (until about five years after I was born again), I was trying to reconcile evolution and the Word of God. (Again, this is why I can tell you emphatically that the two are completely irreconcilable. You will either compromise evolution or the Word of God; you can’t do both.) So, I talked with my professor after class one day and said, “I’m a Christian,” and he said, “oh, OK.” I said, “well, I’m a Christian and I believe in evolution.” He basically said, “it’s not possible.” He went on to tell me how he’d read the whole Bible himself, and he’d also talked with many Christians at many churches, and he had never met anyone who was able to truly reconcile the two views of origins. It’s not just me (Peter) telling you that the two views are irreconcilable. This evolution professor who knows “what’s up” will tell you they are irreconcilable.

“So, I needed to grapple with this for a few years, because here I was (I was going to be a biology teacher), and I needed to teach evolution as a state standard. I literally thought about quitting teaching before I started, if I wasn’t going to be able to do it in good conscience. So, I grappled with it and kept

it before the Lord, and I believe He gave me some insight into how to teach it so that I was teaching science that was actually observable.

“Long story short, you can observe a change in allelic frequency in a population of HIV over time. In other words, if you give just one drug to someone with HIV and it kills 99.9% of the HIV virus in his body, and the remaining 0.1% repopulates his body, then the strain of HIV he now has is genetically different from the original population of HIV that was in his body. That is called micro-evolution. Colloquially many of us would call that adaptation. That’s true. That’s observable. When you hear about beaks of finches in the Galapagos Islands changing with droughts over 30-40 years (Peter and Rosemary Grant’s research), that’s micro-evolution. That’s observable. God made organisms (and thereby populations of organisms) to be adaptive and resilient to environmental changes over time. That’s simple. That’s observable. That’s a totally separate conversation from that of origins!

“One time, after I had taught for a couple years (I was probably 24 years old), I was out to a fancy dinner with a number of successful scientists and mathematicians. Everyone at this dinner of about eight people was at least 20 years my senior. All of them were professors, some visiting from around the nation, and one professor at the table was “high ranking.” At some point in the evening, this group of math and science professors apparently felt bad for me and wanted to go out of their way to engage me in conversation, and here’s the question they engaged me with: “Peter, you teach biology; how do you teach evolution?” I swallowed inside and thought, “dear God, am I going to lose my job?” I felt like I might have just gotten thrown to the lions! So, I said, “well, I’ve thought about that a lot, but basically I’ve learned to major on what I would call ‘micro-evolution’ (like observable changes in HIV populations – observable, actionable science) and to minor on what I would call ‘macro-evolution’ (or evolution about origins).” I thought, “well, I said it!” (By the way, my biology students showed some of the most growth in the state of Ohio at times – so I really taught them science well, and the standardized test showed that.)

“After I put my thoughts out there, the most senior professor at the table said, “I am really glad to hear you say that.” As a 24-year-old, I thought, “thank God!” Then he went on to say something like, “you know, I must just not understand it – not being in biology, so it is probably just me – but it has really been concerning to me (again, just looking from the outside in) some of the conclusions they have been making in the biological sciences community – it doesn’t seem to stack up scientifically, but again I must just not understand it. So truthfully, I am really glad that you are majoring on the part that there is evidence for.” Then, everyone else at the table started nodding their heads. Do you realize what just happened? Seven strong scientists (not in the biological sciences) and mathematicians were

concerned about what was happening in the science around evolution. Surely, not all scientists would voice the same opinion, but this group happened to be saying that!

“Here’s another story: I taught science for five years, but over the past five years, I have been consulting for schools to help their teachers facilitate their students doing ‘design’ (like engineers do; there’s a problem, and then as a student, you would use what you’ve learned in class to thoughtfully and hopefully successfully address that problem or need.) When I coach teachers on doing design, I’ve learned that you have to help them focus on how their students are going to be able to ‘test their design.’ For instance, if you were designing a hammock for infants to sleep in, you would want to TEST to see if it held weight!

“Well, every once in a while, when I coach teachers, one of them will say, “I want my students to do a design project on evolution.” I have learned that I have to tell them that they can’t do that. Why? It’s not testable! You can’t observe it. I’m not saying they can’t observe it because I don’t believe in it. I am saying they can’t observe it! It’s really odd to have this one part of the science curriculum where I have to tell teachers that they can’t do design work with it because it’s unobservable – because science is about observation...I thought?

“It turns out that there are two types of science. There is observational science, and then there is what is called “historical science,” and really, historical science is what we would call “belief.” You will see that “belief” for yourself if you watch Ray Comfort’s video (Evolution vs. God) in which he asks four evolution professors around the country for a single example of a “change in kinds” (such as a fish becoming a salamander) that has been observed by science, so he doesn’t have to take evolution on “blind faith.” Those four professors (whose job is to teach evolution) couldn’t give one observed example of what their entire science is based on. It turns out that evolution as an explanation of origins is FAITH, not science. It’s “historical science,” not observational science – which is why students can’t do design with it in the classroom. This is what the scientists at the dinner echoed; they were glad I was majoring on the observable, evidence-based part of science in my biology classroom.

“You will also note that science is meant to be a system of questioning the hypotheses and conclusions of others through rigorous observation. For instance, you would be glad to know, if a drug were being tested for coming to market, that they would publish scientific studies that showed it didn’t work. In other words, if they only published favorable studies about the drug and sought to silence any studies that showed potential issues with the drug, people could end up being hurt! The success of science hinges on an impartial pursuit of “what works” – on both truth in testing and truth in reporting. We sure hope they test drugs like that!

“Interestingly though, if you do science that hints at supernatural intervention in the creation of the world, you tend to get kicked out of your university now! That’s odd; if science is meant to be an impartial pursuit of truth, it seems like you shouldn’t censor it. You can watch the documentary “Expelled” by Ben Stein and see that they will expel scientists with any findings that hint at creation. Wouldn’t they be interested in finding the truth about the evidence? I am sure some are, but apparently, some are not.

“Another time, I asked an expert statistician to explain to me the core fallacy of statistics – creating circular logic arguments. In other words, he said the cardinal sin was to make a statistical formula out of that data and then use that formula on the very same data set that you used to make the formula, which creates a circular logic argument! The next time I saw the statistician, I thanked him for explaining that to me the day before, and then said, “boy, it makes me think of carbon dating.” He smiled with a clearly knowing look and said, “I’ve thought the same thing.”

“The statistician has seen what I’ve seen. With all this data around carbon dating, they are extrapolating backwards based on what they’ve observed currently. That extrapolation process is based on statistical assumptions, yet it is then presented as fact. Scientifically problematic! Imagine if I saw your tax returns from last year and saw that you made \$500,000 last year. Praise God – that would be great! If I then said, “therefore, for the last 300 years, you’ve definitely made \$500,000 each year!” That would be silly! Even if I said, “therefore, you must have made \$500,000 for the last 3 years,” that is called an extrapolation. I am taking one or a few data points and saying “it must have been the same forever.” Kind of silly, isn’t it? Major assumption, huh? We will talk more about that.

“Recently, I was listening to a famous psychologist who was being interviewed. The interviewer asked her, “what do you think about evolutionary psychology?” Now, she had been doing observational research for about 30 years or more and has released a best-selling book out of that observational research. Her response about evolutionary psychology was something like, “I don’t pay much attention to that, because it seems to become whose story is better than whose, since it is not observable.” Here we have another high-level observational scientist looking from the outside in and saying, “look, it seems like it is story telling.” She likes to deal with observable, observational science – not historical science.

“A day, one”

Genesis 1:5 says “*God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So, the evening and the morning were the first day.*” Now, let’s look at the literal translation of this verse: “*and evening was, and morning was, a day, one.*” Do you see how emphatically the Lord wrote that through Moses?!? It’s

almost like the Lord knew there was going to be confusion around this at some point later. But I am here to tell you that it was six days for creation – six literal days. “*And evening was, and morning was, a day, one.*”

If a friend recounting for you a trip to Paris said, “we got there in the evening and went to a quaint cafe and then went back to the hotel, and then that morning we went out to a nice breakfast at another cafe on the town square,” she is telling you that “evening was, and morning was, and it was the first day of my trip,” isn’t she? Would you then conclude that she was talking about a theoretical period of time, perhaps thousands of years or more? Would that be the logical conclusion to their clear language?

“Dr. James Barr, Hebrew scholar and Oriel Professor at Oxford University, has written: ‘Probably, so far as I know there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1 through 11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience; (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to latter stages in the biblical story...’” (from Letter to David Watson, April 23, 1984; cited in Ken Ham, *The Lie: Evolution*, Master Books, 1987, p. 53).

Dr. Barr was writing as a Hebrew scholar – not as a believer. He is simply making commentary on the linguistic text of Genesis 1-11, and on what the premier Hebrew and Old Testament scholars around the world say about it. To Dr. Barr, the intention of the writer of Genesis was plainly clear. Creation was six literal days, and the genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of creation.

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

In this series, Peter is going to be addressing about five or six “controversial to the world but not controversial to God” topics. We are going to address those topics from the Word of God, and where helpful, Peter is also going to pull in some empirical evidence to help us see just how true the Word of God proves (Ps. 18:30). The first topic we are going to address is creation – and therefore we will also address evolution.

You may ask yourselves, “Peter, can’t you just let dead dogs lie? Why do you have to stir the pot? Why do you have to address these issues? Can’t you just leave them alone?” Peter is planning on addressing evolution, homosexuality, abortion, and a whole host of secular humanist concepts that we will also address from the Word of God, because they are pro-actively robbing the world of what God has for them. Peter is also planning on addressing a couple of topics from inside the church where there is actually controversy within the church – although, again, there is no controversy with God. Those two topics are grace and cessationism.

If you desire to live Godly, you will suffer persecution. Said differently: if we go a decade thinking we are living Godly and we don’t suffer persecution, chances are we are a little like salt that has lost its taste. We are supposed to be salt. Salt preserves things. What does salt preserve? Dead meat – so it doesn’t rot! Do you realize that the whole world is in decay unless the believers salt it by living righteously – and perhaps suffering persecution for doing so? We are supposed not to lose our saltiness so that we can preserve a rotting world until it can receive Jesus! (Said with no negativity). This is part of our service to the world. We cannot be half-way salty. What good is salt if it has lost its saltiness? This is why we are addressing these topics of societal import – because we are not to be afraid or troubled about talking about these issues. They are not controversial to God.

Let’s continue with verse 15 (from 1 Pe. 3). *“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.”* When this verse says “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,” what that means is to set the Lord apart in our hearts. Make Him Holy or separate in our hearts. So long as our minds are on the throne of our hearts, we won’t set the Lord apart in our hearts, which is going to cause us not to give a defense for the hope that is within us. Peter is saying, “give a defense,” which is a lawyer-type term. We are supposed to be able to give a legal defense for the hope that’s within us. Note that it says we should be ALWAYS ready to do that, and to EVERYONE. Many of us feel like we could share the gospel with a teenager, but would we be comfortable sharing the gospel with an evolution professor?

If we don't know what the Word of God says on these controversial-to-the-world matters, we will have what the Word of God calls a "weak conscience." (1 Cor. 8:7) Notice that this is different from the "evil conscience" talked about in Hebrews 10:22. There we see that an evil conscience needs sprinkled clean by the washing of the water of the Word so that a born-again believer can awaken to who she is in Christ and sin not! (1 Cor. 15:34) That is not what this is about. That is an EVIL conscience. This is a WEAK conscience. This has nothing to do with sin. A weak conscience has nothing to do with sin.

Let's look at an example of a weak conscience. Peter is a pastor. If he were out to dinner with his wife for a date, had a glass of wine with dinner, ran into another pastor who remarked, "you drink wine?" and Peter's conscience were weak about what the Word of God says about wine drinking as a believer, his heart would melt like wax within him at that interrogation. However, if Peter really knows what the Word of God says about wine (not just like, "I think I heard someone talk about that before..." but truly KNOWS what the Word of God says about wine), then he has a strong conscience. So, if Peter KNOWS that wine is no problem for a believer, but being given to drunkenness is, then in response to the accusatory interrogation from another pastor, he says, "yes, I am drinking wine; what's the problem?" and starts to consider how he might be able to minister freedom to the other pastor if possible.

So, what's the difference between a weak conscience and a strong conscience? That you know the Word! When you know the Word of God on the matter, that's what gives you a strong conscience! The reason we may faint at the thought of talking with someone about abortion, homosexuality, evolution, and other secular humanist concepts (or about grace and cessationism) is because our conscience on those issues is not strong in that area. We must be CONVINCED of what the Word of God truly says about these issues so that we can give a reason - a defense for the hope that's within you! There's a freedom that comes with this! You stop walking around being worried that someone is going to ask you, "so, do you think that homosexuality is a sin too?"

A philosophy is basically a value system. What did Jesus value? Let's look at John 5:19-20 "*Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.*"

Jesus says that He does nothing except what He sees and hears from the Father. The core focus of Jesus' life was to imitate the Father. In other words, this was Jesus' philosophy. It was His value system. Jesus' philosophy of life was to do what the Father was doing and say what the Father was saying. Let's

look at Matthew 10:24-25. There is a great humility in Jesus' philosophy of life. There is a level of humility that is going to bring a tremendous freedom in our lives that Jesus modeled perfectly. "*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master.*" It is enough. This is enough. You don't need to add to this; it is enough for a disciple to be like His teacher. It's enough that we would be like the Father! It's enough for us to be like our master. It's enough.

Philippians 2:5-7 (ESV) speaks to this as well: "*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*" Paul was saying to think like this – let this be your philosophy. He went on to say, "this mind that I am about to tell you about is yours in Christ – you already have this mind. You've been given the mind of Christ." When you read 1 Corinthians 2:16 about the mind of Christ, realize that the mind of Christ is not a laundry list of facts. This is the mind of Christ: "I can do nothing of Myself, but what I see the Father do; for whatever the Father does, I do in like manner; it's enough for Me to be like Him."

Think back to Genesis 2 and 3. In Genesis 2:17 we hear God say, "*but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*" God was saying, "in the day that you eat of that tree, you are going to die. That will not give you life and life abundantly; that will kill you." In the world, there are two philosophical operating systems available to us. The one was subscribed to (through deception of the serpent) by Adam and Eve. They ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had said "I'm giving you a free will because I want you to be able to choose to love Me if you choose to love Me, but please for your own sake don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for I never made man to be able to discern good and evil for himself." In fact, as a man, if you try to discern good and evil for yourself, it will destroy you." And THAT was the root of all sin – a desire to discern good and evil for ourselves.

But Jesus was not like the first Adam. Instead, we hear from Jesus, "*I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do.*" "I can say nothing of Myself other than what I hear the Father say." That's it. There are two philosophies for life. The one is "I am going to discern good and evil for myself." The second philosophy is "what my Papa says is what I say." The second philosophy says "I've decided that's enough. I've decided that it's enough for me to be like the Father." This is THE ROOT of Christian philosophy. Having a value system – a philosophy – that is like Christ!

1 Corinthians 2:16 says that we (as believers) have "the mind of Christ." Jesus was saying "here's how I operate. I say what He says and I do what He does." And we have that mind of Christ! What many

of us have done is use the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as the “operating system” for our entire lives, and what we’ve done is taken the Word of God and put it into that operating system as a program. And the Lord is saying, “I want My Word and My ways to be the whole operating system – not just a program.” Like the Lord told Peter, “your mind has been on the throne of your heart, and I want to be.” This is that! Pastor Brad taught on humility a couple years ago. This is a follow-up to that humility series. THIS is humility. It’s saying, “I know I have a right to have my own thoughts; I just choose to have His.” This is the philosophical foundation to this sermon series. Amen!

Some recaps from what Peter began to share about his experience with evolution:

- His major was actually evolution and ecology! He got an A in a high-level evolution course and subsequently taught evolution for 5 years.
- For the first 5 years or so of his walk with God, he tried to reconcile evolution and creation. He has since concluded that the Word of God and evolution are completely, totally, 100%, entirely irreconcilable as it relates to explanations of origins. His capstone professor had come to the same conclusion.
- Peter grappled with teaching evolution (even considered not becoming a teacher because of it). He discovered that there is micro-evolution that is observable (which most of us would call population adaptation). That’s true. That’s observable. But that’s a totally separate conversation from that of origins!
- When Peter shared that he had learned to major on “micro-evolution” (like observable changes in HIV populations – observable, actionable science) and to minor on what he would call “macro-evolution” (or evolution about origins), professors of math and science said, “I am really glad to hear you say that.” It turned out that seven strong scientists (not in the biological sciences) and mathematicians were concerned about what is happening in the science around evolution.
- Interestingly, Peter has also found that students cannot test (observe) evolution – a true anomaly in the science curriculum! It turns out that there are two types of science. There is observational science, and then there is what is called “historical science,” and really, historical science is what we would call “belief.” Evolution as an explanation of origins is FAITH, not science.
- Peter has also learned that while science is meant to be a system of questioning the hypothesis and conclusions of others through rigorous observation, if scientists do research that hints at supernatural intervention in the creation of the world, they tend to get kicked out of their universities. Surely censorship is not science?

- Another time, Peter talked with an expert statistician who also had noticed the statistical assumptions built into the dating components of evolutionary theory.
- Recently, Peter listened to a famous psychologist who was being interviewed. The interviewer asked her, “what do you think about evolutionary psychology.” She responded with something like, “I don’t pay much attention to that, because it seems to become whose story is better than whose, since it is not observable.” Here we have another high-level observational scientist looking from the outside in, saying, “look, it seems like it is story telling.” She seems to like to deal with observable, observational science – not historical science.

OK. Let’s start to take just a peak at the Word of God about creation. Genesis 1:5 says “*and evening was, and morning was, a day, one.*” Do you see how emphatically the Lord wrote that through Moses?!? It’s almost like the Lord knew there was going to be confusion around this at some point later. But I am here to tell you that it was six days for creation – six literal days. “*And evening was, and morning was, a day, one.*”

Dr. James Barr, Hebrew scholar and Oriel Professor at Oxford University, has commented on the linguistic text of Genesis 1-11. To Dr. Barr (and by his own estimates, to every world class scholar of Hebrew and the Old Testament), the intention of the writer of Genesis was plainly clear. Creation was six literal days, and the genealogies provide (by simple addition) a chronology from the beginning of creation.

Points to Ponder . . .

- Why is it important for the church to address these “controversial to the world, but not controversial to God” topics?
- What is a weak conscience (1 Cor. 8:7) and how can a weak conscience be strengthened?
- What is the root of Christian philosophy? How did Christ model it compared to Adam and Eve?
- How are “micro evolution” and “macro evolution” different?
- How are “observational science” and “historical science” different?
- What does the text of Genesis 1:5 clearly show?