

Introduction To Apologetics - Part 3

The Path

We can only believe that we have eternal life in Jesus if we first believe in His resurrection and His divinity (that Jesus is God). We can only believe these things if we believe the Bible is true and that there is a God. Therefore, we will consider these six questions:

1. Does Truth Exist?
2. Does God Exist?
3. Is the Bible Reliable?
4. Is Jesus God?
5. Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?
6. Is Jesus the Only Way to God?

Review of Part 2

Yes, the Bible is Reliable

1. Date of the New Testament.
2. Manuscripts of the New Testament.
3. Non-Biblical Evidence.
4. It is implausible that the New Testament writers lied, but actually wrote their eye-witness accounts of events they experienced.
5. Archaeological Evidence.
6. The precision by which the Old Testament has been copied.
7. Jesus and the New Testament writers believed the Old Testament.

Video: The Bible Can't Be Trusted (D14) by getdebunked.org

Yes, Jesus Is God

1. Jesus made several claims that He was God.
2. The New Testament writers believed that Jesus is God.
3. The Old Testament Messianic Prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus.
4. There are only four possibilities for who Jesus was: Legend, Liar, Lunatic, or **LORD**. What is not possible is that Jesus was just a great moral teacher.

Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?

Video: Did Jesus Rise From The Dead? by Steve Lee

Why should we believe that Jesus rose from the dead? By evaluating the reliability of this historical event. By looking for...

1. Early sources
2. Multiple sources
3. Lack of legendary embellishment
4. No other competing story

Let us apply these criteria to the historical evidence for the...

1. Burial of Christ
2. Empty Tomb
3. Appearance of Christ
4. Transformation of the Disciples

Is Jesus The Only Way To God?

Video: Is Jesus The Only Way? By Steve Lee

Video: Is Jesus The Only Way? By Allen Parr

Religious Pluralism vs Christian Particularism

- Religious Pluralism is the idea that all religions provide a valid way to get right with God.
 - Different religions teach different, contradictory things, so they cannot all be right.
 - Every religion teaches that *its* way is the only way to God.
 - Other religions teach salvation through works, so their followers can never be sure that they've done enough to get to God.
- Christian Particularism says that Jesus is the **only** way to God.
 - Jesus said he was the only way (John 14:6).
 - The New Testament writers taught that Jesus was the only way to God (Acts 4:2, John 3:16, Romans 8:1, Romans 10:9, Galatians 3.26, 1 Corinthians 15:22).
 - Jesus lived a sinless life (1 Peter 2:22, Hebrews 4:15, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 3:5). No other religious leader has ever done that.
 - Jesus willingly paid the price of our sin – the shedding of His blood unto death – to satisfy the holy justice of God, so we don't have to. All we need to do is believe in Jesus.
 - Jesus worked miracles that demonstrated His power over all of creation. He even raised himself from the dead and lives for all eternity. So, we can be confident that He can give us eternal life as well.

Video: The Problem of Those Who Have Never Heard of Christ by ReasonableFaith.org

Video: The Fate of The Unevangelized by Steve Lee

What about those who have never heard about Jesus?

- The Bible does not give an explicit, definitive answer to this question.
- Perhaps they are judged based on the light they have received.
- Perhaps God has so arranged things to ensure that everyone who would accept Jesus as Lord and Savior is presented with the message of the Gospel.

Conclusion

Video: Who Is Jesus? by Focus on the Family

Apologetics Quick Chart®

Terms and Definitions

Apologetics, from the Greek *apologia*: a defense, is that branch of Christian theology which seeks to provide a rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith.

1 Peter 3:15 – “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason [i.e. – *apologia*] for the hope that you have.”

1. Offensive Apologetics – presenting a positive case for the Christian truth claims.
“There is good reason to think Christianity is true.”-Ex. *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel
 2. Defensive Apologetics – answering objections against the truth claims of Christianity.
“There is no good reason to think Christianity is false.”-Ex. *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel
- Offensive apologetics is the focus of this document.

The Nature of Truth

Truth exists and is knowable. Many would try to deny the existence of truth with one of the following claims: “There is no truth” or “Truth is not knowable” or “Truth is relative.” These claims are self-refuting, meaning they fail to meet their own standard.

Self-defeating claims: fail to meet their own standard and are self-contradictory. For example, the claim that “there is no truth” is asserted as true, but that is contradictory. Likewise, the claim that truth is not knowable, simply ask “how do you know that?” The claim that truth is relative is asserted as absolute. But if truth is relative, then so is the claim “truth is relative.” Such claims do not meet the criteria it is asserting. Christianity claims to be true. The following information provides evidence for that truth.

Three Arguments for God’s Existence

Cosmological

P1: Everything that begins to exist has a cause

P2: The universe began to exist

C: The universe has a cause

Evidence for P1

- self-evident
- nothing comes from nothing
- seems more plausible than its denial

Evidence for P2

- impossibility of an actual infinite number of past events necessitates a beginning
- Big Bang implies a beginning of the universe

Implications of C

- first cause must be timeless, immaterial, super-powerful, supernatural b/c time, matter, energy, and nature was created at Big Bang
- these attributes are the very attributes of God



Moral

P1: If God doesn’t exist, objective moral values don’t exist

P2: Objective moral values exist

C: Therefore, God exists

Evidence for P1

- God is the only source for objective moral values, because society and individuals can only provide subjective moral values (i.e., ethical relativism)

Evidence for P2

- There exists moral obligations that everyone is required to follow whether they do or not, or say they believe or not
- ex.-rape, murder, torture of children are examples of some objective moral truths

Evidence of C

- objective moral values breed a sense of obligation or duty
- only a person or authority can give a sense of obligation
- since the obligation to objective moral values cannot come from society or individuals, God must exist to ground this obligation

Teleological

P1: The fine tuning of the universe is either design or chance.

P2: It is highly improbable that it resulted from chance.

C: Thus it is highly probable that it resulted from design.

Evidence for P2

- The existence of life like ours depends upon a complex and delicate balance which must be fine tuned to such a degree that is literally incomprehensible and incalculable that it cannot be a result of chance, thus it must be design.
- Examples of fine-tuning include the expansion rate of the universe, gravitational force, placement of planet to sun, placement of solar system in galaxy, strong nuclear force, oxygen level, moon-earth gravity relation, and over a hundred others. If any one of these constants was different then life would not be possible.



Reasons for the Reliability of the New Testament (NT)

Dates

Reasons to believe the New Testament was written in the 1st century:

1) **Extant** (existing) **manuscripts**

- The Chester Beatty Papyri contains most of the New Testament and is dated AD 250
- The Bodmer Papyri (AD 200) contains most of John



2) **Early Church Father’s Testimony**

- Papias (AD 70-163) – mentions all four gospels
- Justin Martyr (AD 100-165)-four gospels, 11 other NT texts
- Iranaeus (AD 130-200) – all but four books of NT mentioned
- Polycarp (c. AD 110) - four gospels, majority of Pauline texts
- Ignatius (c. 107) – 24 books of NT quoted from by Ignatius
- The many and early quotations that push the New Testament well within the first century.

3) **John Ryland fragment:**

contains a fragment of John 18:31- 33, 37-38. Found in Egypt. Dates between AD 117-138.



4) **Focus of Luke’s writings**

(Gospel of Luke and Acts) is Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Does not mention the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) thus most likely written before that date. Matthew and Mark written before that and most of Paul’s epistles written well before that. Thus most, if not all, of NT written before AD 70.

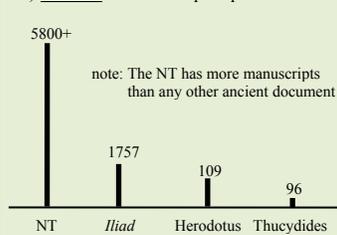
Importance of Early Dating

- 1) Early dating shows eyewitnesses were alive during the production of NT and could serve as a corrective.
- 2) The time is too short for legends to develop. Takes at least two generations in order for legend to corrupt historical data

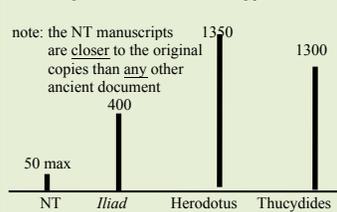
Manuscript Evidence

1) Comparing NT textual preservation with other ancient documents.

a) **Number** of manuscript copies:



b) **Span of years** between original composition and earliest copy:



2) **Embarrassing details** - If the New Testament was fabricated, the authors would not report and include embarrassing detail. People lie to put themselves in a better light, thus embarrassing accounts increase the likelihood of accuracy. Ex.–Peter’s denial of Christ, all disciples fled in fear after Christ’s death, women discovered empty tomb

- 3) **Variations of the Gospel Stories** - Variations attest to the N.T. accuracy in what they reported. If the gospels were fabricated and conspired they would be exactly the same (which is an indication of conspiracy). The stories differ slightly (because of perspective, focus) which attest to the truth of what is being reported. Ex. - number of angels at empty tomb (Mt 28:5-7, Jn 20:10-13)



Archaeology

Archaeology has continually affirmed the truth of the historicity of the Bible.

1) Significant OT archaeological finds:

- Dead Sea Scrolls (1947-56)
Qumran, Israel – provided oldest copies of almost all of the books of the OT confirming reliability of transmission process

b) House of David Inscription (1993)

Tel Dan, Israel – Earliest mention of King David outside the Bible

c) Cylinder of Nabonidus (1854) Ur, Iraq – Corroborates Belshazzar as last king of Babylon (Dan. 5:1-30)

2) Significant NT archaeological finds:

a) Pilate Stone Inscription (1961)

Caesarea Maritima – Confirmed existence and office of Pilate

b) Caiaphas Ossuary (1990) near Jerusalem-confirmed existence of Caiaphas

c) Pool of Siloam (2004) Jerusalem– Site of Jesus’ miracle in John 9:1-11

3) John McRay - Professor of NT and archeology. Wrote *Archaeology and the New Testament*. Supervised excavations at Caesarea, Sepphoris, and Herodium. John McRay has stated that “Archaeology has not produced anything that is unequivocally a contradiction to the Bible.” And “There is no question that the credibility of the New Testament is enhanced” through archaeology.



Caiaphas Ossuary

Non-Biblical Sources

1) There are more than 36,000 New Testament quotations present in writings of early church fathers.

2) Secular Historians confirming NT accounts:

- Josephus (A.D. 37-100) **Jewish Antiquities**
- Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. c. 55-117) Roman historian- names Jesus as the founder of Christianity
- Pliny the Younger (c. A.D. 112) Roman governor
- Other Historians
 - Lucian, Greek Satirist (2nd cent)
 - Suetonius, Roman Historian (c. AD 120)
 - Thallus, Historian of Samaria (AD 52)

3) Combining all secular testimony (outside of N.T.) we get the following picture: Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate at Passover time, believed by disciples that Jesus rose on the third day, church leaders charged Christ with sorcery (i.e., miracles), Christianity could not be contained and spread into Rome, Nero and other Roman rulers persecuted Christians, early Christians denied polytheism, live dedicated lives according to Jesus’ teaching, and worshiped Christ – This picture is congruent with the NT accounts

4) “On the basis of non-Christian sources...it is noteworthy that it does not in any way conflict with, but rather confirms, the historical information in the New Testament.” Paul Barnett, professor of ancient history at Macquarie University



Josephus

The Divine Claims of Christ and Messianic Prophecy

Jesus' Divine Claims

Jesus claimed to be God in direct and indirect ways:

1) Direct Claims:

- a) **Jesus' Trial** - Mk 14:61-64: High Priest asks Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus replied, "I am and all of you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" High priest tore his clothes, saying, "you have heard the blasphemy." This is a direct reference to Dan 7:13 a reference to God. In 1st cent. Jewish context, everyone knew he was referencing Dan 7:13 which talks of the Son of Man coming in a cloud of glory (only God was referenced that way) to judge the living and the dead (only God could judge) and all the world would worship him (only God is worshipped). He was claiming to be God and everyone knew it
- b) Claimed to be equal with the Father - John 10:25-33; John 5:17,18. "I Am" - John 8:58; "I Am" in Old Testament refers to God Himself
- c) **Son of God** - Matthew 16:16,17

2) Indirect Claims:

- a) He forgave sins - Mark 2:5-7; Sins one commit against God, can only be forgiven by God, Jesus forgave sin
- b) Claimed to be "life" - John 14:6 - Not that he knew but that he was the "way" the "truth" and the "life"

Options for Understanding

Jesus "teachings" resolved around himself thus, when Jesus claimed to be God, he was making a claim about the very core of his teaching. If Jesus was not God, then he was mistaken about something that was at the very core of his teaching. A great teacher could be mistaken about a marginal issue, being God or not can never be a marginal issue. Claiming to be God becomes the most important issue and if he is wrong then he is not a good teacher.

The Alternatives - Quadralimma (4 L's)

There are four alternatives with regard to who Jesus was (notice being a good teacher is not an option)

Legend - Never was a Jesus who claimed to be God

Lunatic - Thought that he was God,

but was wrong

Liar - Jesus deliberately

deceived people

Lord - He was

who he claimed to

be. In taking the

claims of Jesus

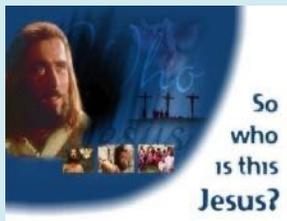
seriously one

cannot dismiss Jesus

as just a good moral teacher. Simply

being a good moral teacher is not an available option. Only

the options of legend, liar, lunatic, or lord are available.



Statistical Prophecy

The Old Testament contains predictions about a coming messiah. Such predictions included being a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; soldiers gambling for his garments; born in Bethlehem; the piercing of his side with no bones broken; being crucified with criminal; burial among the rich; piercing of hands and feet; and riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, to name a few.

Were these predictions fulfilled by (1) manipulation, (2) written after the fact, (3) chance, (4) or truly fulfilled? Manipulation Impossible Most prophecies were beyond the control of Jesus, which rules out that he deliberately fulfilled them to become the messiah. Written in After the Fact Impossible Finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls situated in entire Old Testament, prophecies and all, 100 years and more before Christ. Fulfillment by Chance Next to Impossible The mathematical possibility of anyone fulfilling the predictions by mere coincidence or chance makes us beg the question: was Jesus the Messiah? Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks* calculates the probability of fulfillment by chance. Fulfilling 8 prophecies by chance is 1 in 10¹⁷. That's one in one hundred million billion. 10¹⁷ in silver dollars would fill Texas two feet deep. Blind fold someone, mark one silver dollar; the person has one chance to pick the marked dollar. Fulfilling 48 prophecies by chance. One in 10⁵⁷. That's one chance in a trillion, trillion. All the prophecies came true in Christ!

Evidence for the Resurrection

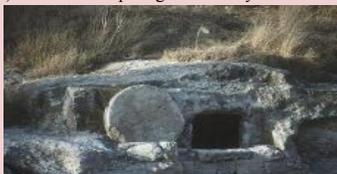
Establishing Historical Facts

Historical Facts must . . .

- 1) be recorded in very early sources.
 - 2) be recorded in multiple independent sources.
 - 3) lack legendary development, have a ring of truth
 - 4) have no other competing story.
- There are four facts about the fate of Jesus widely accepted by the majority of NT historians today:

#1 Burial: After Jesus died, he was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in his tomb.

- 1) Journal of the American Medical Association article "On the Physical Death of Jesus" March 21, 1986, Volume 256 determined that Jesus died from the process of crucifixion. Also, Roman soldiers are experts at capital punishment.
- 2) Jesus burial is attested in very old, multiple sources (1 Cor. 15:3-5 and Mark 15:42-47).
- 3) Joseph of Arimathea is unlikely to be a Christian invention because he was a well-known member of the high-court.
- 4) Burial story lacks any signs of legendary development.
- 5) No other competing burial story.



#2 Empty Tomb: Jesus' tomb was found empty

- 1) This old information transmitted by Paul (1 Cor 15:4) implies the empty tomb.
- 2) empty tomb story is also part of Mark's very old source material (Mk 16:1-8).
- 3) The earliest known Jewish response to Jesus' resurrection presuppose the empty tomb (Mt 28:11-15).
- 4) empty tomb discovered by women, unlikely to be invented by disciples given the status of women and the inability for women to give testimony in 1st cent. Jewish context.

#3 Appearances of Christ: On multiple occasions & various circumstances different individuals and groups of people experienced appearances of Jesus.

- 1) Appearance narratives are very early and cannot be dismissed as legendary 1 Cor. 15:5-8 - very early source (within 5 years of crucifixion).
- 2) Appearance narratives are multiple and from independent sources.
 - Appearances . . .
 - . . . to Peter is attested by Luke and Paul
 - . . . to the twelve by Luke, John, and Paul
 - . . . to the women is attested by Matthew and John;
 - . . . appearances in Galilee are attested by Mark, Matthew, and John
- 3) Gerd Ludemann of U. of Gottingen, a skeptic of the resurrection, concludes that the appearances "are historically certain."

#4 Transformation of Disciples: Disciples suddenly and sincerely came to believe that Jesus was risen from the dead despite every predisposition to the contrary

- 1) Jewish messianic expectations included no idea of a messiah who would be executed as a criminal.
- 2) Jesus' execution exposed Him as a heretic, a man literally accused by God (Deut 21:23).
- 3) Jewish beliefs about the afterlife precluded anyone's rising from the dead before the general resurrection
- 4) Yet the disciples suddenly came to believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead that they were willing to die for that belief.

Best Explanation

What explanation best accounts for these four established facts?

Explanatory Scope: it must explain all the facts

Explanatory Power: it must explain each fact adequately

Proposed Explanations -

- 1) **Conspiracy** - The disciples faked the resurrection by stealing the body of Jesus out of the tomb.

Critique: Explains the empty tomb but doesn't explain why the disciples would die for a lie. No one dies for a lie they know is a lie.
- 2) **Apparent Death/Swoon Theory** - Jesus did not die but revived in the tomb, got out and the disciples mistakenly thought he rose from the dead

Critique: denies the first historical fact that Jesus died from the crucifixion. Disciples would not have claimed a miracle resurrection with a tortured and wounded Jesus.

3) **Disciples Lied** - Disciples of Jesus intentionally deceived people into thinking that Jesus rose from the dead. *Critique:* Disciples wouldn't die for a known lie. Doesn't explain the empty tomb fact.

4) **Wrong Tomb** - Women and disciples went to the wrong tomb that was empty and mistakenly believed in resurrection. *Critique:* Tomb of Jesus is a known location, the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

5) **Hallucination** - Disciples hallucinated the resurrection.

Critique: Hallucinations are individualistic; the appearances of Jesus were to groups of people at many locations. Even if hallucinations occurred does not explain why the tomb is empty.

6) **God raised Jesus from the dead** - Only explanation that is able to explain each fact adequately and all of the facts. All attempted naturalistic explanations do not adequately explain each and all the facts.



References/Resources:

Beginner

- I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist* by Geisler and Turek (Crossway, 2004)
- Passionate Conviction*, ed. P. Copan and William Lane Craig (B&H, 2007)
- On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* by William Lane Craig (Cook, 2010)
- Christian Research Journal* (bimonthly apologetics journal)

Intermediate

- Reasonable Faith*, by William Lane Craig (Crossway, 2008)
- The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, G. Habermas and M. Licona (Kregel, 2004)
- God and Evil: The Case for God in a World of Pain*, ed. Meister and Dew (InterVarsity, 2013)
- Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Examines the Gospels*, J. Wallace (Cook, 2013)

Advanced

- The Jesus Legend*, Gregory Boyd & Paul Eddy (Baker Academic, 2007)
- Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, Moreland and Craig (IVP, 2003)

- To Everyone an Answer*, ed. Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland (InterVarsity Press, 2004)
- Contending with Christianity's Critics*, ed. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (B&H, 2009)
- Apologetics Study Bible*, ed. Ted Cabal (B&H, 2007)
- Areopagus Journal* (bimonthly apologetics journal)

- Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Norman Geisler (Baker, 1998)
- Building Belief*, Chad Meister (Baker, 2006)
- Reinventing Jesus*, by Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace (Kregel, 2006)
- Fabricating Jesus*, Craig A. Evans (InterVarsity, 2006)

- The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed., Craig Blomberg (InterVarsity, 2008)
- Debating Christian Theism*, ed. J. P. Moreland, C. Meister & K. Sweis (Oxford, 2013)

Web Resources:

www.reasonablefaith.org

www.str.org

www.paulcopan.org

www.bethinking.org

www.crossexamined.org

www.apologetics.com

www.ischristianitytrue.wordpress.com

www.coldcasechristianity.com