

Ultimate question #2 Has God spoken?

Intro: Last week we looked at the most fundamental of all questions, “Is anyone out there?” Using reason and the existence of the universe, we may infer that a supreme eternal being of power and intelligence beyond anything we know in the universe has brought the world into existence. Yes, there is someone out there.

However there is another approach that may enhance our faith in God’s existence and at the same time answer the next most fundamental question, “Has man encountered God or Has God spoken?” When we answer this question we not only affirm that God exists but we settle the issue of how we can know about Him.

The first two arguments were philosophical arguments for God. We’ll call this the historical argument for God. It in effect says, “If God has been experienced by man, then God is!”

The principles of historical investigation

Let’s begin today with a common sense approach as we answer this ultimate question, “Has God spoken?” What are the fundamental rules of all historical investigation?

Man has powers to observe the world about him. By the use of his senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) he may experience what is around him.

What man experiences he may report to others. What others haven’t experienced they may know through the experience of others if there is sufficient evidence to support the testimony.

The witness or reporter must demonstrate mental competence to experience, interpret, and report what he experiences.

The witness or reporter must demonstrate moral competence to be a truthful witness of the things he has seen.

There must be a sufficient number of witnesses to establish the facts.

The hearer must listen to the report without prejudice or bias.

All that we know about the past is founded upon the proper use of these principles. Based on the use of these principles, we may now present the historical argument for God, “If God has been experienced, then God is!”

The history of Moses, the mediator of the covenant with Israel

Let’s consider as our first witness, Moses, the great prophet of the Jewish people. The most ancient written testimony of the existence of God comes from Moses, the great Lawgiver of the Jewish people. In his book, the Torah, he writes the history of those who had lived before him who also had

encounters with God, the patriarchs (Adam, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). But more importantly, for our investigation, he reveals his own experience in seeing and hearing God. Here is some of his testimony:

He reports as a historian how God had spoken to him first in a burning bush (Ex. 3). In this case, God gave a visible sign of His presence, a confirming miracle, and spoke to Moses directly (3:4-6).

Moses further reports of how God gave some visible manifestation of His presence to the himself, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the 70 elders of Israel (Ex. 24:9-11).

He reports how God spoke to him personally upon the mountain at Sinai (Ex. 25:1). Those who saw Moses climb the mountain saw the glory of the Lord in visible form as a cloud (Ex. 24:17). This phenomenon left no doubt in the minds of the Jewish people that Moses was indeed God's chosen mediator to them.

And so Moses records not only his own encounters with God but also the evidence God gave to the remainder of the people of Israel to confirm in their minds His reality and God's appointment of Him as His prophet.

He was mentally competent to interpret and report what He experienced.

Moses himself had been schooled in all the learning of the Egyptians (Ac. 7:22).

When we read the Torah (Gen-Deut.) we cannot help but be impressed with the skill with which Moses logically and harmoniously weaves together the story of God's purpose from the beginning and His development and choice of the descendants of Abraham.

He was morally competent to be regarded as a truthful witness.

Moses was giver of the highest moral law code ever known to man up to his day. It was a code that made truthfulness one of its principle features (Ex. 20:16) Is it conceivable that Moses should be the author of a system of morality so high, yet himself be one of the biggest deceivers that had ever lived to that time?

Moses' truthfulness is underscored by his willingness to report that which cast himself in a bad light. He honestly report his own failings to obey God and God's refusal to let him ever the land of promise (Deut. 3:37).

His testimony is corroborated by the whole Israelite nation in their decision to follow him.

If the reported evidences of God's intervention did not occur, how can we explain the Israelites sudden release from Egyptian bondage and their successful occupation of Canaan? Why did they so venerate Moses if they did not experience the things that we have mentioned? Was it not because of the confirming signs God worked that they also believed?

The history of the apostles of Jesus Christ, ambassadors of the New Testament

Our nearest written testimony of the existence of God comes from the apostles of Jesus Christ, the great lawgivers of the church of Christ. In their gospels, they reveal their experiences in seeing and hearing God who existed in the flesh as Jesus Christ.

They affirm that He was the Word who was “with God” and “was God” and “became flesh and dwelt among us”. Cf. Jn. 1:1-3; 14-18

They record his supernatural works culminating in the resurrection from the dead as evidence that that He was God among us (Jn. 20:30-31).

They too were mentally competent.

It is clear that the disciples had the opportunity to know about him (2 Pet. 1:16-18)

Their writings reveal them to be people with intelligence and ability to comprehend and report what they saw.

They too were morally competent.

They too upheld and taught the highest standard of morality ever given to man, the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Though their testimony was to cost them their lives, they did not hesitate to insist upon its truth even in the face of death (2 Pet. 1:12f-15).

There were a sufficient number of witnesses.

The apostles who testified to Jesus’ resurrection were themselves 12 in number. To them we could add a host of other corroborating witnesses who authenticated their testimony and stood beside them in their work of preaching.

Evaluating these reports of man’s experiences with God

Can we listen to their report without prejudice or bias?

What if we decide before investigation that God doesn’t exist? What if we decide that “supernatural” events cannot occur? What if we have moral reasons not to come under the limitations that faith in God would put upon us? Then in that case, we may seek to explain away this testimony as myth or superstition. If we assume that God cannot exist, then nothing they say would convince us.

However, if the world itself points in the direction of a powerful creator, then we should expect that such a God would not merely create the world and abandon it. Instead, we would expect that He would speak to the creatures He made.

What the Biblical writers report is that they experienced the God who created all things.

Conclusion: By the reasonable examination of the testimony of Scripture then we may conclude 1) that God exists. “For if God has been experienced, then God is!” 2) We may also conclude that God has made known His will for His

creation by revealing Himself to His creation. “Has God spoken?” Indeed he has. That is the testimony of Scripture (Heb. 1:1); and we are urged not to miss the importance of the revelation God has given (Heb. 12:25).