

Paul's Method and Message of Apologetic Evangelism
8 Principles of Sharing Your Faith
Acts 17:16-34

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Cultural Shift: Fact-Value Separation

In order to be equipped to share the gospel message in today's modern post Christian society, attention will be directed at understanding the shift away from a Bible-believing culture to our modern mindset. Therefore, the theological, philosophical, scientific, intellectual, and judicial/educational movements that have shaped the modern secular mind will be explored. The degree to which one understands this shift away from a Christian worldview will be the same degree to which he/she will properly identify erroneous thinking and aide in the proper application of Scripture to the problem. This is the culture in which Christians share the gospel and must be equipped to do apologetics (1 Chronicles 12:32).

I. Theological transition (Reformation)

A. Martin Luther (1483-1546)

B. Johann Gutenberg (1400-1468)

II. Philosophical transition

A. Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

"It may also be asked, in doubt rather than criticism, whether I am speaking politics – should also be carried on by my method. I would answer that I certainly do think my words have a universal application; and just as common logic, which governs by means of the syllogism, applies to all the sciences – not just to natural sciences – so my logic, which proceeds through *induction*, also embraces all things" (Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Bk I: Aphorisms, 127).

B. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

"The World (I mean not the earth only . . . but the *Universe*, that is, the whole masse of all things that are) is Corporeal, that is to say, Body . . . and that which is not Body, is no part of the Universe: and because the Universe is all, that which is no part of it is *Nothing*, and consequently *no where*" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*).

C. Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677)

"If, therefore, anything should come to pass in nature which does not follow from her laws, it would also be in contravention to the order which God has established in nature forever through universal natural laws: it would therefore be a contravention to God's nature and laws, and, consequently, belief in it would throw doubt upon everything, and lead to atheism. I think . . . we can again conclude . . . that a miracle . . . is a mere absurdity" (Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Tractatus*).

III. Scientific transition

A. Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo (1564-1642)

B. Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

IV. Intellectual transition (Enlightenment) (1688-1800)

A. Mechanical universe and miracles

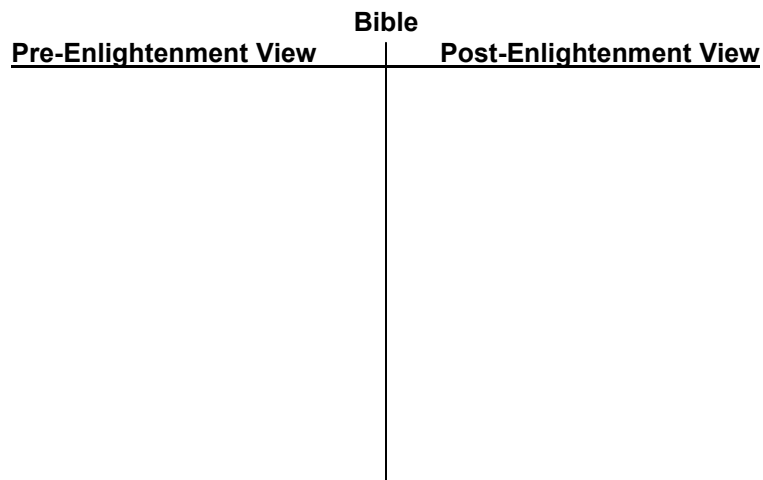
B. Secular over the Sacred

C. Reason over Revelation

D. Natural theology over revealed theology

E. David Hume (d. 1776) (skepticism)

F. Immanuel Kant (d. 1804) (appearance vs. reality)



V. The fruit of these transitions was Fideism (1800-1900)

A. Faith and Reason Separated (fact/value dichotomy)

B. Proliferation of the Cults in “Burned Over district”

C. Higher Criticism Flourishes (Simon, Graf, Welhausen, Austruc)

D. Charles Darwin (1809-1892)

VI. Liberalism enters the United States

A. Educational Institutions under attack

- B. Neo-Orthodoxy born (mixed scholarship with fideism, experience)

VII. Cultural/Educational/Religious transition

- A. Secular Humanism (1933, 1973)

- 1. Humanist Manifesto I
- 2. Humanist Manifesto II

Humanist Manifesto I (1933): “Religious Humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created”

“the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected”

“we are convinced the time has passed for theism”

Humanist Manifesto II (1973): “humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in a prayer-hearing God, . . . is an unproved an outmoded faith” (Paul Kurtz, ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II*, p. 7-23)

- B. John Dewey (1859-1952) (religion vs. religious)

“Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant” (Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 34).

VIII. Judicial transition

- A. Bible is *isolated* and *marginalized* from society

- 1. Judicial activism

1947 *Everson v. Board of Education* (330 US 1)– first to cite separation of church and state

1961 *Torcaso v. Watkins* (367 US 488) – court ruled that secular humanism is a religion. This led to the removal of God from all public life.

1962 *Engle v. Vital* (370 US 421) – ruled that state (NY) formulated prayer was unconstitutional

1963 *Abingdon School District v. Schempp* (374 US 203) -

devotional Bible reading is unconstitutional and that New Testament could be psychologically harmful

1980 *Stone v. Graham* (449 US 39) – court decided that posting the Ten Commandments was unconstitutional

- B. Christians are social/intellectual outcasts – no seat at the table of ideas

IX. Modern implications for the Bible

- A. Relativism takes root after God (standard) eliminated from public life

- B. Bible is seen as *outdated* and even *harmful* to read

- C. Compartmentalized *secular* and *sacred* (never will meet, historical separated from the spiritual)

- D. Bible has *competition* (New religious movements: immigration, travel, internet, immigration)

Introduction to Apologetics

The Introduction will serve as a foundation for defending the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith. The study will be divided into three sections as follows:

- I. What is apologetics?
 - A. Definition
 - B. What does the Bible say about apologetics?
 - C. The Two aspects of apologetics
 - D. Why do apologetics?
- II. Varieties of Apologetic Systems
 - A. Historical
 - B. Presuppositional
 - C. Classical
 - D. Evidential
- III. The Limits and Laws of Apologetics
 - A. The limits of apologetics
 - B. The Seven Laws of apologetics
- IV. Why study philosophical issues?
 - A. What is philosophy?
 - B. Why study philosophy?
 - C. How to study philosophy?

I. What is Apologetics?

A. Definition

1. The word “apologetics” comes from the Greek word *apologia* which means “reasoned defense”.
2. The word is used at least nine times in the New Testament (I Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; I Pet 3:15; Phil 1:7, 16; II Tim 4:16; Acts 25:16; 19:33; 22:1).
3. It is a *judicial* term which describes the way a lawyer defends his client in a court room (II Tim 4:16). It is not a *military* term.
4. Therefore, apologetics is the branch of Christian theology that deals with the verbal defense of the Christian faith.

B. What does the Bible say about apologetics?

1. ***I Peter 3:15-16*** *But in your hearts reverence the Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*
2. ***Jude 3*** *I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*
3. ***Philippians 1:7, 16*** *. . . for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. . . knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.*
4. ***II Timothy 2:24-25*** *And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and that they may escape from the snare of the devil.*

5. **Titus 1:9-11** . . . holding fast the faithful word as he [Bishop] as been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

C. The two aspects of apologetics

1. Negative

- a. Tearing down argument and defending against objections-I Peter 3:15
- b. **II Corinthians 10:5** We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.
- c. **Titus 1:9-11** He must hold firm to the sure as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also confute those who contradict it.

2. Positive

- a. Providing evidence and reasoned answers (Romans 1:19-20, Luke 24:39; Isaiah 1:18, 1 Pet 3:15)
- b. **Acts 1:3** To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God.
- c. **Luke 24:39** And he [Jesus] said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and blood as you see I have.
- d. **Romans 1:19-20**- For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

D. Why do apologetics?

1. Because the Christian faith is under attack from the outside

- a. From the cults
 - i. Mormonism: Bruce McConkie said “Mormons have the only pure and perfect Christianity now on earth” (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, vol. 2, 1976, p. 113.)
 - ii. Mormonism: George Cannon asserts “The various organizations throughout Christendom . . . have one common origin. They all belong to Babylon. God is not the founder of them” (Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, 1987, p. 324.)
- b. From the occult
 - i. Witchcraft: Arnold (1909-1974) and Patricia Crowther say that “They [witches] do not understand why other religions should wish to convert everyone to. . . Surely no one can believe that a god, who made the world and everyone in it, should choose one group more than any other, and condemn the rest to an everlasting hell” (Crowther, *The Secrets of Ancient Witchcraft with the Witches Tarot*, 1974, p. 179)
 - ii. Witchcraft: Scott Cunningham avers that “perhaps it’s not too strong to say that the highest form of human vanity is to assume that your religion is the only way to Deity” (Cunningham, *Witchcraft Today*, p. 66)
- c. From non-Christian religions
 - i. Muslim apologist Ahmed Deedat says “Out of the four thousand differing manuscripts the Christians boast about, the Church fathers just selected four which tallied with their prejudices and called them Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John” (Deedat, *Is The Bible God’s Word?* P. 24)
- d. From secular humanism and Atheism
 - i. *Humanist Manifesto I* (1933): “Religious Humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created” “the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected” “we are convinced the time has passed for theism”
 - ii. *Humanist Manifesto II* (1973): “humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in a prayer-hearing God . . . is an unproved an outmoded faith” (Paul Kurtz, ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II*, p. 7-23)

- iii. Atheist, G. Richard Bozarth said “And how does a god die? Quite simply because all his religionists have been converted to another religion, and there is no one left to make children believe they need him. Finally, it is irresistible – we must ask how we can kill the god of Christianity. We need only insure that our schools teach only secular knowledge. . . . If we could achieve this, God would indeed be shortly due for a funeral service. Bozarth, “On Keeping God Alive,” *American Atheist* (Nov 1977): 8; cited in John Whitehead, *Texas Tech Law Review* (Winter 1978): 40.
 - aa. 1947 *Everson v. Board of Education* (Sep of Church and State)
 - bb. 1961 *Torcaso v. Watkins* (Humanism is a religion)
 - cc. 1962 *Engle v. Vitale* (removed state formulated prayer -NY)
 - dd. 1963 *Abingdon School District v. Schempp* (dev Bible reading)
 - ee. 1980 *Stone v. Graham* (Ten Commandments unconstitutional)
- iv. Atheist, George Smith writes, “It is my purpose, however, to demonstrate that the belief in god is irrational to the point of absurdity . . .” (Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God*, p. xi)
- e. From unbiblical philosophies
 - i. Materialism: Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) wrote, “The World (I mean not the earth only . . . but the *Universe*, that is, the whole masse of all things that are) is Corporeal, that is to say, Body . . . and that which is not Body, is no part of the Universe: and because the Universe is all, that which is no part of it is *Nothing*, and consequently *no where*” (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 689).
 - ii. Antisupernaturalism: Benedict Spinoza (1632 - 1677) asserts, “If, therefore, anything should come to pass in nature which does not follow from her laws, it would also be in contravention to the order which God has established in nature forever through universal natural laws: it would therefore be a contravention to God’s nature and laws, and, consequently, belief in it would throw doubt upon everything, and lead to atheism. I think . . . we can again conclude . . . that a miracle . . . is a mere absurdity (Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Tractatus*, p. 87) (See Colossians 2:8).
- 2. Because Christianity has corruption from within
 - a. From aberrant doctrines (e.g. neotheism, annihilationism, spiritual resurrection, etc)
 - b. From aberrant movements (e.g. faith teachers)
 - c. From the religious and non-religious academicians (e.g. some university professors and the “Jesus Seminar”)
- 3. Because apologetics can *help* lead others to Christ
 - a. **St. Augustine** - by the debater [Helpidius] of the Manecheaens (see *Confessions*)
 - b. **Simon Greenleaf** - by his students presenting evidence. He later looked for himself (see *Testimony of the Evangelists*)
 - c. **Frank Morison** - He set out to disprove the resurrection and was convinced by the evidence. (see *Who Moved the Stone?*)
 - d. **C. S. Lewis** - Was an atheist until someone asked him “By what standard are you saying there is injustice in the world?”
 - e. **Doubting Thomas** was convinced when Jesus provided evidence (John 20:26-28)
- 4. Because without evidence it is unreasonable to believe
 - a. Do you step into an elevator without checking that the floor is there?
 - b. Do you board a plane without evidence that it can fly?
 - c. Then why choose a religious system that has eternal significance without checking out the facts?
 - d. To believe without any kind of evidence or reasons is called *fideism*. However, fideism is self-defeating because:
 - i. If you have no reasons for your faith, you have what is called an *unreasonable or unjustified* faith. Which in this case gives no one any good reason to believe fideism is true.
 - ii. And if there are reasons why someone should be a fideist, they are not a true fideist because they are giving reasons. In short, fideism is self-defeating.

5. Reason and evidence are needed to discover which views are true
 - a. The Qur'an claims that Jesus *did not* die on the cross (Surah 4:157)
 - b. But the Bible says Jesus *did* die on the cross (John 19:28-37)
6. Because Jesus never bypasses the *head* to get to the *heart* (mysticism). Take a *step in the light* of reason and evidence not a *leap in the dark*
 - a. **Isaiah 1:18** "Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow;"
 - b. **Matthew 22:37-38** And he said to them, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment."
 - c. **Mark 2:10-11** "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins . . . I say to you, arise, take up your bed and go to your house."
 - d. **John 3:12** "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things."
 - e. **Romans 12:1-2** "I beseech you therefore, brethren, . . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service . . . and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ."
7. Because the use of feelings alone is not a good test for what is true
 - a. Opposing religious systems (Mormons) have a good feeling (in the bosom) that they have the truth. Do they really?
 - b. Feelings cannot be the ultimate test for truth because feelings change and truth does not change. Truth is absolute.
 - c. Feelings can be used in how one "holds" the truth, but not as one's "test" for truth.
8. Because Jesus did apologetics
 - a. He showed "Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3).
 - b. He dispelled the disciples' doubts by presenting his body as evidence of his resurrection.
 - i. **Luke 24:38-39** "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have. When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet."
 - c. Jesus provided empirical evidence in order to confirm his message.
 - i. **Mark 2:8-11** - "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'your sins are forgiven you,' or to say 'arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins' $\frac{3}{4}$ He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose . . . and . . . all were amazed and glorified God . . ."
 - ii. **Acts 2:22** - "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus of Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know."
 - d. He defended and proved the afterlife (Mt 22:23-33) with reason and Scripture when the Sadducees tried to trap (Mt 22:15) Jesus in His words.
9. Because Paul customarily used reason to defend the Gospel and persuade others to believe in Jesus
 - a. **Acts 9:22** "But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ."
 - b. **Acts 17:2-4** "Then Paul, as his custom was, went into them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. . . . And some of them were persuaded."
 - c. **Acts 18:4, 19** "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. . . . And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews."

- d. **Acts 19:8** “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.”
- e. *To be ignorant and simple now-not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground - would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen.* (C. S. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, p. 50)

II. Varieties of Apologetic Systems

There are a number of different approaches to the discipline of apologetics. There is not a universally agreed upon way of categorizing each of them. This difficulty seems to be a result of the differing systems utilizing each others approach at one time or another (overlapping). However, there are certain headings that make understanding apologetic systems helpful. These four approaches are not meant to be exhaustive (since the apologetic systems are so broad), but rather to familiarize the student with some of the more prevalent systems.

- A. **Historical:** Emphasizes the need to start with historical evidence in an attempt to defend the truth of Christianity. It is part of the broader category of “evidential” apologetics (G. Habermas).
- B. **Presuppositional:** Stress the need to presuppose certain aspects of reality (meaning, language) and the basic truth of Christianity. Then proceed to show opposing worldviews are false by employing different kinds of methods. (Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark)
- C. **Classical:** Stresses the importance of arguing from the existence of God and employing various historical evidences to defend the truthfulness of Christianity. The classical apologist seeks to establish Christianity (God) apart from special revelation (Bible). Then proceed to draw rational inferences such as “if God exists then miracles are possible.” Classical apologists also employ philosophical and theistic apologetics. They start with theistic proofs because they believe that facts are not self-evident, rather they are interpreted through ones worldview (see John 12:28-29). (R.C. Sproul, St. Augustine, Norman Geisler, J.P. Moreland, and William Lane Craig).
- D. **Evidential:** Stresses the need for evidence in demonstrating the truthfulness of Christianity. These evidences include historical, archaeological, experiential, and prophetic. It is a broad category that overlaps with many other systems. Evidential apologetics would be the second step in the classical system. (Josh McDowell).

III. The Limits and Laws of Apologetics

A. The limits of apologetics

How far can apologetics go in bringing someone to faith in Christ? *Apologetics can save no one.* However, it can be used to clear away obstacles to faith. The distinctions between faith and reason are as follows: (Faith that vs. Faith in)

<u>Faith that</u>	<u>Faith In¹</u>
Area of apologetics	Area of preaching
Pre-evangelism	Evangelism
Addresses reason	Addresses faith
Intellectual	Will
Objective	Subjective
Done sometimes	Done anytime/anywhere
Uses <i>general</i> revelation	Uses <i>special</i> revelation
Addresses <i>perceiving</i>	Addresses <i>receiving</i>
Comes prior to faith <i>In</i>	Comes after faith <i>that</i>
(see Hebrews 11:6)	

B. The “7 laws” of a good apologist

The “Seven Laws of the Apologist” are principles that the apologist can use while engaging in the defense of Christianity. These laws are easily remembered in the form of the acronym A-N-S-W-E-R-S. They are based on Dr. J.W. Montgomery’s tape lectures (Sensible Christianity).

¹N. L. Geisler, Southern Evangelical Seminary unpublished class notes (1995)

- A** Always give the gospel first
- N-** Never be offensive
- S-** Search out the real issues
- W-** Walls are to be removed
- E-** Evangelistic techniques are to be used
- R-** Relationships are essential
- S-** Self analysis of our own doubts about Christ

IV. Why Study Philosophical Issues?

A. What is philosophy?

1. *Philosophias* - *Colossians 2:8*
2. *Phileo* - _____
3. *Sophia* - _____
4. It is the discipline that teaches one how to *think properly* and according to the *rules* of thought (e.g. laws of non-contradiction - 1 Tim 6:20)

1. Emphasis of Philosophy

- a. The discipline of Philosophy can be described as:

Philosophy	Sociology

b. Another emphasis

- c. It is the discipline that studies the *foundational* elements of other disciplines such as science, history, religion etc.
- d. What is studied in philosophy?
 - i. Metaphysics – What is real?
 - ii. Epistemology – How do we know?
 - iii. Ethics – What is right, good or moral?
 - iv. Logic – How should we think?
 - v. Ontology – The study of being?
 - vi. Semantics/Hermeneutics – What is meaning and how do we interpret?
 - vii. Philosophy of religion – *What* or *Who* is ultimate?
 - viii. Aesthetics – What is beautiful?

B. Why study philosophical issues? 10 reasons

1. Because we can't do theology or study our Bibles
2. It's impossible not to hold a philosophy. Everyone has a philosophy of life called a "worldview."
3. Because we are rational beings, not animals who rely on brute instinct.
4. Because thinking properly helps fulfill part of the greatest commandment to worship Him with our minds (Mt 22:37-38)
5. Because we are to meditate on whatever is true (Phil 4:6-8; John 20:30; Jude 14-15) and avoid contradictions (1 Tim 6:20)

6. Because theological discussions often jump to the philosophical level
7. Because it offers a common ground with non-believers (Acts 14; 17A; 17:28ff – appeals to nature, Scripture, philosophy)
8. Because no one can come to Christ without first believing that God exists (Heb 11:6)
9. Because it helps eliminate intellectual objection to Christianity, exposing the real issue: moral rebellion!
10. What about Colossians 2:8?

“Good philosophy must exist if for no other reason than to refute bad philosophy” - C. S. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*

C. Q: How do we study philosophy?

A: Like a scientist studies disease

1. Academic vs. the devotional approach
2. Take the proper precautions (prayer and reading, keep a proper perspective of philosophy)
3. Do not get enmeshed into it
4. One does not need to know every aspect of a certain philosophy. Find the underlying presupposition then refute it (principle of self-stultification).
5. Discover the disease, and then treat it.

The Relationship Between the Use of Reason and the Bible ²

In our discussion about the role of philosophy, the student should *not* be left with the idea that reason has been elevated above the Bible. The following chart will be helpful in clarifying the proper role of reason in relation to Scripture.

Reason above Revelation

YES	NO
Epistemologically	Ontologically
In knowing	In Being
In Discovering	In Submitting

In other words, reason has its proper role when *approaching and discerning* Scripture before one is saved. In other words, one uses reason in the process of evaluating, discerning and discovering whether a book is a revelation from God, however, once this question has been solved, the person should then submit his reason to that newly discovered revelation (Bible), thus making the Bible the test for our thoughts and actions. This process of using reason/philosophy is the same one used by all Christians in order to test whether the Bible is the Word of God before they were saved.

As the chart indicates, reason and sound evaluatory skills are the rudder which God has given us (whether saved or unsaved) to discern and evaluate truth from error, heat from light, and wheat from chaff. Once this rudder is abandoned (as is custom in many eastern religions and philosophies), your critical thinking skills have been lost making it impossible to distinguish the kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan and making salvation an impossibility in this condition. One cannot adequately discern good from evil or Jesus from the devil or sin from righteousness without the vital thinking skills.

Furthermore, reason is the gift that all men, whether saved or not, have in common, and thus can be the point of contact in the presentation of the Gospel to the unsaved. Of course, only after the gospel has been first presented in its simplicity (Romans 1:16-17)

² N. L. Geisler, *Baker's Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*

The Apologetic Argument for Christianity³

This outline³ is not only the logic behind the apologetic case for Christianity; it is the essential order in which the case must be presented. If the premises are true, then so is the conclusion. It will also serve as our general course structure.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

³Unpublished class notes, Norman L. Geisler, "Introduction to Apologetics". Southern Evangelical Seminary, 1996. See Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976).

The Apologetic Task

The Christian's "apologetic task" is to establish Christianity as true to the unbeliever. In order for this to be accomplished, there are certain issues which need to be addressed in logical order. For example, it makes no sense to make truth statements and talk about reality as the Bible does without first establishing that truth is real, and that it can be known, and that a real world actually exists in the first place. This order is known as the "apologetic task" which consists of three chronological steps: **1) Establishing the Philosophical Foundations, 2) Establishing the Existence of God, and 3) Establishing the Truthfulness of Christianity.** This order of demonstrating Christianity as true will also be our general course outline.

STEP 3: Evidential Apologetics

Establishing the Truth of Christianity

1. The Historical Reliability of the New Testament
2. The Person of Christ
3. The Resurrection of Christ

STEP 2: Theistic Apologetics

Establishing the Existence of God

1. The Existence of God
 - a. Cosmological, Teleological, and Moral arguments
 - b. Theistic attributes: Eternality, Intelligence, Goodness
2. An Examination and Evaluation of Alternative Worldviews
3. The Possibility of Miracles
4. The Problem of Evil
5. The Doctrine of Hell

STEP 1: Philosophical Apologetics

Establishing the Philosophical Foundations

1. Can something be Known?
2. What is truth?
3. Can everything be false?
4. Can opposites both be true at the same time and in the same sense?
5. Does something exist?
6. Can something come to be that is not caused?
7. Can nothing produce something?

Truth is Absolute and Knowable⁴

Step 1: Philosophical Apologetics

Introduction

The implications are staggering, for if there is no absolute truth, Jesus is in error for claiming that “thy word is truth,” (John 17:17). The importance of the issue of truth cannot be stressed to highly, for if there is no absolute truth, Christianity is nothing more than one’s opinion about God.

Therefore, attention will be directed to **1) Barriers to Truth, 2) Theories of Truth, and 3) The Negative Test for Truth 4) Objections to truth**

I. Barriers To Truth (can truth be known?)

A. Agnosticism (Plotinus, c. AD 250, and Immanuel Kant, d. 1804)

1. According to the hard form of Agnosticism, one cannot know anything about ultimate reality (truth). There are no absolute truth statements about reality. Therefore, knowledge of God is impossible.
2. Problems with Agnosticism:
 - a. *Agnosticism is self-destructive.*
 1. It claims to know about reality, namely, that you cannot know it.
 2. Agnosticism makes absolute truth statements about reality.
 3. It does know something about God, namely, that you can’t know Him.
 - b. *If agnosticism cannot know reality it has no business making absolute statements about reality.*
 - c. *Every negative affirmation about reality presupposes a positive prior knowledge about reality.*
 1. “The shirt is not white” presupposes prior knowledge of what color the shirt is.
 2. “God cannot be known” presupposes prior knowledge of God.

B. Skepticism (David Hume, d. 1776)

1. According to hard skepticism, one should doubt everything and suspend judgment about reality. It is the philosophy of uncertainty.
2. Problems with Skepticism:
 1. *Skepticism is self-destructive.*
 - a. One cannot be skeptical about everything or else he would have to be skeptical of his own skepticism.
 - b. To suspend judgment about reality is to make a judgment about reality (i.e. to suspend it).
 1. *Skepticism (can’t know for sure, therefore, remain skeptical) implies agnosticism, but as we have seen agnosticism is self-defeating.*
 2. Skepticism essentially says “I am *certain* you *cannot be certain* about the truth claims concerning reality.” Is this a truth claim about reality that claims certainty? Yes.

C. Relativism (Heraclitus, c. 500 BC and Immanuel Kant d. 1804)

1. According to relativism, all truth is relative or subjective, it is not absolute. Truth is a matter of one’s own perspective.
2. Problems with relativism:
 - a. *It is impossible to deny absolute truth.*
 - b. *If truth is relative, what is it relative too?*
 - c. *Relativists fail to consider the context of truth statements.* For example, the relativist would claim that the statement “Bill Clinton was president of the United States in 1996” is true *then* but is not true *today* (1997). They fail to see that “Bill Clinton is president of United States in 1997” is a different truth statement. The old statement still is true for all people, at all times, and in all places, namely, it will never be true that Bill Clinton was not president of the United States in 1996.

⁴The following information is derived from Geisler, Norman L. and Ron Brooks. *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor books, 1990), 260-72. Geisler, Norman L.. *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976), 13-147. Kreeft, Peter and Ronald K. Tacelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 361-82. Also see Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19958.

- d. Ask the relativist if his view of truth is just his perspective, or is it true for all people, at all times, and in all places that truth is relative. If it is just his perspective, it leaves the door open for absolute truth to exist and if it is absolute truth he is no longer a relativist.

D. Religious Pluralism

1. The view that all religions are true. Those who deny this are considered *intolerant, exclusivist, and narrow minded*.
2. Problems with pluralism:
 - a. Religious pluralism cannot be true because the various systems make mutually exclusive truth claims (both cannot be right).
 - b. Religious pluralists wrongfully charge Christians with intolerance due to their confusing of what one holds (truth) with how ones holds (attitude) it. If holding an exclusive religious truth makes one intolerant, then the exclusive truth held by the pluralist makes him equally intolerant.
 - c. The religious pluralist holds an equally exclusive position, namely, everything contrary to pluralism is false.
 - d. The religious pluralist concept that Christians are narrow minded stems from their misunderstanding of the *nature of truth*. Truth by definition is narrow. 2+2 is always 4; every other number on into infinity is false.

II. Theories of Truth (What is Truth?)

A. The Coherence theory

1. According to the coherence theory, a statement is true only if it is *consistent or coheres* with the other statements in the system. Statements are true only to the extent that it fits into the system.
2. Problems with this theory:
 - a. Just because a statement is consistent and coheres with the rest of a given system does not make that statement true. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses have an internally consistent doctrine of Christ that coheres with other statements in that system; however, this does not make their system true.
 - b. If two mutually exclusive coherent systems existed, one cannot discover which is true.
 - c. A statement may be consistent within a system but not applicable to the real world. For example, the statement "Santa Clause lives in the North Pole" may cohere within a system that advocates Santa Clause but does not reflect the facts in the reality, namely, that Santa Clause does not live at the North Pole.
 - d. At best, coherence theory is a negative test for truth, not a definition of truth. That is to say, if something coheres it could possibly be true, but if it does not cohere to what we already know to be true, it cannot possibly be true. Truth must at least cohere with other true statements.
 - e. The coherence theory makes the system the test for truth. The test must come from outside the system (e.g. reality). The coherence theory is like building a house in mid-air with no foundation, nothing outside itself to support it.

B. The Pragmatic theory

1. According to the pragmatic theory, something is true if it *works*. Truth is that which is *expedient* and brings the best *results*.
2. Problems with this theory:
 - a. It confuses what truth *does* with what truth *is*. Truth does work (the way God intends it to work), but what works is not always true. For example, *lying* may work, but that does not make what you said true, it still misrepresents the facts.
 - b. Some say truth and falsehood are not categories that can be applied to function. Is a car true or false because it does not work?
 - c. Will the judge allow you to take the witness stand and tell whatever "works, whatever is expedient, whatever brings the best results"? No.

- d. Opposite things bring different results to different people. Some bank robberies work and some do not, are bank robberies true or false? Truth cannot contradict itself.

C. The Intentionalist theory

1. According to this theory, truth is found in good intentions, not in affirmations. Something is true if we intend it to be true, and false if intended to be false.
2. Problems with this theory:
 - a. Truth is not contained in what one intends to say, but what one does say. For example, if I intended to say "get off the elevator at the seventh floor," but said "get off at the third floor" and you get lost, my directions were false no matter what I intended to say. Truth is not contained in what you *don't* say (intentions); it is in what you *do* say (affirmations).
 - b. The Old Testament considered certain unintentional acts wrong and erroneous which demanded sacrifice (Lev 4:2-10, 27).
 - c. If the intentionalist view of truth is correct, there cannot ever be a sincere intending person that is wrong. What about the sincere nurse that intended to put eye drops in the babies' eyes but put acid instead? What about the well intending Mormon or Jehovah's Witness? Does their well intentions make their doctrine true? No. Would the judge let a motorist off with no penalty after unintentionally killing a pedestrian? Manslaughter.
 - d. This view makes statements that do not correspond to the facts true because the person intended to tell the truth.
 - e. How can we know what someone's intentions are if his intentions are not made known in statements (affirmations).
 - f. The intentionalist theory is contradictory. For example, lies are often intentional, this however, does not make lies true (a true lie is a contradiction).

D. The Correspondence theory

1. According to the correspondence theory, a statement is true if it *corresponds to reality as it exists*. Truth is telling it like it is and not telling it like it is, is false. This is the biblical theory of truth.
2. Strengths of this theory:

Biblical Data:

 - a. Joseph said to his brothers, "Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you," (Gen 42:16).
 - b. Ananias and Sapphira "lied" by misrepresenting their finances to the apostles (Acts 5:1-4). They did not tell the facts as they corresponded to reality.
 - c. How can you tell who is telling the truth when God said "you shall surely die" (Gen 2:17) or Satan, when he said "you shall not surely die" (Gen 3:4)? Satan is the liar because what he said did not *correspond* to what God said, Adam and Eve eventually died in reality.
 - d. The ninth commandment is predicated on the correspondence theory of truth. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor," (Ex 20:16).
 - e. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know the facts as they corresponded to his real dream (Dan 2:9)
 - f. Correspondence view of truth possesses something outside itself as a positive test, namely *reality*. Reality can be the ground by which all truth claims, whether Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Mormon, or Atheist are tested.
 - g. Other passages are Acts 24:8, 11; 1 Kings 22:16-22; Proverbs 14:25)
3. Philosophical implications without correspondence theory:
 - a. If statements do not have to correspond to the facts, *lies and truth-telling are impossible*. Every statement would be true (even contradictory ones) (e.g. murder witness).
 - b. There could be *no truth or falsity*. The correspondence theory implies that there is a difference between things as they exist and statements about those things. Without this distinction there is no testing of statements outside themselves. No one could be certain of truth or falsehood.

- c. Factual communication would break down *without* correspondence theory. Facts by definition correspond to the way things really are (reality). This is how someone distinguishes the factual from non-factual information.

D. **Definition of Truth:** *Truth is that which corresponds to reality as it exists.* Truth is contained and conveyed in the following forms:

1. Statements/Affirmations/Propositions whether written or spoken that corresponds to reality
2. Jesus as a person (John 14:6)
3. The Word of God (John 17:17)

III. The Negative Test for Truth

Now that we know what truth *is*, it will be helpful to apply certain principles in order to discover what *is not* truth. In other words, these principles will reveal what statements cannot possibly be true. Study of this section will help equip the Christian apologist by exposing him to certain laws of rational argumentation that are universally applicable no matter what religious, cultural, or philosophical backgrounds one might be identified with. They also serve as the basis for absolute truth and also for undeniable premises by which Christians can prove the existence of God.

A. **The Laws of Logic** (which says no two opposite statements can be true at the same time and in the same sense). The laws of logic are also called “first principles” due to their foundational nature. They are:

1. The Law of Non-Contradiction (A cannot be both A and non-A at the same time and in the same sense)
2. The Law of Identity (A is A)
3. The Law of Excluded Middle (A is either A or non-A)
4. The Law of Rational Inference (If A is in B, and B is in C, then A is in C)



2. The Nature of These Laws

They are:

- a. Undeniable (to deny them would be to affirm them)
- b. Laws that flow from God’s nature (John 1:1; Heb 6:18; Tit 1:2; James 1:13)
- c. Self-evident to all (i.e. cannot get behind, under, or beyond them)
- d. Like ethical laws which are *prescriptive* (what you ought to do), not like the laws of nature which are *descriptive*.
- e. A negative test for truth (i.e. what cannot possibly be true)

3. The Importance of Knowing These Laws

- a. Knowledge of these laws help in the detection of *logical contradictions* when dealing with others (Ex: Panentheist says God is an “Infinite finite.” The statement “All truth is relative” is an absolute relative statement which is contradictory)
- b. Knowledge of these laws aid in establishing *common ground* with all religions when witnessing (i.e. All religious statements are subjected to them).
- c. No absolute truth statements could be made without these laws.
- d. Knowing these laws will help one discover and establish certain undeniable premises that can be used for establishing the existence of God.

IV. Some Anticipated Objections⁵

A. Absolute truth is too narrow

1. Truth is narrow by definition (2+2=4 only, not 5,6,7,8 on into infinity) If Christianity is true, then all non-Christianity is false (check law of non-contradiction). If atheism is true, theism is false. Both views are equally narrow. If one of these systems is true then all opposites must be false.

⁵ Objections based on Geisler, Norman L. “Is Truth Absolute?” in *Cornerstone*, Vol. 23 no. 105, January 1995, 29-31, and Geisler, Norman L., and Ronald M. Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason: An introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapid: Baker Books, 1990), 13-19.

2. The one making the statement “absolute truth is too narrow” is giving an absolute truth which implies its opposite is false.
 3. Wouldn't this be equally narrow? Yes.
- B. Those who hold to absolute truth are *exclusive* and *intolerant***
1. If holding absolute truth makes someone intolerant, then the one making this absolute truth claim is equally intolerant. For they believe their view is absolutely true at the exclusion of those who hold an opposite position.
 2. This claim confuses *what* (absolute truth) one holds and *how* (manner or attitude) he holds it.
 3. The one making this truth claim holds an equally exclusive position, namely, all non-exclusive and tolerant positions are true. Further, this statement favors pluralism and relativism which are exclusive beliefs. There are no true pluralists, only professing ones, for even pluralism is an exclusive position (i.e. all non-pluralism is false).
 4. Someone does not tolerate that which he agrees with. Tolerance implies a real disagreement based in absolute truth claims.
- C. All religions have equal truths**
1. No, all religions are not equally true because different religions make mutually exclusive truth claims.
 2. If all religions are true, and a religion disagrees with the above statement (Christianity), is the statement false? By the statements own standard it cancels itself.
- D. All truth is culturally relative**
1. If this statement were true, it would apply to *all* cultures and therefore be an absolute truth. Thus leaving open the possibility of other absolute truths.
 2. It is self-defeating because it is an absolute truth claim that says truth is relative. Just ask “Is that the absolute truth, that truth is culturally relative?” “Do you get that truth from your culture or from somewhere else?”
 3. If truth is culturally relative, how do we adjudicate conflicts between cultures (WWII Nazi Trials)?
- E. What is true for one person is not true for another**
1. This statement is self-defeating because it asserts an absolute truth claim for all people.
 2. What is true for one person in one place is true for all people in all places. For example, if it true that it is cold at the South Pole, it is true in Arizona, California, Texas, Japan, and for the rest of the world that it is cold at the South Pole.
- F. If truth doesn't change there can be no new truth.**
1. Yes, there can be new truth that comes into existence. For example, the statement “today is December 25, 2058” is not true today but will be true on that date.
 2. Further, truth can be “new” in the sense of our coming to discover it (e.g. Newton and the laws of gravity). This sense of the word “new” is not dealing with truth coming into existence; rather it speaks of new discovery of “old” truths.
- G. There are no absolutes**
1. This statement is self-defeating.
 2. Absolutes are undeniable. In the very act of denying them, one would affirm them at the same time.
- H. People are not logical, why bother using logic?**
1. Often, people are not moral either, should we close down all the churches and police stations? No. People may not be logical or even moral at times but they *ought* to.
 2. We should be logical even if others are not!
- I. Logic doesn't apply to religious truth**
1. You just did! This statement is self-defeating because it is a logical truth claim that is applied to the area of religious truth.

J. The use of logic puts logic before God

1. No it doesn't. Our use of logic is prior to God in the knowing process (epistemologically) but not prior to him in being (ontologically). In other words, logic comes from God, not God from logic (cf. John 1:1). God is the basis of all reality and without Him nothing could exist.
2. We must *first* use our logic to discover whether God exists. However, once this question has been settled, we become aware that God existed prior to our use of logic. Hence, reason takes its proper place under God ontologically (in being or existence). Further, the use of maps illustrates this point. I need a map *before* I can get to Florida, but Florida must *exist prior* to the map. It is the same with logic, we use logic to come to know God, but God must exist before we can come to know Him (cf. Heb 11:6).

K. Using logic makes God subject to our logic

1. No. Man did not invent logic, he discovered it. Logic flows from God, not God from logic.
2. It is not God that we examine using logic; it is *our statements about* God that are analyzed with logic in order to see if those statements are believable.
3. Logic has been given to use by God, otherwise there could be no *true or false* statements about God.
4. Since logic flows from God's rational nature (John 1:1), we are not judging statements about Him by a standard outside God.

L. Truth cannot be known about God because finite human language can't talk about an infinite God

1. First, the statement is self-defeating because it makes a knowledgeable truth claim using finite language to talk about God. In other words, this statement is a truth statement about God and language in finite words!
2. Second, it fails to understand the "doctrine of analogy" with reference to language. This doctrine answers the question as to how humans with *finite* language can talk meaningfully about an *infinite* God. There are three possible ways to talk about God, though not all of these are correct:

Terms (words) can be either:

- a. equivocal = totally different meaning
 - b. analogical = similar meaning
 - c. univocal = same meaning
3. **Which do we choose?** *Univocal definitions*
 4. **However, there is a further problem:** How can finite meaning be appropriately *applied* to God?
 5. **Answer:** The terms used of God must be *defined* in the same way (univocal) but must be *applied or predicated* of God in a similar (analogous) way. In other words, one must take the finitude out of language when *applying* it to God. So when God is called "good," He is "good" in an infinite (perfected) way, while man is "good" in a finite way. Another way to say it is that the *mode* or *context* of the word is changed but not its meaning. Therefore, Finite language can be used to talk about an infinite God without being left in agnosticism.⁶

M. Conclusion

Truth may be tested in many and diverse ways but understood in only one way. If there is only one reality to which all statements must correspond, then truth should extend to all, regardless of time or place. Besides, if one cannot discover truth in its simple form, how will they ever discover the truth incarnate, Jesus Christ (John 14:6)?

Sources and Books on Truth:

Anselm, *Truth, Freedom, and Evil*

Aquinas, Thomas, *On Truth*

Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*

Barna, George, *What Americans Believe* (Regal Books)

Beckwith, Francis and Gregory Koukle, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-air*

Geisler, Norman L. and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Baker)

_____ , and Ronald Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason* (Baker)

J.F. Harris, *Against Relativism*

Kreeft, Peter, and Ronald Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (IVP)

⁶ See Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologicae: A Concise Translation*, ed. by Timothy McDermott (Allen, Tx: Christian Classics, 1989), 30-35, and Geisler, Norman L., and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 305-19.

Lewis, C.S., *The Abolition of Man*
Plato, *Protagoras*
Wells, D., *God in the Wastelands: No Place for Truth*

The Theistic God Exists

Step 2: Theistic Apologetics

The heart of any Christian apologetic system will most likely be interested in defending the truth claims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Bible is the Word of God. However, before establishing these important tenants of the Faith, one must establish the existence of God. For it would make no sense to confirm acts of God (miracles), the Son of God, and the Bible as the Word of God unless there is a God who can act, can have a Son, and who can speak a Word in the first place.

Establishing a theistic worldview as the first priority will also allow for a correct interpretation of the facts that will be presented later under the heading of “evidential apologetics.” Therefore, this study will be divided into two sections as follows:

- I. Establishing the Existence of God
 - A. Cosmological Argument
 - B. Teleological Argument
 - C. Moral Argument
- II. Examining and Evaluating Worldviews
 - A. Theism
 - B. Deism
 - C. Finite Godism
 - D. Pantheism
 - E. Panentheism
 - F. Polytheism
 - G. Atheism

The Importance of the Matter

1. If no God, then Christianity is false (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-19)
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
 - g. _____
 - h. _____
2. If no God, we cannot witness about the Son of God, miracles of God, and the Word of God (Hebrews 11:6).

I. Establishing the Existence of God (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 17:22-34)

A. **Cosmological argument** (reasons from effect to a *First Cause*) Genesis 1:1, Hebrews 3:4

1. ***Whatever begins to exist has been caused by another.***⁷

There are only three possibilities of origins:

- a. *uncaused* =

⁷ This first premise is an inductive *illustration* of a deductive self-evident truth (i.e. law of causality) which says “every effect must have a cause.” Further, “self existence” is *undeniable*.

- b. *self-caused* =
- c. *caused by another* =

2. **The Universe began to Exist**

Provide scientific evidence:

- a. **Expanding Universe**⁸ -Edwin Hubble (1929) discovered that galaxies are moving away at high speeds. If one were to reverse this process, the universe would eventually become “infinitely dense”. Therefore, the universe must have had a beginning.

Four of the world’s most respected astronomers said: “The universe began from a state of infinite density. . . . Space and time were created in that event and so was all matter in the universe.” (J. Richard Gott III, James Gunn, David Schramm, and Beatrice Tinsley, “Will the Universe Expand Forever?,” *Scientific American*, March 1976, p. 65)

- b. **Big Bang Theory** - This theory is the dominant view among scientists today. One may not agree with every aspect of Big Bang Cosmology, however, it does establish a “beginning” to the universe.

Atheist Anthony Kenny asserts: “According to the Big Bang Theory, the whole matter of the universe began to exist at a particular time in the remote past. A proponent of such a theory, at least if he is an atheist, must believe *that the matter of the universe came from nothing by nothing.*”

- c. **Radiation Wave** - Robert Wilson (1965) discovered substantial levels of radiation the same wavelength as a large explosion (Big Bang).

Agnostic Astronomer, Robert Jastrow says: No explanation other than the Big Bang has been found for the fireball radiation. The clincher, which has convinced almost the last doubting Thomas, is that the radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson has exactly the pattern of wavelengths expected for the light and the heat produced in a great explosion. At the present time, the Big Bang Theory has no competitors.” (God and the Astronomers, 1978, p.15)

- d. **Second Law of Thermodynamics** - States “that the amount of usable energy in a closed system is running down.” The scientific name for this process is called “entropy.” If the universe was infinite, the earth would never run out of energy and be at a state of equilibrium. An infinite universe would have an infinite amount of usable energy (Psalm 102:25-27)

The First Law of Thermodynamics - Many often use the First Law of Thermodynamics which says “Actual Energy is neither *created* nor *destroyed*, it remains constant” to prove an infinite universe. It should be stated “the amount of actual energy in the universe remains constant *so far as we can observe.*” (philosophy vs. science)

- e. **Robert Jastrow**⁹ says, “Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world. The details differ, but the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of Genesis are the same: the chain of events leading to man commenced suddenly and sharply at a definite moment in time, in a flash of light and energy. Some scientists are unhappy with the idea that the world began in this way.”

Jastrow’s Summary - NASA scientist and agnostic, Robert Jastrow, says, “Science has proven that the universe exploded in to being at a certain moment. . . . Was the universe created out of nothing, or was it gathered out of preexisting materials? And science cannot answer these questions, because, according to the astronomers, in the first moments of its existence the universe was compressed to an extraordinary degree, and consumed by heat and fire beyond human imagination. . . . The scientist’s pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. . . . For the scientist who has lived by faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”(Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 114-16)

3. **Therefore, the universe was caused to exist by another**

Another way of presenting this argument is:

- a. Every effect has a cause

⁸ Scientist, Hugh Ross, and Alan Guth, say that “if the expansion rate [of the universe] were slightly slower, the whole universe would have recollapsed before any solar type stars could have settled into a stable burning phase. If the universe were expanding slightly more rapidly, no galaxies (and hence no stars) would have condensed from the general expansion. How critical is this expansion rate? According to Alan Guth, it must be fine tuned to an accuracy of one part in 10 to the 55th power” (that is, 10 with 55 zeroes following). (Ross, Hugh, *The Fingerprint of God* (Orange, CA: Promise Publishing, 1991), 124.

⁹ Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Norton, 1978), 14.

- b. The universe is an effect
- c. Therefore, the universe needs a cause

This cause (God) must be:

- i. **Uncaused** - because “self caused” is impossible (can’t pull oneself up by your own bootstraps) and “caused by another” would lead to an infinite regress of causes which in that case today never would have arrived. (Gen 1:1)
- ii. **Supernatural** - because it brought into existence the whole natural order.
- iii. **Eternal** – Since it takes one outside the temporal world to create time, or else the cause itself would be temporal would be temporal
- iv. **Immutable** - If the first cause is eternal (i.e. outside of time), then it cannot change since change is measured by time in “befores” and “afters.” However the first cause does not have any “befores” or “afters,” it always was. (Mal 3:6)
- v. **All-Powerful** - power is what can effect change in something. It must have All-power to bring something from nothing.
- vi. **All Knowing** - A first cause that could bring to be sustainable life must know all about biology, science, mathematics, physics, geology, chemistry, etc.
- vii. **One God** - There cannot be more than one infinite, All-perfect God.

(Because to differ by nothing is not to differ at all, hence, all is one. And to differ by something implies a lack since one God would have and the other lack)

Not Composed of Parts (body) – Parts imply composition, and composition implies a composer. Besides, each “part” would lack the perfection of the other parts.

B. Teleological Argument (reasons from design to a *Designer*) Psalms 19:1-6 Romans 1:19-21

1. **Design implies a designer**

This is true from experience:

- a. Watches imply _____
- b. Paintings imply _____
- c. Buildings imply _____
- d. If one sees the words “Goodyear makes the best tires” written in the sky, would it be reasonable to believe the wind and clouds formed it? No.
- e. The greater design, the greater the designer (Ex: Bees make bee hives not skyscrapers)
- f. Analogy implies that the cause is similar to the effect (Acts 17:28-29)

2. **The universe manifests design**

Provide evidence:

- a. DNA possesses intelligent information called “specified complexity.”
- b. Universe structured and operates in an orderly fashion
- c. A personal computer vs. human brain
- d. The camera lens vs. human eye
- e. Irreducible Complexity (see Michael Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box*)
- f. **Richard Dawkins** asserts that “there is enough information capacity in a single human cell to store the Encyclopedia Britannica, all 30 volumes of it, three or four times over. . . . There is enough storage capacity in the DNA of a single lily seed or a single salamander sperm to store the Encyclopedia Britannica 60 times over. Some species of the unjustly called ‘primitive’ amoebas have as much information in their DNA as 1,000 Encyclopedias Britannicas.”¹⁰

3. **Therefore, there must be a designer of the universe**

Just as it would be unreasonable to assume that a computer and camera did not have an intelligent cause, so also would it be unreasonable to assume man’s intelligence did not have an intelligent cause.

¹⁰ Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* (New York: Norton, 1986, 1987, 1996), 116. See Michele Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*; Stephen Jay Gould, *The Panda’s Thumb* (New York: Norton, 1982), 182.

C. **Moral Argument** (reasons from moral Law to a moral *Law Giver*) Romans 2:14-15

1. **Moral Law implies a Moral Law Giver**

This is true from experience:

- a. Does law arise without law givers? No.
- b. Are prescriptions given without a prescriber? No.

2. **There is Moral Law**

Provide evidence:

- a. To deny absolutes is self-defeating
- b. Does the moral relativist “value” his right to hold his opinion? Does he think that everyone should have that freedom or right or just himself?
- c. Why are governmental laws of morality similar or identical if there are no moral absolutes?
- d. Ask the relativist whether he thinks torturing babies for fun, murder, and rape is right for all people.
- e. Even if the moral relativist denies morals with his words, he affirms them in his actions. They expect to be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and fairness by all
- f. Authors of the *Declaration of Independence* said that all men are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable moral rights - to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

3. **Therefore a Moral Lawgiver exists**

Note: These three arguments used in conjunction with each other demonstrate 1) a *first* cause 2) an *intelligent* first cause and 3) an intelligent and *moral* first cause. This cause Christians call “God,” the God of the Bible.

D. **Other arguments for the existence of God**

1. Cosmological argument

- a. Everything that began had a cause
- b. The universe had a beginning (big bang)
- c. Therefore, the universe had a cause

2. Perfection argument

- a. There are more or less perfect things
- b. But more or less implies a *most*
- c. Therefore, there must be a most perfect being

3. Anthropological argument

- a. Man is an intelligent being
- b. Only intelligence can produce the intelligent
- c. Therefore, an intelligent being created man

4. Biological argument

- a. Life is a highly complex organism
- b. Highly complex information results from an intelligent cause
- c. Therefore, there is an intelligent creator

5. Value argument

- a. Value judgments are impossible without values
- b. Value implies a value-giver
- c. Therefore, a value-giver exists

E. **Answering some objections**

1. If “everything” needs a cause, then so does God

- a. No, only every “finite” being or event needs a cause, God is infinite. In other words, everything that has a *beginning* needs a cause.
 - b. To deny this would be to deny the principle of causality (ask for an example where a finite didn’t need a cause)
2. Logic and reason cannot be used when speaking of God
 - a. This statement is self-defeating (contradictory) since it uses logic and reason to speak about God
 - b. This is equivalent to saying “I can’t speak a word in English.”
 3. The Cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments make God subject to man’s logic
 - a. No it doesn’t, its not man’s logic. Man did not *determine* logic, he *discovered* it. If one determines truth he *creates* it, but if one discovers truth he *finds* it.
 - b. It is not God Himself who is subjected to our logic; it is our *statements about* God that must be subjected to logic.
 - c. We can test statements about God with logic because it is not a standard outside of Himself. Logic flows from God’s very nature (John 1:1) (see II Tim 2:13; Heb 6:18; Mal 3:6).
 4. Should we subject our reason to revelation or revelation to our reason?
 - a. Reason is prior to revelation in the order of *knowing* (epistemologically), but revelation is prior to reason in the order of *being* (ontologically, it always was a revelation from God and didn’t *become* one when we discovered it). In other words, reason is used to *discover* revelation, once this question has been settled; the revelation becomes our standard and guides our reason. At this point, reason takes its place *under* revelation.
 - b. It is important to distinguish between the use of reason to *discover whether* something is a revelation and the use of rationalism to *determine what* in the Bible is revelation.

II. Examining and Evaluating Worldviews

A. Theism

1. One infinite personal God
2. He exists *beyond* (*transcendent* - above and over creation or “up” and “out” there) and *in* (*imminent* - presence within creation)
3. He is *in* the world but not *of* the world (distinct from the world just as an artist is distinct from his painting)
4. Possesses all the omni-predicates
5. Miracles occur
6. The world is analogous to God (being, language)
7. Represented in Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

B. Atheism

1. No God exists in or beyond the universe
2. No miracles (secular humanism)
3. Injustice and evil are realities
4. Many movement: Death of God (Al Kaiser); Death of God-talk; Myth of God (Nietzsche); Classical atheism (Freud, Ayn Rand)

Problems:

1. No first cause
2. No absolute basis for morality
3. Evolution is untenable. Ask five crucial questions:
 - a. Order from non-order (simple to more complex)?

- b. Life from non-life?
 - c. Intelligence from non-intelligence?
 - d. Something from nothing (causality)?
 - e. Personal from the impersonal?
4. Irreducible Complexity
 5. "Chance" does not explain the origin of all things

C. Deism

1. One God that exists beyond (transcendent) the universe but *not* active in it
2. Mechanical universe and natural theology
3. Like theism but no miracles
4. Denies the incarnation, virgin birth, divine inspiration, etc...
5. Jefferson and Franklin

Problems:

1. Inconsistent view of miracles
2. Confuse the function of the Laws of Nature (descriptive vs. prescriptive)
3. Ignores the abundant evidence of the reliability of the Bible

D. Pantheism

1. God (impersonal) *is* the universe
2. All is *one* substance (monism) (Parmenides)
3. No distinction between creator and creation
4. No miracles
5. Opposite view of deism
6. Eastern philosophy and religion

Problems:

1. Self-defeating (change vs. non-change)
2. Fails the practical test
3. Where did the spiritual amnesia come from?
4. If the world is God, how do they explain the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics?
5. To deny logic is self-defeating

E. Polytheism

1. Many personal finite Gods beyond the universe and in it
2. They have a beginning but no end
3. Pantheism and polytheism are only two worldviews which are compatible with each other
4. World is eternal
5. Usually named after natural phenomena and human traits
6. Romans, Greeks, Witches, and Mormons

Problems

1. The universe is not eternal (2nd Law; Expanding universe)
2. Some say the gods were birthed by the forces of nature. If so, nature is ultimate, not the gods
3. To render ultimate worship to what is less than ultimate is idolatry
4. Philosophically, there can be only *one* perfect God

F. Panentheism (dipolar theism, processism, organicism, neo-classical theism)

1. This worldview is a mixture of theism and pantheism
2. A personal God that has two poles: an *infinite pole* (Spirit beyond the physical universe and a *finite pole* (God's body) which is the universe.
3. God is *in* the universe as soul is *in* the body
4. God and the universe are interdependent
5. God grows, learns, and changes with history
6. Evil is seen as an incompatibility within the universe
7. Major figures are A.N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, Shubert Ogden, John Cobb and Lewis Ford¹¹

Problems:

1. God cannot be both *infinite* and *finite* at the same time and in the same sense (what about the incarnation of Christ?)
2. God cannot be dependent since He is a necessary being, or else we must find what God is dependent upon (this is God)
3. God cannot guarantee final victory over evil
4. God cannot change or else he is finite (Mal 3:6)

G. Finite godism

1. A finite god that is active beyond and in the universe but is limited in power
2. Evil is real
3. The universe is eternal
4. Plato

Problems:

1. God cannot guarantee final victory over evil
2. If god is finite, how did they come to exist? No apparent cause which is impossible, or if by the forces of nature, then nature is god
3. The cause of the finite world must be infinite; otherwise it too would be part of the finite world. The creator of time cannot be in time.

Sources and Books on the Existence of God:

Corduan, Winfried, *Reasonable Faith: Basic Christian Apologetics* (Broadman & Holeman)

Craig, William Lane, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Crossway Books)

_____ . *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (MacMillan)

Geisler, Norman L., and William Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on Worldviews* (Baker)

Hereen, Fred, *Show Me God* (Searchlight Publications)

Nash, Ronald, *Worldviews in Conflict* (?)

¹¹For a complete refutation of process theology see Royce Gordon Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God: Biblical Faith and the Challenge of Process Theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983); Ronald Nash, *Process Theology*.

The Problem of Evil

Christians have traditionally offered a justification for God's existence in light of the real presence of evil. The theological name applied to this question is _____. This study¹² will be divided into three sections as follows:

- I. How Some Have Dealt with the Problem of Evil
- II. A Christian Response to the Problem of Evil
- III. Concluding Remarks

I. How Some Have Dealt With the Problem of Evil

A. Evil is an illusion

This system is called *illusionism* and is represented by certain Eastern philosophies and religions (Pantheism, Hinduism, etc.). Things that appear to be really evil are actually an illusion. This view has many forms and is no stranger to the Western world. In ancient times, **Parmenides** (c. 550 B.C.) pioneered this view with his philosophy which said that even if things appear to be many and evil (our senses are deceived), "all of reality is one" and good (absolute pantheism).

The beliefs of Christian Scientist, **Mary Baker Eddy**, are an example of illusionism in the modern Western world. She writes, "Evil is but an illusion, and it has no real basis," (Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 1906, p. 113, 289, 480).

Problems with the illusionist's view:

1. It does not account for the *origin* of the illusion. How did this come to dominate our illusions? Why are we not having good illusions (like pantheistic ones)? (Evil illusions are real evils)
2. How is this illusion passed on through the generations?
3. Why do *all* experience evil (pain, suffering, injustice, crime) as an alleged reality, but not *all* are convinced that it is an illusion?
4. Finally, the illusionist may *confess* with his words that evil is an illusion but in fact deny the same view by his actions.
5. How can one distinguish an illusionary evil from a real evil?

B. Evil is the eternal opposite of Good

This view is called *dualism* and differs from the illusionist's view by acknowledging the reality of evil. It attempts to explain the real presence of both good and evil in the world. Zoroastrianism believed a cosmic struggle existed between the Good, *Ahura-Mazda*, and the evil, *Angra-Mainyu*. One form of Zoroastrianism believed that both Good and evil came from *Zurvan*. It soon became a major religion in Persia for over a millennium and is an example of dualistic religion/philosophy.

Another is Manichaeism (which rejects the notion that good and evil can be traced to the same source) which was developed by the Persian prophet Mani (AD 217-276). This view differs from the Christian view in that evil is *eternal* instead of *temporal* (theism).

Problems with dualism:

1. No *assurance* or *hope* of final victory over evil.
2. Second, there remains the question as to how both good and evil can be present in God's nature and He still be considered an All-good God?
3. A God that is *part* good and *part* evil implies parts, thus implying composition in God. A composed God needs a composer.
4. Dualism implies *differences* in the two principles (or beings), implying a lack in the beings – which means both are finite and cannot be considered ultimate

II. Christian Response to the Problem of Evil

A. Objections to God by way of evil

1. Problem of the **Nature** of Evil

¹²Based in part on N.L. Geisler, *Roots of Evil*. This section has its foundation in Augustine and Aquinas, *On Evil*.

- a. God is the author of everything
- b. Evil is something
- c. Therefore, God is the author of evil

Solution:

- a. Christians do not deny this first premise (Isaiah 45:7, *ra*; 1 John 1:5; Habakkuk 1:13; James 1:13)
 - i. *ra* in the sense of calamity/judgment (not moral)
 - ii. *Indirect* author but not *direct* author of moral evil
 - iii. Possible vs. actual
 - iv. Permits vs. promotes
 - v. Henry Ford's automobiles ¹³
- b. We reject that evil is *something* like a material object or a "thing" with molecules.

Evil is:

- i. *Real* but not *material*
- ii. A *lack* in good things, a *privation*.
- iii. It's the absence of what should be present
- iv. It's like a moth eaten garment, rust to a car, or rot to a tree. What is *totally* moth eaten shirt? Nothing. Therefore:
- v. There cannot be *total or pure evil*, because evil does not exist "in itself," but only in other things as a lack.
- vi. There are two kinds of evil:
 - aa. moral evil - a lack in one's nature such as depravity (will, morality, actions, etc.). This has a bearing on one's eternal destiny.
 - bb. Physical or Metaphysical evil - a lack in one's physical body such as an amputated leg, arm, finger, etc. This type of evil has *no* bearing on one's eternal destiny. (Mk 9:43-47)
- vii. St. Augustine said, "What is evil? Perhaps you will reply corruption. Undeniably this is a general definition of evil, for corruption implies opposition to nature. . . . But corruption exists not by itself, but in some substance which it corrupts; for corruption itself is not a substance. So the thing which it corrupts is not corruption, is not evil; for what is corrupted suffers loss of integrity and purity. So that which has no purity to lose cannot be corrupted (*On the Morals of the Manichaens*).

Therefore, it does not follow that God directly created evil.

2. The **Origin** of Evil

- a. Every creature God made is perfect
- b. But perfect creatures cannot do what is imperfect
- c. So, every creature God made cannot do what is imperfect (evil)

Solution:

- a. The Christian do not deny this first premise. (Gen 1) However, one of the perfections God gave His creatures (i.e. man) was free will
- b. Evil is the *byproduct* of free will. If this is not true, one would have to answer the question: who tempted Satan with evil?
- c. So, imperfection (evil) can arise from a perfection (free will)

Free will:

- i. Free will means the ability to make an unforced decision between two or more alternatives
- ii. Free will renders love meaningful
- iii. Free will preserves individual moral responsibility

¹³N.L. Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992), 271-72.

- iv. Free will provides the ability to choose between good and evil
 - v. Free will detaches God from the *direct* origin of evil. God makes the *fact of freedom* and man performs the *acts of freedom*. God makes evil acts *possible*, man makes them (evil acts) *actual*
3. Why Doesn't God **Stop** Evil? (Persistence)
- a. If God is all-good, He *would* destroy evil
 - b. If God is all-powerful, He *could* destroy evil
 - c. But evil is not destroyed
 - d. Hence, there is no such God

Solution:

- a. If God is good, He *will* destroy evil
- b. If God is powerful, He *can* destroy evil
- c. Evil is not yet destroyed
- d. Therefore, God *can and will one day* defeat evil

False assumptions:

- i. This argument assumes one knows the future ("yet")
- ii. To destroy evil would mean the destruction of free will. *Preservation* of free will is more important than the *destruction* of evil.

4. The **Purpose** of Evil

- a. An all-good God must have a good purpose for everything
- b. There is no good purpose for suffering
- c. So, there cannot be an All-good God

Solution:

- a. The first premise is true.
- b. The Christian would disagree with the second premise, namely, because there is a difference between our *knowing* a good purpose for suffering and God *having* a good purpose for it. God must have a good purpose for everything. For example, sometimes God allows evil to warn us of greater evils.
- c. Therefore, God does have a good purpose for all suffering. Such as:
 - i. To warn us of greater evils (root canal)
 - ii. To preserve us from self destruction (leprosy)
 - iii. To bring us to the end of the works of our own flesh (II Corinthians 2:8-9)
 - iv. To arouse a deaf world (C.S. Lewis)
 - v. Just as a parent may *permit* the pain (evil) of the dentist's drill in order to promote healthy teeth, God *permits* evil to bring about a better world in the end.

5. God Could have **Avoided** Evil

- a. God knows everything
- b. God knew evil would occur when He created the world
- c. God had other non-evil possibilities, He could have:
 - i. created nothing (no world)
 - ii. created a non-moral world
 - iii. created with no free creatures
 - iv. created free creature that would sin but all be saved
- d. Therefore, God could have created a world where evil and Hell do not exist

Solution:

- a. The first premise is true
- b. The second premise is true
- c. However, the third premise has several flaws:
 - i. To assume that a non-world is better than a world is to assume nothing is “better” than something. “Nothing” cannot be compared to “something” because nothing is nonexistence.
 - ii. Second, the claim stands on moral ground to say a non-moral world is “better” than a moral world. There is a difference between *no* moral value and *some* moral value.
 - iii. Without free creatures, man is no more than a robot which would render love and responsibility meaningless.
 - iv. It is possible to create *free* creatures that do not sin (Adam) but God could not guarantee that these free creatures would never sin.

Note: It is better to have the chance to achieve the greatest good (Christ/God/heaven) than to be confined to achieving lesser goods with no evil. In other words, it is better to live life, love, and risk than not to have the opportunity at all (it cannot be compared).

- d. Therefore, God could not have actually done any better any other way with free creatures

Note: This world may not be the best of all possible worlds but it is the best way to get to the best of all possible worlds with free creatures involved.

6. The **Consequences** of Evil
 - a. The greatest good is to save all men
 - b. Even one person in Hell would be less than the greatest good
 - c. Therefore, God cannot send anyone to Hell

Solution:

- a. True, God wills that all should come to repentance (II Pet 3:9); however, God will not force man to love Him.
- b. A world in which *some* are in hell *is not* less than the greatest good. Only if there was *one more* person in Hell that *should* be there would it be less than the greatest good.
- c. All who go to Hell *chose* to go there:
 - i. Even though man does not *want* to go to Hell, he *wills* it by his actions (e.g. alcoholic, drug addict)
 - ii. God doesn't send people to Hell, man does. God is for man; Satan is against him, man casts the deciding vote.
 - iii. God does not fall short of the greatest good when there is some in Hell because what does not fall under God's perfect *grace* is satisfied in His perfect *justice*.

III. Conclusion

Although the hideous scars of evil have had their devastating effect in this world, the Christian is much better off than Adam was before the fall. We now can experience God's grace, forgiveness, love (the cross), and His indwelling power first hand (Gal 2:20). Further, Satan has been defeated (Col 2) and will one day be separated forever (Rev 20), from God and man. Not only are there spiritual benefits to this fall in the garden, there are physical ones as well. The believer will one day have a physical resurrection body (I Corinthians 15) that will never grow tired, sick, and hungry. During Adam's life, Satan had free reign in heaven and earth with no end in sight; today we look forward to an unhindered eternity with God knowing *for sure* that evil will never again touch us.

Sources and Books on the Problem of Evil:

Aquinas, Thomas, *On Evil*

Augustine, *City of God*

_____. *Confessions of St. Augustine*

Geisler, Norman L., *Roots of Evil*

Lewis, C.S., *The Great Divorce*

Problem of Eternal Punishment

I. Doctrine of Eternal Punishment (reveals God's love and justice)

Hell can be defined as that place where unbelievers are eternally separated from God in accord with their own free choice. The real torment of Hell seems to be characterized by three elements: privation, punishment, and pain, (Luke 13:28;16:23, 26).

In the New Testament three different words are used in regards to life after death for the unsaved. The Greek word hades is transliterated "Hades" in the NIV in five instances (Matt 16:18; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14); twice it is translated as "in the depths" (Matt 11:23; Luke 10:15), once as "hell" (Luke 16:23), and twice as "the grave" (Acts 2:27, 31). In general, the Greek word hades is equivalent to the Old Testament word sheol (used 65 times in Old Testament).

It is clear that hades is used of the temporary place (Rev. 20:14) of the unsaved after death. The most definitive term in the New Testament is gehenna, uniformly translated "hell" and refers to everlasting punishment (Matt 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6). This word is derived from the Valley of Hinnom (located south of Jerusalem, Joshua 15:8; 18:16; Jer 7:30-33), traditionally considered by Jews to be the place of final punishment of the ungodly. All references to gehenna are given by Christ Himself with the exception of James 3:6. One instance of the Greek word tartaros is found in 2 Peter 2:4; This word is translated "hell" and considered equivalent to gehenna (John Walvoord, "The Literal View" in William Crockett, ed. Four Views on Hell (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, p. 19)

A. Scriptural references to Hell

Psalm 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God

Daniel 12:2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt

Matthew 10:28 But fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell

Matthew 13:40 He will also say...depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels

Mark 9:43 It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched

Luke 16:23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom

Revelation 20:13-14 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judgedThen Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire

B. Five Views on Hell¹

1. The Literal view

The literal view holds that Hell is a place of eternal torment with literal smoke and flames (John Walvoord, Dallas Theological Seminary).

2. The Metaphorical view

The metaphorical view holds that Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment but not necessarily as being a literal fire (William V. Crockett, Alliance Theological Seminary).

3. The Purgatorial view

The purgatorial view holds that there is a place of temporal purification for all those who die at peace with the church but are not yet purified. These people will eventually inherit heaven after their purification. Those who die in mortal sin, go directly to eternal punishment after death (Hell). (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1030, 1031, 1032, 1035).

¹ See W.G.T. Shedd, The Doctrine of Endless Punishment (Banner of Truth Trust); William Crockett, ed., Four Views on Hell (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

4. The Conditional view

The conditional view holds that the wicked begin in Hell, but eventually, God destroys the soul rather than punish them endlessly. This is conditional annihilationism (Clark Pinnock).

5. The Annihilation view

This view says that after death one is immediately annihilated, destroyed, snuffed out of existence. This view has ancient Greek roots in Aristotle and has found in modern Atheistic movements, cults and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

C. Characteristics of Hell

- Jesus taught there was a hell (Mt 10:28; Mk 9:43).
- Bible teaches there is a hell (Heb 9:27; Rev. 20:11-15).
- Hell is described as "Outer darkness" (Mt 8:12), Under the earth" (Phil 2:10).
- "Outside" (Rev. 22:15), Away from the "presence of the Lord" (Mt 25:41; 2 Thess 1:7-9).
- As an omnipresent God, He is metaphysically in hell, but not relationally (Ps 139:8-10).
- Hell is like being left out in the dark forever (Mt 8:12) and a perpetual burning dump (Mk 9:44-48).
- Hell is like a bottomless pit (Rev 20:1,3) and everlasting life imprisonment (1 Pet 3:19).
- Hell is like everlasting anguish and regret Lk 16:28).
- Hell is like a divorce or separation (2 Thess 1:7-9).
- Hell is a place of "torment," not "torture." Torture is inflicted by another from without against one's will, torment is self-inflicted from within in accordance with one's will.
- People will be in hell (gehenna) with their imperishable resurrected bodies (John 5:28-29) and will be conscious (Lk 16:26-28).
- Hell is the eternal abode for fallen angels, the Devil, beast, false prophet , and Judas (Rev. 20:10; Mt 13:40; Jn 17:12).
- The beast was conscious after one thousand years in hell (Rev 19:20; 20:10).
- Hell is forever/eternity (same word "everlasting," aionion (Mt 25:41 cf. 2 Thess 1:7; Rev 20:10; Jn 5:24).
- Hell has a permanent "great gulf" preventing anyone leaving (Lk 16:26).
- God does not desire anyone to be in hell (2 Pet 3:9).
- Hell is for the unrepentant and reprobate (2 Pet 2:1f).
- Hell is a place of separation, corruption and quarantine (1 Cor 5:6-7; Rev 21:4,8).
- Hell is for those who do not heed the warning signs to repent Lk 13:3).
- Hell is for those who refuse to be in God's fold (Mt 23:37)(see Lk 16:19ff).

D. Objections to eternal punishment

- Why do people go to hell?
- If God is loving, why does He send people to hell?
- Why did God create man if He knew he would be in hell?
- It's not fair to send people to hell who have not heard.
- Why doesn't God just annihilate the wicked instead of letting them suffer?
- How can God send people to hell for eternity for temporal sins?
- Why not reform people instead of punish them?

Miracles are Possible and Credible

Undoubtedly, one of the major stumbling blocks to becoming a Christian for many today is that Christianity is a religion of miracles. It asserts that God became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, being born of a virgin, that he performed various miracles, exorcised demonic beings, and that, having died by crucifixion he rose from the dead. But the problem is that these sorts of miraculous events seem to belong to a worldview foreign to modern man ³/₄ a pre-scientific, superstitious worldview belonging to the ancient and middle ages. -William Lane Craig

I. The Importance of the Matter

- A. If miracles are impossible, Christianity is false
- B. If miracles are impossible, the Bible cannot be trusted
- C. If miracles are impossible, there is no way to adequately explain reality
- D. If miracles are impossible, Christ did not raise from the dead (see I Corinthians 15:12-19)

II. What is a “Miracle”?

A. Definition

- 1. A “miracle” is a divine intervention/interruption into the regular course of events in the natural world; it is a special act of God that produces a purposeful event in the world which would not or could not have occurred otherwise.¹⁴
- 2. A miracle is “a striking event brought about (usually by God) for a religious purpose, against the usual course of nature; for example, the resurrection or the instantaneous healings recorded in the Christian gospels.”¹⁵
- 3. “A genuine miracle is an unusual event in that it is not a mere product of so-called natural laws. . . . A genuine miracle accomplishes some practical and benevolent work.”¹⁶
- 4. “An action of God or His messenger that runs counter to observed processes of nature.”¹⁷
- 5. “The distinctive thing in the miraculous deed is that it results from the exercise of the supernatural power of God. And this means, of course, that it is not brought about by secondary causes that operate according to the laws of nature.”¹⁸

B. Important things to note concerning the above definition

- 1. A miracle is a divine intervention into the natural world (transcendent source)
- 2. A miracle is a special act of God that produces a *purposeful* event (this distinguishes *unusual* events from *miraculous* events)
- 3. A miracle could not or would not occur on its own (this distinguishes *naturalism* from *supernaturalism*)

C. Characteristics of a genuine miracle

- 1. They are always **instantaneous**, never gradual
- 2. They are always **successful**
- 3. There is **no known relapse** after a genuine biblical miracle
- 4. They **bring glory** to God (John 9:3) by:
 - a. By conveying His message and will (Mk 2:1-12 - forgiveness)
 - b. Confirming His word (Mk 16:19-20; Heb 2:3-4)
- 5. They were **specific**, not vague (e.g. bad back, ear ache, etc...) If false teachers *appear* to work “miracles,” there are other plausible explanations for them:
 - a. Anomaly
 - b. Magic

¹⁴See N.L. Geisler, *Baker's Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 450.

¹⁵John Bowker, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 644.

¹⁶Henry Theissen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, revised (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949, 1977, 1979), 11.

¹⁷Terry L. Miethe, *The Compact Dictionary of Doctrinal Words* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1988) 138.

¹⁸Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, combined edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932, 1938, 1996), 176.

- c. Mind over matter (psychosomatic illness)
 - d. Special providence
 - e. Power of suggestion
 - f. Star status of the teacher/preacher
 - g. hypnotism (mantras)
6. They possess a doctrinal, moral, purpose, and fit the context

III. Why Do Christians Need to Defend Biblical Miracles?

A. Because Christianity rests on the most significant miracle of all, the resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees several things:

1. His power over death (Acts 2:31)
2. His ability to fulfill His promise to resurrect all Christians (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)
3. That Jesus is the Son of God (Romans 1:4)

Without this confirming miracle (Rom 1:4) believers through the ages have no assurance of Christ's promises or that Christianity is true (1 Corinthians 15). Without the resurrection, Christianity is placed on the same ground as other world religions.

B. Because miracles often serve as outward signs that points to an unseen reality

1. Jesus said, "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins...I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home," (Mk 2:10-12).
2. In the final analysis, faith in Jesus Christ is not a *leap in the dark*, but rather a *step in the light*. This is what separates Jesus from a host of others such as Buddha, Confucius, Krishna, and the Dali Lama. They have given us no indication by confirming signs that there message is true and should be believed.

C. Because miracles confirm the person and message of God (Bible)

What the Bible says about the use of miracles:

1. God's message to Pharaoh through Moses was confirmed by miracles (Ex 4:1-9)
2. Jesus' as Messiah was confirmed by miracles (Mt 12:38-39; Rom 1:4)
3. Peter said Jesus was confirmed by miracles (Acts 2:22)
4. Paul used miracles to establish his apostleship (2 Corinthians 12:12)
5. God "bore witness by signs and wonders" the message to the Hebrews (Heb 2:2-4)
6. Mark said, "And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen," (Mk 16:20).

D. Because many unbelievers acknowledge that miracles would confirm a message from God

1. The Muslim prophet, **Muhammad**, acknowledges that prophets are confirmed by miracles. "If they reject thee, So were the apostles rejected Before thee, who came With Clear Signs..." (Surah 3:184). (Also see Surah 17:103; 23:45).
2. The British skeptic, **David Hume**, made reference to the fact that miracles would establish the truth of a religion.
3. English philosopher and logician, **Bertrand Russell**, would be convinced by the miraculous. He said, "I think that if I heard a voice from the sky predicting all that was going to happen to me during the next twenty-four hours, including events that would have seemed highly improbable, and if all these events then proceeded to happen, I might perhaps be convinced at least of some superhuman intelligence. I can imagine other evidence of the same sort which might convince me..." ("What Is An Agnostic?" *Look Magazine*, 1953)
4. **Nicodemus**, along with some others, were convinced that Jesus was of God because of the "signs" Jesus performed, (John 3:1-2).

IV. Arguments Against the Possibility and Credibility of Miracles

A. Are miracles impossible?

1. No. Miracles are possible, especially in light of a closer examination of the faulty arguments against them. The question as to whether miracles are possible is not a historical question, it is philosophical one. That is to ask, can they occur?
2. The current skeptical views that exist concerning miracles did not arise through twentieth-century higher criticism of the Bible; rather it came to prominence two-hundred years earlier during the period known as the European Enlightenment (c. 1688-1788). During that time, the attack marshaled against the possibility of miracles came from the deists hiding behind the backdrop of the “Newtonian World-Machine.” However, it wasn’t a deist who presented the most potent argument against the possibility of miracles; it was the Jewish pantheist, Benedict De Spinoza (see *Theologico-Politico Treatise*, 1670).

Summary of Spinoza’s Argument against miracles:

1. Miracles are a violation of the laws of nature
2. The laws of nature are unchangeable
3. It is impossible for unchanging laws to be violated
4. Therefore, miracles are impossible

Christian response to Spinoza’s argument:

1. Natural laws are not *prescriptive*, they are *descriptive*. They don’t tell how the universe *must* operate; they simply describe how the universe *usually* operates. The laws of nature are not prescriptive of unchangeable patterns; they are descriptive of general events.
2. If this is the case, then miracles are not violations *of*, they are exceptions *to* the laws of nature
3. Whatever is not unchangeable can have exceptions
4. Therefore, miracles can occur

B. Are miracles credible?

1. Yes, if one is talking about biblical miracles, especially in light of the evidence. The credibility question deals with “whether one should believe in them.” These people do not deny that miracles can occur, they see no justification for believing in them based on the limited evidence, they are simply not credible. This argument uses evidence from “experience” to show that miracles do not line up with our everyday encounters. In other words, there is more evidence against miracles, namely, that we experience the non-miraculous (i.e. regular events) more than we do the miraculous (i.e. irregular singularity). Experience tells us that miracles are unbelievable because of our lack of contact with them. For example, have you witnessed a resurrection, blindness healed, someone walking on water, etc? In the final analysis, they say it would be foolish to believe that miracles occurred in the past since our *non-experience* of them is greater than our experience with them.
2. Again, this argument against the credibility of miracles did not originate with modern atheists; it was developed by David Hume (1711-1776) in his *Inquiries Concerning Human Understanding*, section 10, 1748)
3. Summary of Hume’s Argument against the Credibility of Miracles:
 - a. Miracles are a violation of the laws of nature
 - b. Unalterable experience has established these laws
 - c. The wise man proportions his belief to the evidence that human experience provides
 - d. Therefore, the wise man should never believe a miracle has occurred unless the evidence for a particular miracle is greater than the evidence provided by the uniform experience of mankind

Christian response to Hume:

1. First, Hume begins where Spinoza did by wrongfully assuming the laws of nature are fixed and unchangeable.
2. Second, Hume falsely assumes that human experience is *uniform*. For no one could claim to know that experience is uniform unless he knows that all reports of miracles past, present, and future are false. Hume could only know that miracles did not occur if he knew that human experience is uniform, and he could only know that human experience is uniform if he knows that miracles cannot occur, but he could only know that miracles cannot occur if he knows that human experience is uniform In short, Hume is arguing in a circle.

C.S. Lewis wrote concerning Hume's argument asserting:

Now of Course we must agree with Hume that if there is absolutely 'uniform experience' against miracles, if in other words they have never happened, why then they never have. Unfortunately, we know the experience against them to be uniform only if we know that all reports of them are false. And we know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle.

C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, 105

3. Christians would agree with Hume that one should believe based on the evidence. However, Christians must differ with him when he assumes that the evidence for *regular events* is *always* greater than the evidence for *singular events* (miracles). How many of us have experienced the origin of the universe, Abraham Lincoln's birth, or even the events of history that have only occurred once? If Hume's logic is correct, we must also reject other singular events likened to those mentioned above. Further, Hume makes a fundamental flaw when viewing evidences. He *adds* the evidence instead of *weighing* the evidence. He added the *quantity* of experiences instead of weighing the *quality of experience*. For example, ten witnesses who did not see the crime does not outweigh the one witness who did. If this was not the case, our prisons would be empty since there are quantitatively more people who do not witness a specific crime than those who do.

V. Science and Miracles

A. Is science the ultimate test for truth?

1. Western culture has benefited tremendously by the advances of science. Science is viewed by many as being the only field which is interested in truth and by which beliefs can be rationally assessed. Today, we are told, that "everything is brought before the bar of science to be evaluated." The recent successes in technology, medicine, meteorology, and agriculture have been impressive to such an extent, it has led many to say "**only what can be known by science or quantified and empirically (visually) tested is rational and true.**" This statement virtually eliminates Christianity's major characteristics and miracle claims from being "rational and true" since many of its characteristics cannot be repeatedly tested through empirical means with the scientific method.
2. However, upon closer examination, J.P. Moreland of Talbot Seminary reveals three fundamental flaws with this reasoning.
 - a. First, the statement is self-defeating. The statement itself cannot be empirically tested or quantified mathematically.
 - b. Second, the statement is not a statement *of* science; it is a philosophical statement *about* science. And if it is not a statement of science, then it cannot be considered rational or true by the statements own standards. Science cannot be justified by science anymore than one can pull himself up by his own boot straps. Science must appeal to something outside of science to justify itself just as Christianity must appeal to evidence *outside* the Bible to justify its claims, namely, reality.
 - c. Finally, the scientist assumes certain things as "rational and true" that cannot be tested by operation science. For example, scientists believe that they ought to report their test results "honestly." This implies morality which cannot be scientifically tested. Further, they assume that *numbers* are real, that the laws of logic are true, that *language* has meaning, and that *truth-telling* is a virtue. All these are categories that serve as the basis *for* science but cannot be tested *by* science.

Therefore, if "only that which can be tested by science is rational and true," and the basis of science rests on what cannot be tested by science (numbers, logic, morality, etc.), science is not rational or true.

B. Do Science and the Bible Contradict each other?

Difficulties yes, contradictions no! Many have hastily claimed that science and the Bible are incompatible and are mutually exclusive domains. This claim has arisen for two reasons.

1. A misunderstanding of "alleged" unscientific passages of Scripture
2. A misunderstanding of the *relationship* between science and the Bible. Seven reasons for this misunderstanding:
 - a. The assumption that the Bible is true *only* when speaking about religious matters (fact/value split – John 3:12)
 - b. The assumption that miracles are impossible
 - c. Failure to understand that both theology and science are *interpretive disciplines* subject to error which inevitably will conflict (scientists believe earth was eternal and Roman Catholic scholars had believed that the Sun revolved around the Earth).

- d. Failure to understand that the Bible *is not* a *scientific text book*, and should not be held to modern technical standards
- e. Failure to understand that the Bible reveals *partial* scientific truths and not always complete ones. Nevertheless, a partial truth is still true. (Ex: Gen 1:1 - universe had a beginning)
- f. Failure to understand that the Bible uses and employs *observational* rather than astronomical language (“sunrise” and “sunset”).
- g. Failure to understand that the unexplainable may yet be explained

Note: There can be no real contradiction between the domain of science (nature) and the domain of theology (Bible) because they are two different kinds of revelation (general and special) from the same God. The only real conflicts or contradictions that exist between science and the Bible are interpretative.

C. The Bible has demonstrated remarkable consistency with science

Christians claim that the Bible is the Word of God. If this claim is true, one would expect certain unique qualities within it that would set it apart from other books. One of these unique qualities the Bible possesses is scientific knowledge about the heavens and earth 2000 to 3000 years before its time. Much of which runs contrary to the surrounding cultures at that time.

The following are some examples:

1. The existence of water paths (currents) in the seas (Ps 8:8)
2. The ocean contains underwater springs (Gen 7:11; Job 38:16; Proverbs 8:28)
3. The ocean floor contains deep valleys (Ps 18:15; 2 Sam 22:16; Job 38:16)
4. The ocean contains towering mountains (Jonah 2:6)
5. Allowing the land to lie unplowed every seventh year (Ex 23:10-11). Scientists have found that this practice allows the ground to replenish itself.
6. The heavens (stars) cannot be measured (Gen 15:5; Jeremiah 31:37)
7. Outer space (heavens) is called the “expanse” or “spreading out” which is consistent with the expanding universe (Gen 1:8, 14-17)
8. The heavens and the earth had a beginning (Gen 1:1)
9. The earth will eventually wear out (Second Law of Thermodynamics) (Ps 102:26; Isaiah 51:6)
10. The earth is spherical (Isaiah 40:22)
11. The earth is suspended in nothing (Job 26:7)
12. All living things reproduce after its own kind (Gen 1:21; 6:19)

VI. Conclusion

Miracles can be a powerful piece of evidence in confirming the message of Christianity. Although there are other religions that claim their message has been confirmed by alleged miracles, Christianity stands alone when viewing the evidence. Specific prophecy, the character of eyewitnesses, the unique kinds of miracles, and the recording of the actual events close to the time when they occurred (closer than any other religion) served to elevate Christianity not only above the pagan cults of the first century, but also above the world religions of today.¹⁹

Sources and Books on Miracles:

Brown, Colin, *Miracles and the Critical Mind*

Geisler, Norman L., *Miracles and the Modern Mind* (Baker); *Signs and Wonders*

Geivett, Douglas, and Gary R. Habermas, eds., *In Defense of Miracles* (IVP)

Johnson, Phillip E., *Reason In the Balance* (IVP)

_____, *Darwin On Trial*

Lewis, C.S., *Miracles*

Morris, Henry M., *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science* (Baker)

Moreland, J.P. *Science and Christianity*

¹⁹ The information contained herein was derived and expanded from Geisler, Norman, *Signs and Wonders* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1988); *Miracles and the Modern Mind*. Also from CRI “Jean Dixon and Prophecy.”

Reliability of the New Testament

During the first sixteen-centuries the question of biblical *reliability* did not occupy center stage. However, since the European Enlightenment (1688-1788) the question of reliability has not only served as fuel for atheistic and deistic attacks upon biblical Christianity, it has been a topic for discussion within the church. No longer can Christians assume their churches believe in the inerrant, infallible, and inspired Word of God.

The differences between the pre-Enlightenment view and post-Enlightenment view of the Bible and supernatural (miracles) can be contrasted as follows:

Views of the Bible

Pre-Enlightenment view	Post-Enlightenment view

I. Introduction

A. What is Reliability?

When one investigates the historical reliability of the Bible, he asks questions that seek to discover whether the documents we possess today are reliable historical sources about Jesus. That is to say, did Jesus actually “do” and “say” all that is recorded of Him in the text. The following questions have a direct bearing on the outcome:

1. Can the Bible be trusted?
2. Is the New Testament a mythological document?
3. What about the manuscript evidence?
4. What does archaeology, prophecy, and statistics contribute?
5. Was it written by reliable witnesses?
6. What about non-Christian witnesses to New Testament events?
7. How close is the biblical record to the original events?
8. How does the New Testament compare to other ancient pieces of literature?
9. Have there been any errors in historical or scientific facts discovered?

B. Why Defend the Historical Reliability of the New Testament?

1. Because if the Bible is in error, then so is God since it is *His* Word (2 Tim 3:16; Tit 1:2)
2. Because if the Bible cannot be trusted in earthly matters, how can we trust it in spiritual matters (John 3:12)?
3. Because if the Scripture has fallen short of its claims, Jesus is a liar (John 10:35; Matt 5:18)
4. Because if the Bible cannot be trusted, it is no better than the *Koran*, the *Tao-Te-Ching*, *Upanishads*, or the *Book of Mormon* (2 Peter 1:16)
5. If the Bible is not reliable, we have no guarantee that what it records about things that cannot be verified (spiritual) are true
6. Because the historical and spiritual are inseparable (e.g. virgin birth, cross, resurrection, etc.)

II. What are the critics saying about the Bible?

- A. **Robert W. Funk (founder of the Jesus Seminar) and the Jesus Seminar (based in Sonoma, CA)** “The gospels are now assumed to be narratives in which the memory of Jesus is *embellished by mythic elements* that express the church’s faith in him” (Robert W. Funk, *The Five Gospels*, 4-5)
- B. **John Dominic Crossan (co-founder of the Jesus Seminar)**“ Jesus lived on in the hearts of followers . . . but he did not physically rise from the dead. Taken down from the cross, his body was probably buried in a shallow grave $\frac{3}{4}$ and may have been eaten by dogs” (*Newsweek*, April 4, 1994)
“While Jesus may have been a carpenter . . . he never delivered the Sermon on the Mount . . . he never cured any diseases. As for the other miracles? No loaves and fishes, no water into wine, no raising of Lazarus. And certainly no resurrection” (*Time*, January 10, 1994)
- C. **John Shelby Spong (Episcopalian Bishop in Newark, NJ)**“ Everything written by biblical writers about the heavens or the earth assumed that the earth was the center of the universe. To the degree that the Bible makes these assumptions, the Bible cannot be literal for us” (Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, 26)
“the ‘fall of man,’ . . . no longer makes sense, the traditional way of understanding the Christ story also sinks into the sea of inadequacy” (Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, 35)

III. Why the Christian should believe the inerrancy of the Bible

- A. **Because inerrancy has implications on God’s nature**
 - 1. **Put in Logical Form**
 - a. God Cannot Err (Heb 6:18; Tit 1:2)
 - b. The Bible is the Word of God (2 Tim 3:16; Rom 9:6)
 - c. Therefore, the Bible cannot err (John 10:35)
- B. **Inerrancy follows inspiration**

IV. Implications of inspiration on Scripture

- A. **Character of Scripture**
 - 1. Holy - 2 Tim 3:15-16
 - 2. Indestructible - Matt 5:17-18; John 10:35
 - 3. Infallible (unfailing) - John 10:35
 - 4. Authoritative - Matt 4:4;7,10
 - 5. Powerful - Heb 4:12; Romans 1:16
 - 6. Without error - John 17:17; Mt 22:29

Note: *Inspiration is found in the very words. However, only in these words as they are part of a whole unit of meaning (sentence). This is called “wholistic” inspiration, not “atomistic” inspiration.*

- B. **Positive and Negative aspects of inspiration**
 - 1. **Positive**
 - a. Inerrancy is a byproduct of inspiration
 - b. Inerrancy means wholly true (that which corresponds to reality) and without error
 - c. Inerrancy applies to all that the Bible affirms, records, teaches, and implies.
 - d. Inerrancy applies to matters of science, history, math, etc.
 - 2. **Negative**
 - 1. Inspiration does not mean that everything said in the Bible is true rather than only what is taught (Gen 3:4)
 - 2. Inspiration does not mean everything recorded in the Bible is approved by God (e.g. David’s sin - 2 Sam 11)

3. Inspiration does not mean that all statements about God are purely literal (Heb 4:13; Job 38:7; John 10:7 - "I am the door")
4. Inspiration does not mean that factual assertions are technically precise (Bible uses round numbers)
5. Inspiration does not mean that all Scriptural citations of the OT be the exact words (verbatim) (get the meaning; vox vs. verba) (Ps 40:6-8 cf. Heb 10)
6. Inspiration does not mean that citations from secular literature affirms the whole source (Tit 1:12; Acts 17:28)
7. Inspiration does not mean that statements about the universe must be in modern astronomical language rather than from an *observational* perspective (Josh 10:12)
8. Inspiration does not mean that some portions of Scripture are more inspired than others (the *significance* of Scripture may have degrees, but inspiration does not - e.g. resurrection vs. counting of people in the book of Numbers)
9. Inspiration does not mean that grammar will always be customary rather than adequate to convey meaning
10. Inspiration does not mean that *descriptive* passages are to be made *prescriptive* (Acts 4:32-37). What *did* happen should not always be taught as what *must* happen.

V. What did Jesus affirm about Scripture?

A. Old Testament

1. Authority (Matt 22:43)
2. Reliability Matt 26:54)
3. Finality (Matt 4:4,7,10)
4. Unity (Luke 24:27,44)
5. Historicity (Matt 12:40)
6. Inerrancy (John 17:17; Matt 22:29)
7. Indestructible (Matt 5:17,18)

B. New Testament

1. Jesus *confirmed* the Old Testament but *promised* the New Testament. He promised to guide the apostles into "all truth" (John 14:26; 16:13).
2. The apostles recognized the bulk of the New Testament as "Scripture" (1 Tim 5:18; 2 Pet 3:16)

Note: Only 2 Peter, Jude, Hebrews, and the Apostle John's writings had not been penned yet. The Gospel of Luke (c. 60 AD) was written only about 3 years before 1 Timothy (c. 63 AD), yet Paul does not hesitate to put Luke's gospel on the same level as OT Scripture (1 Tim 5:18 cf. Duet 25:4; Luke 10:7).

C. Many conclude that the Bible is full of errors not necessarily due to their examining of the facts, but rather due to philosophical or moral considerations

1. *They disbelieve in miracles.* (Unwarranted anti-supernaturalism)
2. *They reject absolute truth.* (Self-defeating-Absolutely sure?)
3. *Reject moral absolutes.* (Self-defeating- Are you *absolutely* morally sure?)
4. *They claim the Bible is outdated.* (Absolute truth doesn't change with time. Truth is truth for all times, all people, and all places)
5. *They claim Christians are narrow minded.* (Truth is narrow - 2+2=4, not 5, 6,7,8,9, 10 on to infinity. Only 4 is the correct answer.)
6. *They claim language doesn't have meaning.* (Self-defeating - even that statement: what do you mean?)
7. *You can't see God, how do you know he exists?* (You can't see the wind either, but you see the effects of it. It is the same with God (effects in nature). There are other things that are real but are unseen such as numbers, values, and mind, should we reject the reality of these things because we can't see them? No, neither should we reject God because He is unseen.

8. *You cannot know anything about God.* (Self-defeating - this statement posits knowledge about God, namely, that one cannot know Him. In other words, it asserts that "I know for certain something about God, that is, you can't know Him.)
9. *One has to be skeptical about everything.* (Self-defeating. If this was the case, you would have to be skeptical about skepticism)
10. *You can't speak about an infinite God using finite language.* (Linguistics - univocal (same words), equivocal (different words), analogical (similar words) language?)
11. *I don't believe because we don't have the original inspired text of the Bible.* (We do not need them for the truthfulness contained in the copies to be valid. Would the United States ever give up its freedoms because the original Constitution or Declaration of Independence were suddenly destroyed? No, we have good copies.

VI. Evidence for the Historical Reliability of the New Testament

The historical reliability of Scripture should be tested by the same principles that test all historical documents.²⁰

These principles are:

- A. **The Bibliographical Test** (check manuscripts)
- B. **The Internal Evidence Test** (prophecy, eyewitnesses)
- C. **The External Evidence Test** (archaeology, non-Christian witnesses).

Note: *The integrity and character of the eyewitnesses will be addressed in the section dealing with the resurrection.*

A. **The Bibliographical Test** (manuscripts)

By employing this test, one seeks to investigate the area of textual transmission (how the documents reach us). In other words, since we do not have the originals, we must ask how reliable the copies we possess are. This test seeks to answer three questions:

1. **How many manuscripts (MSS) do we have?** (More manuscripts give one a better understanding of what the original said and correct many scribal errors)
2. **What is the time interval between the original and the existing copy?** (the shorter the time gap from the original, the less chance for myth and distortion to develop)
3. **How does the New Testament manuscripts compare to other ancient pieces of literature?**
 - a. What is the **manuscript evidence** for the New Testament?
 - i. There are approximately 5,600 + partial and complete Greek manuscripts that support the new Testament²¹
 - ii. The Gospels boast over 2,300 manuscripts and fragments surviving from the earliest centuries of the Christian church²²
 - iii. There are over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and 9,300 other early versions
 - iv. There are a total of over 24, 000 manuscripts that attest to the original documents of the New Testament

²⁰ Gordon H. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1971) and Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, Indiana: 1990).

²¹ Metzger, Bruce M., *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 36.

Manuscript breakdown:	
Greek	
Uncials	307
Minuscules	2,860
Lectionaries	2,410
Papyri	109
TOTAL	5686 + Greek manuscripts
Manuscripts in other languages	
Latin Vulgate	10,000 +
Ethiopic	2,000 +
Slavic	4,101
Armenian	2,587
Syriac Pashetta	350 +
Bohairic	100
Arabic	75
Old Latin	50
Anglo Saxon	7
Gothic	6
Sogdian	3
Old Syriac	2
Persian	2
Frankish	1
TOTAL	19, 284
GRAND TOTAL	24,970²³

2. How does the New Testament **compare** with other ancient documents?
 - a. The New Testament is the most documented piece of literature from ancient History
 - b. The next closest is Homer's Iliad (c. 800 B.C.) at 600+ manuscripts
 - c. Tacitus' The Annals of Imperial Rome (100 A.D.) have c. 18-20 manuscripts copied c. 900-1000 years after the original
 - d. Aristotle's works (c. 384-322 B.C.) have only c. 50 manuscript copies of any one original work with a time span of over 1100 years before the earliest copy.
 - e. The earliest New Testament manuscripts are only 50-250 years removed from the original events (P52 John Rylands Fragment)

F.F. Bruce writes,

"Perhaps we can appreciate how wealthy the New Testament is in manuscript attestation if we compare the textual material for other ancient historical works"²⁴

3. What does the **early church and the Apostolic fathers** contribute to reliability?
 - a. *Early dates* (first and second-century)
 - b. *More manuscript evidence* (could reconstruct the whole New Testament with the early church father's 36,000+ quotes)

B. The *Internal Test*

The internal test asks whether the document itself claims to be actual history written by eyewitnesses. It also asks whether the text reveals certain characteristics that affirm or incriminate its reliability.

1. The evidence of **eyewitnesses**

- a. Luke 1:1-4 - "Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us"
- b. 2 Pet 1:16 - "we did not follow cunningly devised fables . . . but were eyewitnesses of his majesty"
- c. John 19:35 - "he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows he is telling the truth"
- d. John 21:24 - This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true"
- e. Hebrews 2:3-4 - "if we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard him"
- f. 1 John 1:1-4 - "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard . . . seen . . . looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of Life. . . . that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us"

2. The evidence of **oral tradition**

²² Blomberg, Craig L., "Gospels: Historical Reliability," in Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: IVP), 292.

²³ McDowell, Josh, *New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 34.

²⁴ Bruce, F.F., *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rep. 1996), 16.

Critical scholars often doubt the reliability of the gospels because they doubt either the *ability* or the *interest* of the early church to preserve accurately the story of Jesus as it was passed along orally. However, Craig Blomberg has posited several factors that support the likelihood that the gospel tradition was carefully preserved.

- a. Jesus was perceived by his followers as one who spoke God's Word in a way that demanded careful retelling.
 - b. Over 90 percent of Jesus' teaching possesses poetic elements which would allow for easy memorization.
 - c. The most universal method of education in antiquity was rote memorization which would allow one to remember vast quantities of materials far greater than all the gospels put together.
 - d. Oral story telling often permitted a wide range. Of freedom in selecting details but required fixed points of a narrative to remain unchanged (*vox/verba*)
 - e. Despite the publicly stated preference for rote memory, disciples and rabbis kept notes privately.
 - f. The lack of teachings ascribed to Jesus about later church controversies (e.g. circumcision) suggests that the disciples did not freely "invent" material and read it onto the lips of Jesus.²⁵
3. Three **Marks of historicity** contained in the Gospels

The *counterproductive features* present in the Gospels point towards historicity because of their apparent conflict with the *purposes* for which the book was written.²⁶

- a. Testimony of women
 - b. Death of Christ on the cross
 - c. Religious leader's authority and apparent triumph
 - d. Fearful disciples; they fled and denied Christ
4. The evidence of **prophecy**
- a. Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14 cf. Mt 1:8, 24, 25)
 - b. House of David (Jeremiah 23:5 cf. Luke 3:23, 31)
 - c. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 cf. Mt 2:1)
 - d. Entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech 9:9 cf. Luke 19:35, 36, 37)
 - e. Sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech 11:12 cf. Mt 26:15)
 - f. He would be pierced (Zech 12:10 cf. John 19:34)
 - g. Wounded and bruised (Isaiah 53:5 cf. Mt 27:26)
 - h. Smitten and spat on (Isaiah 50:6 cf. Mt 26:67)
 - i. Resurrection (Ps 16:10 cf. Acts 2:31)

5. A **historian's** perspective

Roman Historian, A.N. Sherwin-White asserts,

"For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted"²⁷

6. An answer to those who claim the New Testament is **mythological**

- a. *The mythical view is based on an antisupernatural presupposition* (cf. Strauss and Bultmann) which when stripped away defrocks the view of its plausibility.
- b. The surrounding persons, places, and events of those narrated in the gospels were all historical (Luke 2:1; 3:1 2).
- c. *There is no time or way for legend and myth to develop* while the eyewitnesses were still alive to refute the story. Tests show that even two generations are not enough time to allow for myth to develop (Sherwin-White, *Roman Law*, 190). Scholars are challenged to produce one example where in one generation a myth developed.

²⁵Green, *Dictionary*, 294.

²⁶Moreland, J.P., *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987), 144-46.

²⁷Sherwin-White, A.N., *Roman Law and Roman Society in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1963), 189.

- d. *The New Testament records do not show any signs of being mythological.*
 - e. No Greek myth spoke of the literal incarnation of a monotheistic God into human form (John 1:1-3,14) by way of a literal virgin birth (Mt 1:18-25), nor followed by a death and physical resurrection (Mt 27-28). The Greeks believed in reincarnation into another mortal body (Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus) not resurrection into the same body made immortal (Luke 24:37). Further, they were polytheists, not monotheists.
 - f. The stories of Greek gods becoming human via miraculous events like a virgin birth were not prior to but after the time of Christ. Hence, if there is any influence of one on the other it is the influence of the historical event of the New Testament on the emulated mythology, not the reverse.
 - g. Both Historians (A.N. Sherwin-White) and myth writers (C.S. Lewis) have rejected the mythical view of the New Testament.²⁸
7. An Answer to those who claim the New Testament was influenced by **pagan mystery religions**
- a. *Arguments offered to “prove” a Christian dependence on the mystery religions illustrate the logical fallacy of false cause.* This fallacy is committed whenever someone reasons that just because two things exist side by side, one of them must have caused the other. As we all should know, mere coincidence does not prove causal connection. Nor does similarity prove dependence.
 - b. *Many of the similarities between Christianity and the mysteries are either greatly exaggerated or fabricated.* Scholars often describe pagan rituals in the language they borrow from Christianity. The careless use of language could lead one to speak of a “last supper” in Mithraism or a “baptism” in the cult of Isis. It is inexcusable nonsense to take the word “savior” with all of its New Testament connotations and apply it to Osiris or Attis as though they were savior-gods in any similar sense.
 - c. *The Chronology is all wrong.* Almost all of our sources of information about the pagan religions alleged to have influenced early Christianity are dated very late. We frequently find writers quoting from documents written 300 years later than Paul in efforts to produce ideas that allegedly influenced Paul. We must reject the assumption that just because a cult had a certain belief or practice in the third or fourth century after Christ, it therefore had the same belief or practice in the first century.
 - d. *Paul would never have consciously borrowed from the pagan religions.* All of our information about him makes it highly unlikely that he was in any sense influenced by pagan sources. He placed great emphasis on his early training in a strict form of Judaism (Phil 3:5). He warned the Colossians against the very sort of influence that advocates of Christian syncretism have attributed to him, namely, letting their minds be captured by alien speculations (Col 2:8).
 - e. *Early Christianity was an exclusivist faith.* This Christian exclusivism should be a starting point for all reflection about the possible relations between Christianity and its pagan competitors. Any hint of syncretism in the New Testament would have caused immediate controversy.
 - f. *Unlike the mysteries, the religion of Paul was grounded on events that actually happened in history.* The mysticism of the mystery cults was essentially non-historical. Their myths were dramas, or pictures, of what the initiate went through, not real historical events, as Paul regarded Christ’s death and resurrection to be. The Christian affirmation that the death and resurrection of Christ happened to a historical person at a particular time and place has absolutely no parallel in any pagan mystery religion.
 - g. *What few parallels may still remain may reflect a Christian influence on the pagan systems. . . .* It should not be surprising that leaders of cults that were being successfully challenged by Christianity should do something to counter the challenge. What better way to do this than by offering a pagan substitute? Pagan attempts to counter the growing influence of Christianity by imitating it are clearly apparent in measures instituted by Julian the Apostate, who was the Roman emperor from A.D. 361 to 363.²⁹

C. The external test³⁰ for the reliability of the New Testament

By employing this test one seeks to discover whether evidence *external* to the New Testament documents confirm its reliability. We will look at 1) *non-Christian witnesses* and 2) *archaeology*.

²⁸ Unpublished class notes, Norman L. Geisler, “The Evidence that the New Testament is not Mythology,” in “Introduction to Apologetics,” Southern Evangelical Seminary (1996). Also see Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*; C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, 209, 236; Sherwin-White, *Roman Law and Roman Society*, 189-90; Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Easter-Myth, Hallucination, or History,” (2 parts) in *Christianity Today* 15/29 March 1974, 4-7, 12-16; Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*, 181-83.

²⁹ Ronald Nash, “Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions?” in *Christian Research Journal* Winter 1994, 8ff. Also see Bruce Metzger, *Historical and Literary Studies: Pagan, Jewish, and Christian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 11; J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul’s Religion* (New York MacMillan, 1925), 234-35; Ronald Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks* (Richardson, TX: Probe Books, 1992); Nash, *Christianity and the Hellenistic World*.

³⁰ See F.F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*.

1. **Non-Christian written testimony** to the reliability of the New Testament
 - a. Most biblical scholars acknowledge that there are enough non-Christian sources to abandon the position that rejects Christ's existence and view the gospels as myth.³¹
 - b. Traditions about Jesus appear in various pieces of literature. These ancient non-Christian sources have value in that they offer data from a secular perspective, often clarifying and corroborating with the gospel record. Attention will be directed to Greco-Roman and Jewish testimony.

2. **Greco-Roman Sources**

Tacitus

Tacitus was a Roman historian who lived through the reigns of over a half dozen Roman emperors (c. AD 56-120). He is best known for his two works titled *Annals* and *Histories*. In the *Annals*, Tacitus records how Nero responded to Christians after the great fire in Rome with references that correspond with the gospel record when he writes,

To suppress this rumor, Nero fabricated scapegoats – and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called. Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. But in spite this temporary setback the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome. All degraded and shameful practices collect and flourish in Rome. First, Nero had self-acknowledged Christians arrested. Then, on their information, large numbers of others were condemned - not so much for incendiarism as for their anti-social tendencies. Their deaths were made farcical. Dressed in wild animals' skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight. Nero provided his gardens for the spectacle, and exhibited displays in the circus, at which he mingled with the crowd - or stood in a chariot, dressed as a charioteer. Despite their guilt as Christians, and the ruthless punishment it deserved, the victims were pitied. For it was felt that they were being sacrificed to one man's brutality rather than to the national interest.³²

Professor Gary Habermas (Liberty University) has noted several factors concerning the above quote that remarkably corroborate with the gospel records.

- a. Christians were named for their founder, "Christ." (Acts 11:26; 26:28)
- b. Christ was sentenced to death by under "Pontius Pilate." (Luke 23:24-25)
- c. Christ's death was during the "Tiberius' reign." (Luke 3:1)
- d. His death ended the "superstition" for a short time. (John 20:19)
- e. The superstition "broke out afresh." (Acts 1:8)
- f. It broke out in Judea again "where the mischief had started." (Acts 2:1)
- g. His followers carried his doctrine to "Rome." (Acts 28:16)
- h. After the great fire in Rome, Nero placed blame on the Christians.
- i. Christians were persecuted, being "nailed to crosses." (John 15:20)³³

Although these sources do not prove the gospels are inspired, it does show a remarkable agreement between secular history and the gospel record of Jesus Christ.

Suetonius

Another Roman historian, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas, (b. A.D. 70) makes one reference to Jesus and another to Christians in his historical writings. Suetonius is known for his *Twelve Caesars* in which he chronicles the exploits of Twelve Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Domitian.³⁴ Suetonius' first reference is to Christ when he writes, "Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of *Chrestus*, he expelled them from the city," (see Acts 18:2).³⁵ The word "*Chrestus*" is noted by the translator as being "Christ."³⁶ The second reference refers to those Christians who were tortured by Nero. Suetonius writes that "Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief."³⁷ These two statements are similar to Tacitus' in that they reflect consistency

³¹ Green, *Dictionary*, 292.

³² Michael Grant, *Tacitus: The Annals of Rome*, trans. by Michael Grant (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1989), 365-66.

³³ Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 189. Scripture verses added.

³⁴ Robert Graves, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. by Robert Graves (Baltimore: Penguin, 1957).

³⁵ *Ibid.* 202.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* 221.

with the New Testament records (Acts 18:2; 26:28). There is no contradiction between secular Roman historians; rather there is every indication that the authors of the gospels recorded accurate historical information concerning Jesus Christ.

3. **Jewish Testimony**

Josephus

The most important witness to Jesus from the Jewish culture was the historian, Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37-97).³⁸ After surrendering to the Roman army (Vespasian, A.D. 70) at Jotapata, Josephus became an apologist for the Romans and denounced the Jews who led the rebellion against Rome.³⁹ The “Flavian Testimonium” of Josephus is the most celebrated and controversial passage. Josephus asserts,

Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works,^{3/4} a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ: and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.⁴⁰

Note: *Scholarly opinion is divided into three major positions over this passage due to suspicion of interpolation by Christians. Some reject it entirely, others accept it, or at least partially. There are good indications that the text is genuine. First, there is no textual evidence against it. Second, there is good manuscript evidence to support the text. Finally, there are credible New Testament scholars who find no evidence against the passage. F. F. Bruce writes, “Yet there is nothing to say against the passage on the ground of textual criticism; the manuscript evidence is as unanimous and ample as it is for anything in Josephus.”⁴¹ Bruce further suggests that Josephus could be writing tongue-in-cheek with a bit of sarcasm, ‘If indeed we should call him a man.’⁴² Bruce shows the similarity between the contents of Josephus’ works and the gospel record concerning Jesus Christ.*

Bruce writes,

It may be said, however, that Josephus bears witness to Jesus’ date, to his being the brother of James the Just, to his reputation as a miracle-worker, to his crucifixion under Pilate as a consequence of charges brought against him by the Jewish rulers, to his claim to be the Messiah, and to his being the founder of the ‘tribe of Christians.’⁴³

Elsewhere Josephus records,

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he [Ananus, cf. Luke 3:2] assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus [cf. Mt 13:55], who was called Christ [cf. Mt 16:16], whose name was James [cf. Acts 15:13], and some others, [or some of his companions;] and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.⁴⁴

Thallus

Thallus wrote around 52 AD about the crucifixion of Christ. Though no manuscripts of his works exist today, Julius Africanus (221 AD) quotes Thallus’ comment about the events that followed the crucifixion of Christ:

On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness, and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness [mentioned by] Thallus in the third book of his *History*, calls, what appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun.” (Julius Africanus, *Chronography*, 18.1) (see Luke 23:44-45)

Expert on legal evidences, Simon Greenleaf writes,

Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise.⁴⁵

³⁸Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus*, transl. by Wm. Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1981).

³⁹Wilkins, *Jesus Under Fire*, 212.

⁴⁰Josephus, *Complete Works*, 379.

⁴¹Bruce, *New Testament Documents*, 108.

⁴²Ibid. 109.

⁴³F. F. Bruce, *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 40-41.

⁴⁴Josephus, *Complete Works*, 423 [Scripture brackets added].

⁴⁵Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists: The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 16 [italics in original].

Pliny the Younger (aka Gaius Plinius Secundus, c. 111 AD appointed imperial legate of the Roman province of Bithynia in north-west Asia Minor)⁴⁶

There are several features in Pliny's writings and Emperor Trajan's responses that are of interest to us.

- a. There was a rapid increase among the Christian population in Bithynia and Pontus (1 Pet 1:1)
- b. Genuine Christians did not venerate images or give worship to the emperor's image or the pagan deities at the demand of government officials
- c. The pagan temples, artifacts (statues), and those who sold animals for sacrifices to the gods lost business and were in jeopardy of going bankrupt due to Christian conversions.
- d. Christians met on a certain fixed day before sunrise (i.e. Sunday) to sing hymns to Christ and adore Him as God.

Mara Bar Serapion (letter written sometime between the late 1st and early 3rd century)⁴⁷

The Syrian, Mara was in prison at the time he wrote to his son Serapion. He describes the folly that characterizes those who put to death wise men, including Christ.

- a. Mara placed Christ on the same level as wise sages such as Socrates and Pythagoras. [Sage's Argument]
- b. Christianity lived on even after the death of Christ
- c. Mara describes the destruction of the Jewish kingdom [Jerusalem] soon after the death of Christ.

VII. Conclusion

The New Testament is not merely a book containing theological teachings isolated from historical and scientific statements. The importance of establishing the New Testament as reliable cannot be overstated due to the inseparable nature of doctrine with the historical events (see John 3:12) (e.g. marriage, resurrection, the cross, virgin birth, etc.). The evidence derived from manuscripts, dating, eyewitnesses, non-Christian sources, prophecy, and archaeology give one very good reason to believe the New Testament is indeed reliable. If one chooses to reject the superior evidence for the New Testament, he must be consistent and reject the evidence for most historical works of antiquity as well (including history, poetry, philosophy, etc.). This is a price many are not willing to pay.

Sources and Books on Reliability:

Blomberg, Craig, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (IVP)

Bruce, F.F. *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Eerdmans)

_____. *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament.*

Geisler, Norman L. and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Moody Press)

Joel Green, Scott McKnight, and I.H. Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (IVP)

Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999) E.M. Blaiklock and

R.K. Harrison, eds., *The Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Zondervan)

J.B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East* (2 or 3 volumes)

Archaeology and the Bible

The Hittites (Gen 15:18-21)

In the past, criticism has been marshaled against the biblical mention of "Hittite" peoples (about 40 times in Scripture). Without any secular source mentioning the existence of such peoples, it has been suggested that these were "mythological" or fictitious references. However, in 1906 Hugo Winckler, while excavating in central Turkey (Boghazkoy), discovered the 16th century BC Hittite library that consisted of over 10,000 documents written in Hittite cuneiform which described various law codes, legends, myths, and covenant forms.

In addition, the discovery of the Tel-el Amarna Tablets in 1870, revealed evidence that the Hittite army had been conducting activities in Palestine. Moreover, there are stone slabs with inscriptions and drawings depicting a Hittite princess being given as a peace offering to the Egyptian Pharaoh conqueror.

⁴⁶ F.F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 26-29. See Pliny, *Epistles*, x.33, 34; x.96, 97.

⁴⁷ British Museum, Syriac mss, add. 14, 658. See Bruce, *Christian Origins*; and Habermas, *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*; and McDowell, *The New Evidence*, 59.

Gilgamesh Epic

The Gilgamesh Epic is a 7th century Babylonian account (on clay tablets) of a flood that has remarkable parallels with the flood account found in Genesis. It reveals that 1) The god Ea warns an individual that he was going to flood the world and kill mankind 2) Utnapishtim (*Ziusudra* in the Sumerian account) is told to build a ship 3) Utnapishtim endures the storm 4) He offers a sacrifice at the end of the ordeal 5) The flood waters subsided in one day 6) The deities are sad over the destruction and make a covenant with Utnapishtim The core points of the story are the same as the biblical account.

There are also some notable differences. 1) The boat is cube-like 2) It rained for only six days and nights 3) The ship came to rest on Mount Nisir 4) The gods grant immortality to Utnapishtim. (J.I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, and William White Jr. eds., *The Bible Almanac*)

Similar flood accounts are told by the Greeks, Chinese, Mexicans, Hindus, Algonquins, and Hawaiians. In addition, one list of the Sumerian kings treats the flood as a historical reference point. After naming eight kings that lived extraordinary long lives (tens of thousands of years) it reads “[Then] the flood swept over [the earth] and when kingship was lowered [again] from heaven kingship was [first] in Kish” (see the Weld-Blundell prism) (N.L. Geisler, *Baker’s Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*)

Robert Boyd says “Archaeology has produced no fewer than thirty-three separate tablets of this gigantic flood that may be consulted among peoples and races living today. Of this large number of independent witnesses, only two, the Egyptians and Scandinavians, fail to coincide with the biblical account of the flood. In these records, twenty-eight mention an ark as the method which rescued the remnant, thirty mentioned that the ark rested on a mountain, twenty nine state that birds were sent out to bring back the good news that the waters were receding, thirty mentioned the divine favor which dwelt upon the survivors, and thirty one mention an act of worship as the survivors left the ark.” (Robert Boyd, *Boyd’s Handbook of Practical Apologetics*, 143)

Ebla Tablets

In 1974, Paolo Matthiae and Italian epigrapher, Giovanni Pettinato, discovered approximately 16,000 clay tablets dated from c. 2580 to 2250 BC. They were unearthed in modern day Syria. They contain several references that corroborate the biblical testimony:

1. A creation account (*ex-nihilo* & *original monotheism*) of one being who created the heavens, moon, stars, and earth in the same order as Gen. 1. “Lord of heaven and earth: the earth was not, you created it, the light of day was not, you created it, the morning light you had not [yet] made exist.” (Pettinato, *The Archives of Ebla*, 259)
2. An earlier creation account (Sumerian – 3000’s BC) and a later (than Ebla) creation account (Babylonian- 1700’s BC) both indicate mythological elements such as a conflict between finite gods. The defeated god is split in half and the Euphrates River flows from one eye and the Tigris River flows from the other. Moreover, humanity is made with the blood of an evil god mixed with Mesopotamian clay. Obviously these accounts are embellished and mythological. The claim that the Hebrew account of creation in Genesis 1 (1400’s BC) is myth is mistaken and confuses the *direction* of myth. In the Ancient Near east, historians believe that simpler accounts give rise to embellished accounts, and not the reverse. Genesis was not myth made into history, but rather, the extra-biblical accounts (Sumerian and Babylonian) represent that later stage of myth (Geisler, *Encyclopedia*, 49)
3. Biblical cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah (earliest extra-biblical mention), Ur, Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gaza are mentioned.
4. Deities such as Dagon and Baal are cited. Moreover, one tablet records the creation of the heavens, earth, sun, and moon in that order, like the Genesis account.
5. Names such as Abraham, Saul, David, Adam, Eve, and Noah are mentioned.

Code of Hammurabi

It was thought that Moses’ moral law was simply *borrowed* from earlier moral law codes. However, with the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi (1765 BC), who was the sixth and most famous king of the First Dynasty of Babylon (reigned from c. 1792-1750 BC) in 1901-02 by a French expedition, which contains 282 laws sketched in Old Babylonian cuneiform. It was demonstrated that the code differed from the Mosaic code in that Moses attributed the law to God as the only source of law and righteousness with unwavering obligation to morality. However, Hammurabi’s code allowed for some degree of immorality as approved by the sun-god Shamash. The similarity in moral laws may indicate that there is a universal moral law.

Moabite Stone (aka Mesha Stone)

This slab, which carries over thirty lines written in ancient Moabite, was found in 1868 at Dibon, east of the Dead Sea, by

missionary F.A. Klein. It chronicles the conflict between the Moabites, led by King Mesha, and the Israelites following the death of King Ahab (see 2 kings 1:1; 3:4-5). "Yaweh" is mentioned on line 18; "Omri" (Ahab's father) is also mentioned. It chronicles how Omri, king of Israel, subdued Moab and also how his son Ahab ruled the land. Israel ruled the land for forty years, and then the god Chemosh enabled Mesha to occupy the land once again via a military campaign. The stone is dated from 840-820 BC.

Gallio Inscription

In Acts 18:12-17, Luke describes Paul as being brought before Gallio who was the Proconsul of the city (Corinth) by instigation of the Jews. A stone inscription was found in northern Greece (Delphi) in 1908 that bears the name of Gallio when he was in office in 51-53 AD.

Pontius Pilate (ruled 26-36 AD, appointed by Caesar Tiberius)

Pontius Pilate is mentioned over 50 times in the New Testament, yet some critics argue he was only a fictitious character. However, this changed in 1961 as Italian archaeologist, Antonio Frova, discovered a slab of stone with an inscription of Pontius Pilate's name at the amphitheater in Caesarea near the Mediterranean coast. The stone reads:

"Tiberium, Pontius Pilate, prefect of Judea"

"This slab of stone bears Pilate's name, fragmented and half obliterated but obviously his, and without accompanying titles or explanation" (E.M. Blaiklock and R.K. Harrison, eds., *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, 111)

Luke and Acts

The *Gospel of Luke* and *Acts* contains historical references to cities, people, rulers, travel, coins, sea routes, etc... Many have been confirmed by archaeological research, including the following:

1. A natural crossing between correctly named ports (Acts 13:4-5)
2. The proper river port, Perga, for a ship crossing from Cyprus (13:13)
3. The proper location of Lycaonia (14:6)
4. The unusual but correct declension of the name *Lystra*, the correct language spoken in Lystra, and the correct names of the two gods associated with the city, Zeus and Hermes (14:12)
5. The proper port, Attalia, for returning travelers (14:25)
6. The correct route from the Cilician gates (16:1)
7. The proper form of the name Troas (16:8)
8. A conspicuous sailors' landmark at Samothrace (16:11)
9. The proper identification of Philippi as a Roman Colony and right location of the river Gangites near Philippi (16:13)
10. The association of Thyatira with cloth dyeing (16:14) and the correct designation of the titles for the colony magistrates (16:20, 35-36, 38)
11. The proper locations (Amphipolis and Apollonia) where travelers would spend successive nights on their journey (17:1)
12. The presence of a synagogue in Thessalonica and the proper title of *Politarch* for the magistrates (17:6)
13. The correct explanation that sea travel is the most convenient way to reach Athens in summer due to favoring east winds (17:14)
14. The well attested cult of Artemis of the Ephesians (19:24, 27) and that the Ephesian theater was the city meeting place (19:29)
15. The correct identification of Ananias as high priest (23:2) and Felix as governor (23:34)
16. Luke agreed with Josephus of the name Porcius *Festus* (24:27)
17. Correct identification of the best shipping lanes of that time period (27:4)
18. Correct description of the severe liability on guards who permitted a prisoner to escape (27:42)
19. Accurate descriptions of the local people and superstitions (28:4-6)
20. Common practice of custody with a Roman soldier (28:16) and conditions of imprisonment as one's own expense (28:30-31)

(Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*)

James Ossuary

Perhaps one of the oldest archaeological finds confirming the existence of Joseph, James, and Jesus is the James Ossuary⁴⁸ (63 AD, according to French scholar Andre Lemaire). This limestone ossuary box was found by looters who placed it on the antiquities market. It was recently shipped to Toronto Canada for observation, however, in route it cracked. The Aramaic inscription reads:

“James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus”

(John Noble Wilford, “Jesus’ Inscription on Stone May Be Earliest Ever Found” in *New York Times International* October A12; “Inscription Could be the oldest archaeological link to Jesus” in *The Californian*, 10/22/02)

Nazareth Decree

In 1878, a stone slab was found in Nazareth that many believe was a decree that Emperor Claudius (41-54 AD) issued to protect graves from being disturbed or bodies removed by looters. The decree says:

Ordinance of Caesar. It is my pleasure that graves and tombs remain undisturbed in perpetuity for those who have made them for a cult of their ancestors, or children, or members of their house. If, however, any man lay information that another has either demolished them, or has in any other way extracted the buried, or has maliciously transferred them to other places in order to wrong them, or has displaced the sealing or other stones, against such a one I order that a trial be instituted, as in respect of the gods, so in regard to the cult of mortals. For it shall be much more obligatory to honor the buried. Let it be absolutely forbidden for anyone to disturb them. In the case of contravention I desire that the offender be sentenced to capital punishment on charge of violation of sepulture. (Blaiklock, *Biblical Archaeology*, 330-331)

This decree seems to make sense in light of the Jewish contention that the body of Jesus was stolen (Mt 28:11-15). Perhaps Claudius heard of the Christian doctrine of resurrection and wanted to ensure the peace of the Roman Empire by preventing that sort of thing happening again, since he had several problems with the Jews (riots in 49 AD, and expulsion of Jews from Rome Acts 18:2).

Crucifixion Victim

Yehohanan Ben Ha'galgol was young (20's) crucifixion victim discovered in 1968 in north east Jerusalem cave. After analysis of this individual, seven inch spikes were used to nail the feet and the bones of the lower arm, along with broken legs. This shows that the crucifixion practices described in the New Testament regarding Christ are accurate.

Pool of Bethesda

This pool mentioned in John 5:2 had no record except in the New Testament. The remains of the pool were found in 1888 while excavating near the Church of St. Anne.

The Pavement (Gabbatha)

The area where Pilate judged Jesus (i.e. Praetorium and Pavement; John 19:13; Mt 27:27) has been said to be at the Tower of Antonia (Roman Military Headquarters) at the northwest corner of the temple area, or at the Tower of Herod's palace at the western wall of the city.

Archaeologists speak out:

Nelson Glueck: “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible”⁴⁹

Millar Burrows: “more than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine”⁵⁰

Sir William Ramsey: “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians”⁵¹

William F. Albright: “Aside from a few die-hards among older scholars, there is scarcely a single biblical historian who has not been impressed by the rapid accumulation of data supporting the substantial historicity of the patriarchal tradition”⁵²

⁴⁸ For more information see Herschel Shanks and Ben Witherington, *The Brother of Jesus* (Harper San Francisco, 2003); *Biblical Archaeology Review* September/October 2003 Vol 29 No 6; *Ibid.*, November/December 2002 Vol 28 No 6.

⁴⁹ Glueck, Nelson, *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Cudahy, 1959), 31.

⁵⁰ Burrows, Millar, *What mean These Stones?* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental research, 1941), 1.

⁵¹ Ramsey, W. M. *The Bearing of recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1953), 222, in McDowell, *Evidence: Vol. I*, 71.

⁵² Albright, William F., *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 1-2, in McDowell, *Evidence: Vol. I*, 67. Also see Edwin Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures*.

Deity of Christ

The truth of Christianity rests on the truth and truthfulness of Jesus Christ. Who is He? What did He say about Himself? What separates Jesus from a host of others such as Buddha, Confucius, Hare Krishna, and the Dali Lamma? Answers to these questions make a difference not only when one chooses a worldview, but to whom ultimate allegiance, worship, and obedience is to be rendered. Therefore, based on the premise that the biblical records are presenting a reliable portrait of Jesus Christ, we will seek to discover “who” Jesus claimed to be while at the same time placing emphasis on the rationality (i.e. non-contradictory) of the incarnation of the Son of God.

I. Introduction

A. What Are the Critics Saying about Christ

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

When I tell you why I am not a Christian I have to tell you two different things: first, why I do not believe in God and immortality; and secondly, why I do not think that Christ was the best and wisest of all men, although I grant him a very high degree of moral goodness.⁵³ I do not believe that one can grant the superlative wisdom or the superlative goodness of Christ as depicted in the Gospels.⁵⁴

Others say:

1. Jesus was a good man but not sinless deity (Secular Humanism)
2. He was a wise man like Buddha, Confucius, and Solomon who had Christ consciousness (NAM)
3. He never claimed to be the Son of God (Arianism/Jehovah’s Witnesses)
4. He couldn’t be God because God can’t have a Son (Islam)
5. He should be categorized with the rest of those who claimed to be the Messiah (Rev. Moon, David Koresh, Charles Manson etc)

1 Corinthians 11:4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different Spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you submit to it readily enough.

Galatians 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.

B. Why is it important?

1. If Jesus *is not* God there are several implications that follow:
 - a. He made false claims to be the “Son of God” (Mk 14:61-64; Mt 16:15-17; John 8:42; 9:35-37; 10:30-37; 11:4 cf. 17:1-5; Prov 30:4; Ps 45:6-7 cf. Heb 1:8-9)
 - b. He would not be a sufficient sacrifice to atone for the sin of the world (1 Pet 1:19) because of His sinfulness (Rom 3:23). Otherwise, any sacrifice would be sufficient to atone (Mt 26:39)
 - c. Christianity would not differ in kind from other religions (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)
 - d. There is no assurance that life exists beyond the grave (Phil 3:21; Rom 1:4; 1 John 3:2)
2. If Jesus *is* God there are several implications that follow:
 - a. He is the only way to salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)
 - b. There is assurance of life after death (John 6:68; John 14:1-3)
 - c. Man has a moral obligation to worship and obey Him (Acts 17:30-31)

⁵³ Russell, Bertrand, *Why I Am Not A Christian* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 15-16.

II. Jesus is the God-Man: Biblical Testimony

A. Jesus as God

Jesus	Jehovah
Is the “ <u>shepherd</u> ” (John 10:11)	Is a “ <u>shepherd</u> ” (Ps 23:1)
Is the “ <u>I AM</u> ” (John 8:24, 58; 13:19)	Is the “ <u>I AM</u> ” (Ex 3:14; Isaiah 43:10)
Is the “ <u>creator</u> ” (John 1:3; Col1:15-17)	Is the “ <u>creator</u> ” (Gen 1:1; Isaiah 40)
Is the “ <u>first and the last</u> ” (Rev 1:17)	Is the “ <u>first and the last</u> ” (Isaiah 44:6)
Is “ <u>God</u> ” (John 1:1; 20:28; Tit 2:13; Heb 1:8)	Is “ <u>God</u> ” (Isaiah 43:10; 45:22)
Is the “ <u>savior</u> ” (Acts 4:12; Rom 10:9)	Is “ <u>savior</u> ” (Isaiah 45:21; 43:3, 11)
Is the “ <u>forgiver</u> ” of sins (Mk 2:7, 10)	Is a “ <u>forgiver</u> ” of sins (Jeremiah 31:34)
Is “ <u>addressed in prayer</u> ” (Acts 7:59)	Is “ <u>addressed in prayer</u> ” (Dan 6)
Is “ <u>confessed as Lord</u> ” (Phil 2:10)	Is “ <u>confessed as Lord</u> ” (Isaiah 45:23)
Is “ <u>worshipped</u> ” by angels (Heb 1:6)	Is “ <u>worshipped</u> ” by angels (Ps 148:2)
Is “ <u>worshipped</u> ” by men (Mt 14:31-33)	Is “ <u>worshipped</u> ” by men (Ex 34:14)
Is “ <u>unchanging</u> ” (Heb 13:8)	Is “ <u>unchanging</u> ” (Mal 3:6)
Is “ <u>eternal</u> ” (John 8:58; Heb 13:8)	Is “ <u>eternal</u> ” (Deut 33:27)
Is “ <u>omniscient</u> ” (John 2:24-25)	Is “ <u>omniscient</u> ” (1 John 3:20)
Is “ <u>omnipresent</u> ” (Mt 18:20)	Is “ <u>omnipresent</u> ” (Ps 139)
Is “ <u>all powerful</u> ” (Col 2:10; Mt 28:18)	Is “ <u>all powerful</u> ” (Ps 139)

Pre-existence and eternity of the Son

1. **Psalm 45:6-7** Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. (cf. Hebrews 1:8-9)
2. **Psalm 110:1** The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ (cf. Matthew 22:41-46: “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?”)
3. **Proverbs 30:4 (Psalm of Agur)** Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know! ⁵⁵
4. **Isaiah 9:6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; . . . And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, *Mighty God, Everlasting Father* . . .
5. **Micah 5:2** But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from *old*, from *ancient times*.
6. **John 1:1** In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was *with* God in the beginning. (“was” in the Greek *imperfect tense* stresses continual existence in past time; “with” in Greek speaks of *face to face* relationship)
7. **John 3:16-17** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not *send His Son into the world* to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.
8. **John 8:58** . . . before Abraham was, I am. (“I am” is present tense meaning Christ was *continuously existing* before Abraham’s birth)

⁵⁵ See comments by Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 273-78, and R. Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *A Commentary – Critical, Experimental, Practical – on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 508.

9. **Acts 3:15** You killed the *author of life*, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

Deity

1. **John 1:1** . . . the Word was with God, and the *Word was God*.
2. **John 1:14** And the *Word became flesh* and dwelt among us . . . (implies preincarnate existence)
3. **John 17:5** And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the *glory which I had with You* before the world was. (cf. Isaiah 42:8)
4. **Philippians 2:6** . . . Christ Jesus, being in the *form of God* . . . (“form” *morphe* is same word used to describe the human “form of a bondservant” Phil 2:7)
5. **Hebrews 1:8-9** But to the Son he [God] says “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; . . . Therefore God, Your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness . . .”

Supernatural Creator

1. **Colossians 1:15-17** He is in the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (cf. Psalm 89:27) over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in him all things consist (hold together).

Omniscient

1. **John 16:30** Now we [disciples] are sure You *know all things*. . . By this we know you came forth from God.
2. **John 21:17** And he [Peter] said to him “Lord, you *know all things*; . . .” (See John 2:25; 4:18)
3. **Colossians 2:2** the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of *wisdom and knowledge*.

Omnipotent

1. **Matthew 28:18** *All authority* has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
2. **Mark 2:5-7** He [Jesus] said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” (Only God has the power to forgive sins – Isaiah 43:25; 55:7; Matt 9:2; Luke 7:47).
3. **Colossians 2:10** . . . and you have been given the fullness of Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

Omnipresence

1. **Matthew 28:20** Jesus came and spoke to them saying... “I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”
2. **Matthew 18:20** For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.
3. **John 1:48-50** ...because I saw you under the fig tree . . .

Indwelling of every believer *demand*s Christ be omnipresent (John 14:23; Ephesians 3:17; Rev. 3:20)

***Question:** What about Christ’s physically resurrected glorified body?

Immutability

1. **Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ is the *same* yesterday, today, and forever.

Holiness (moral purity; sinless)

1. **Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – *yet was without sin*.
2. **Hebrews 7:26** Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.
3. **1 Peter 2:22** He [Jesus] committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

B. Jesus as *Man*

1. He was “born” of a woman (Mt 1:24-25)
2. He increased in “wisdom and stature” (Luke 2:51-52)
3. He became “thirsty” (John 4:7)

4. He became “tired” (John 4:6; 19:28)
5. He was “tempted” (Mt 4:1, 4, 7, 10)
6. He “wept” (John 11:35)
7. He felt “forsaken” (Mt 27:46)
8. He physically “experienced death” (John 19:33)

C. Conclusion

1. Jesus is God (*theos*)
2. Jesus is Man (*anthropos*)
3. Therefore, Jesus is the God-Man (*theanthropos*)

Note: Whenever one speaks about Christ he must always consider His dual nature⁵⁶ and ask two questions of Him: one about Christ as God, and the other about Christ as man.

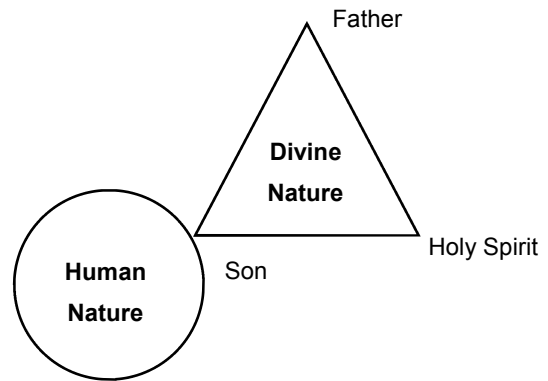
1. Did Christ get tired?
2. Could Christ sin?
3. Was He limited in Knowledge?
4. Did He know the future?

The Nature of Christ Explained

Christ possesses *two* distinct natures, one divine and the other human, united in one person, the Son (Jesus). Both natures are touching but not confused (*theanthropos*) (also called *hypostatic union*)

Is incarnation a Contradiction? No more contradictory than adding a circle to one tip of a triangle.

***Jesus could operate from either nature. One nature was limited (Human) and the other nature was unlimited (divine) (Luke 2:52 cf. John 16:30; Col 1:15-16).**



Reasons to Accept the Incarnation:

1. If Jesus is fully God and fully man, He is *eligible* to *redeem* (Heb 2:14-18) and *judge* humanity (John 5:22, 27).
2. This view corresponds to *Scripture* (John 1:1, 14; 5:17-18; 8:58; 1 Tim 2:5).
3. It is consistent with major *church councils* throughout the centuries.⁵⁷ The Niceno-Chalcedonian Creed (451 AD) says:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in God head and also perfect in manhood; **truly God and truly man**, of a reasonable soul and body; **consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead**, and **consubstantial with us according to the Manhood**; . . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the **distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union**, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person . . . **not parted or divided into two persons**, but one and the same Son . . .⁵⁸

1. It accounts for the seeming *complexity* present within Christ regarding His attributes (e.g. He knew all - John 2:24-25, and He did not know all - Mk 13:32; Luke 2:52).
2. It accounts for the *two wills* present within Christ, one divine and one human (Mt 26:39).⁵⁹

⁵⁶ The “hypostatic union” in theology is the mysterious uniting of two distinct natures (divine and human) within one person (Jesus Christ). These two natures remain distinct (separate in essence), without mixture, yet touching one another. See Council of Nicea (325 AD) and Council of Chalcedon (451 AD).

⁵⁷ See Council of Chalcedon I (451 AD) and Constantinople II (553 AD).

⁵⁸ Schaff, Philip, *Creeeds of Christendom*, vol. II, 62-63.

⁵⁹ The heretical belief that Christ only possessed one will is called “monothelism.” The third Council of Constantinople (680 AD) affirmed that Christ had two wills unopposed, with His human will in submission to the divine will.

- This view of Christ renders love meaningful and self sufficient within the context of a triune God. God's love needs nothing external to His nature to act as its object.

Natures Clarified

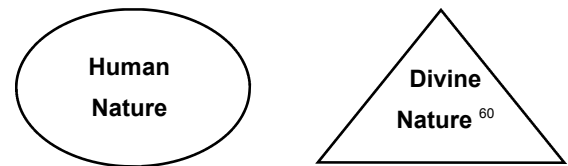
The distinction between Jesus as God and Jesus as man is as follows:

Jesus as God	Jesus as Man
Infinite knowledge	Finite knowledge
Omni-predicates	Limited to time and space
Unchanging	Changing
No beginning	Beginning (birth)
Never dies	Died on the cross

III. Heretical Views of Christ's Nature

A. Nestorianism

This heretical doctrine was founded by Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople (428 AD). It denied the *union* of Christ's human and divine natures. The two natures do not have mixture or contact. In other words, the person of Jesus Christ and the person of the Son of God are viewed as two distinct persons (instead of two natures united in one person). In August of 430 AD Pope Celestine condemned Nestorius, and Cyril pronounced twelve anathemas against him in November of the same year. In 431 AD, the General Council of Ephesus deposed Nestorius and condemned his doctrine. Five years later he was banished to upper Egypt where he probably died.

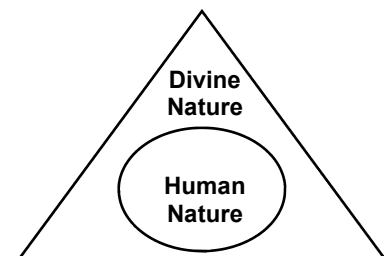


Reasons for Rejecting Nestorianism:

- There is no way to account for biblical statements that attribute God's metaphysical (incommunicable omni-predicates) attributes to Christ (immutability Heb 13:6-8; omniscience John 2:23-25; omnipresence Matt 18:20; omnipotence Matt 28:18 cf. Col 1:15-17). There is no way to explain the interaction between divine and human nature.
- If the death of Jesus Christ was only an act of a human person, it would not be efficacious. It was "who" Jesus was that made the sacrifice on the cross propitious (satisfactory). Sins committed against a sinless and Holy God requires an equally sinless and holy sacrifice (justice) (see Hebrews 2:14-18).
- Nestorianism was condemned at Council of Ephesus (431 AD).
- Scripture affirms Christ's human and divine nature were united (not confused) in one person (Philippians 2:1-11; Col 1:19; 2:9).

B. Eutychianism

Eutychianism (named after Eutychus) is a fifth-century heresy that reacted to Nestorianism. It is sometimes called "monophysitism." *Monos* means "single" and *physis* means "nature," hence this doctrine views the person of Christ as having a divine and human nature which are mixed and confused, thus forming a unique single nature. In other words, they denied the *distinction* between the two natures.



Reasons for rejecting Eutychianism (monophysitism):

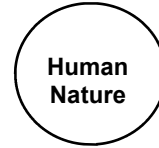
- It is a contradiction impossible that Christ has one "infinite-finite" nature. The natures are both distinct and mutually exclusive.
- Christ would be neither fully man nor fully God. Hence, He could not redeem as man or as God.
- The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) affirmed the orthodox position of Christ's two natures united without confusion in one person.

⁶⁰ The following triangle/circle charts developed by Norman Geisler, class notes, Southern Evangelical Seminary, N.C.

1. Scripture affirms the distinction of natures within Christ (John 5:17-18; 1 Tim 2:5; Hebrews 2:14).

C. Arianism

Arianism is a fourth-century heresy that was held by Arius (a North African Priest-Presbyter of Alexandria) who posited that Christ was the first and highest created being without possessing a divine nature (not of *homoousia*). Modern day Jehovah's Witnesses have many similarities with Arianism. Athanasius (fourth-century Bishop of Alexandria) was one who vigorously opposed Arius' doctrine



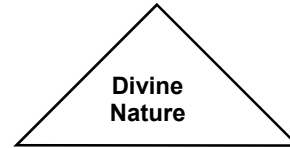
No
Divine Nature

Reasons for rejecting Arianism:

1. Arianism seems to ignore or misinterpret clear passages that reveal Christ's deity (Zech 12:10; John 1:1, 14; 5:17-18; 8:58; Col 1:15-19; 2:9; Phil 2:6). (Explain "pet texts" used by J.W.'s)
2. If Jesus was *only* a man (for He would lack the perfection needed to represent man to God and lack the perfection needed to represent God to man), He could not satisfy God's wrath and atone for the sin of the world.
3. Arianism was condemned at the Council of Nicaea (325 AD).
4. Arianism does not account for the omnipredicates (incommunicable attributes of God) inherent in Christ's person (Mt 18:20; John 2:24-25; 3:13; Heb 13:8).
5. Arianism misunderstands the phrase "Son of God" to be referring to *heteroousia* instead of *homoousia*.
6. There are philosophical problems regarding the *object* of "love" within a Unitarian model of God.
7. Arianism has polytheistic tendencies.

D. Docetism

Docetism is the late first-century view that denied Jesus' suffering and humanity. These aspects of Christ are seen as imaginary or apparent, but not characteristics of a real incarnation. They affirm Christ's deity but deny His humanity. Many from the Gnostic tradition (Valentinus) (viewed matter as evil) are associated with this view.



No Humanity
or Nature

Reasons for rejecting Docetism:

1. If Christ were not human He could not redeem humanity.
2. They ignore clear passages of Scripture that indicate Jesus had a real body (Isaiah 9:6; John 1:14; 2:21; Mt 1:2; Luke 24:39), experienced real limitations of humanity (Mt 4:2; John 4:6-7), called a man by others (John 19:5; Acts 17:31; 1 Tim 2:5), grew as a man (Luke 2:52; 3:23), had human names (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55), and Jesus was handled by others (Luke 8:43-47; John 20:27; 1 John 1:1-3).
3. The docetic view of Christ is in direct conflict with 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7 which affirms that Christ came in the flesh and remains in the flesh (perfect participle/present participle).

VI. Validation of Christ's Divine Nature

A. Christ's miraculous and sinless life

1. Luke 23:14, 15, 47
2. Heb 4:15
3. 1 Pet 1:18-19

Description	Prophecy	Fulfillment
1. Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Mt 1:8, 24, 25
2. Son of God	Ps 2:7	Mt 3:17
3. Seed of Abraham	Gen 22:18	Mt 1:1; Gal 3:16
4. House of David	Jeremiah 23:5	Luke 3:23, 31
5. Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Mt 2:1
6. His pre-existence	Micah 5:2	Col 1:17
7. Shall be Immanuel	Isaiah 7:14	Mt 1:23
8. Shall be a prophet	Deut 18:18	Mt 21:11
9. Priest	Ps 110:4	Heb 3:1; 5:5, 6
10. Teacher of parables	Ps 78:2	Mt 13:34
11. Enter Jerusalem on a donkey	Zech 9:9	Luke 19:35
12. Stone of Stumbling	Ps 118:22	1 Pet 2:7
13. Light to the Gentiles	Isaiah 60:3	Acts 13:47, 48a
14. Resurrection	Ps 16:10	Acts 2:31
15. Betrayed by friend	Ps 41:9	Mt 10:4
16. Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zech 11:12	Mt 26:15
17. Money thrown in God's house	Zech 11:13b	Mt 27:5a
18. Forsaken by disciples	Zech 13:7	Mk 14:50
19. Silent before accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Mt 27:12-19
20. Wounded and bruised	Isaiah 53:5	Mt 27:26
21. Smitten/spat upon	Isaiah 50:6	Mt 26:67
22. Crucified with thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Mt 27:38
23. Made intercession for His persecutors	Isaiah 53:12	Luke 23:34
24. Rejected by His own	Isaiah 53:3	John 7:5, 48
25. Hated without cause	Ps 69:4	John 15:25
25. Garment parted and lots cast	Ps 22:18	John 19:23-24
26. His forsaken cry	Ps 22:1	Mt 27:46
27. Bones not broken	Ps 34:20	John 19:33
28. His side pierced	Zech 12:10	John 19:34
29. Darkness covers land	Amos 8:9	Mt 27:45
30. Buried in rich man's tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Mt 27:57-60

1. Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Mt 2:1
2. Preceded by messenger	Isaiah 40:3	Mt 3:1-3
3. Enter Jerusalem on a donkey	Zech 9:9	Luke 19:35
4. Betrayed by friend	Ps 41:9	Mt 10:4
5. Hands and feet pierced	Ps 22:16	Luke 23:33
6. Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zech 11:12	Mt 26:15
7. Money thrown in God's house	Zech 11:13b	Mt 27:5a
8. Price given for potters field	Zech 11:13b	Mt 27:7
9. Dumb before accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Mt 27:12
10. Crucified with thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Mt 27:38

Note: Peter Stoner, in *Science Speaks*, applied the science of *probability* to several biblical prophecies:

Stoner asserts, “. . . we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10¹⁷. That would be 1 in 100, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000.”⁶¹ Stoner considers 48 prophecies and says “. . . we find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10¹⁵⁷.”⁶²

C. His resurrection from the dead (John 2:19, 21; 20:27-28)

(See the section titled “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ”)

VII. Answering Objections

A. If God is a spirit, He cannot have a “Son”

1. This statement confuses *functional* sonship with *biological* sonship. Jesus is the Son of God in a *hierarchical* sense not *procreative* sense. Christ's sonship is *relational* not *physical*.
2. Agreed, God cannot have a biological Son. Spirit (John 4:24) cannot *procreate* like humans due to their lack of physical capacities (Mt 22:30).
3. The Son of God did not come into being like a human son; however, Jesus' human nature did come into being through God's miraculous intervention. He was eternally the Son. The Son existed before the world began (Heb 1:2; Col 1:13, 14, 17), and continued to be the Son in the Old Testament (Proverbs 30:4; Ps 45:5-7) and New Testament (John 5:23). Further, if there was a time when the Son was not, by the same logic one must conclude there also was a time when God was not the Father.

B. If Jesus is the Son, how then could He be equal to God?

1. The term “Son” refers to function and position within the triune Godhead indicating “submission”. It does not refer to an inferior quality of being. For example, although the wife is under her head (husband), she is of no less a quality of being, it is merely God's order and structure among God, Christ, men, and women (Gal 3:28, I Corinthians 11:1-12).
2. The term “Son of God” is often misunderstood. This term “son of . . .” can refer to “offspring of,” but more importantly its theological meaning is “of the order of.” For example, the “sons of the prophets” means “of the order of the prophets” (1 Kings 20:35), “sons of the singers means of the order of singers” (Nehemiah 12:28), likewise, the phrase “Son of God” means “of the order of God” and represents a claim to deity.⁶³
3. Ancient Semitics and Orientals used the phrase to indicate *likeness or sameness of nature and equality of being*. The Jews of the Jesus' day understood Jesus' claim to be the Son (John 5:17-23) the equivalent of being equal with God (John 5:17-18). This claim was so radical, the Jews believed Christ should be put to death (John 19:7)⁶⁴.

C. It is impossible and contradictory for Christ to be God and man since there cannot be an “infinite-finite” being

1. True, there cannot be an “infinite-finite” being *at the same time and in the same sense* (check law of non-contradiction). The incarnation does not violate this law because Christ had two distinct natures that differed from each other united in one person, one finite (man) and the other infinite (divine). It would only be a contradiction if Christ had two differing natures in *only one* nature.

⁶¹The above information was taken from Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Vol. I (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), 167. H. Harold Hartzler, and an Executive Council of the American Scientific Affiliation found Stoner's book to be accurate and dependable in regard to the scientific material (including his use of the principles of probability) presented therein.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Rhodes, Ron, *Reasoning From the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1993), 242.

⁶⁴Ibid. 243. Also see Charles Ryrie, *Basic Christian Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), 248.

D. Christ is not fully man because He could not sin (impeccability)

1. Some say Christ *could* have sinned. Whenever one asks this type of question, they must direct the question at each of Jesus' *two natures*: Christ as God and Christ as man. Christ as God *could not* sin; however, Christ as man could sin but chose not to.
2. Some assert, that a denial of His possibility to sin would be to deny Jesus' *free choice*, which is a perfection God gave to all men (even Adam while in a perfect state before the fall). If Jesus did not have freedom, He was less than a perfect man.

E. An “unchanging” God (Mal 3:6) could not become man since becoming a man (Phil 2:7) implies “change”

1. True, God cannot “change” His essential nature to become a man with a human nature. However, the second person of the Trinity did not change or annihilate his divine nature; He merely *added* a human nature. Hence God can remain unchanging and at the same time possess a distinct human nature.

Sources and Books on the Person of Jesus Christ:

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

Elwell, Walter, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker)

Enns, Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody)

Geisler, Norman L., ed., *What Augustine Says* (Baker)

House, Wayne, H. *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Zondervan)

Rhodes, Ron. *Christ Before the Manger*

W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*

Luis Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology*

Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the “capstone in the arch of Christianity, if it is removed all else crumbles.” Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Christ. It is the very foundation upon which the Christian Faith is built (1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Ephesians 2:19-22; Romans 10:9-10) and without the resurrection there would be no Christianity (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19). It is the distinguishing event that not only confirms *what* Jesus taught (Hebrews 2:1-4; Mark 16:19-20), but *who* he is (Son of God, Romans 1:4).

- I. Introduction
- II. Alternative theories of Christ's resurrection
- III. The *historicity* of Christ's resurrection (time-space event)
 - a. The *integrity and abundance* of the eyewitnesses and contemporaries
 - b. The *physical and material nature* of Christ's resurrection body (not invisible)
 - c. The *numerical identity* (sameness) of Christ's resurrection body
- IV. Answering *objections* and *misunderstandings*

I. Introduction

A. What is a resurrection?

1. The Greek word for “resurrection” is *anastasis* (386) which is derived from another Greek word *anistemi* (450) which literally means “to stand up.”
2. The resurrection is different than a “resuscitation” such as Lazarus' in John 11. A resurrection is no less than resuscitation; however, it [resurrection] exceeds it in *quality* (kind of life) and *quantity* (duration of life).
3. The resurrection should be distinguished from a “reincarnation” in that a resurrection is a change *in* body and reincarnation is a change *of* body (see chart).

Reincarnation	Resuscitation	Resurrection

The resurrected body will possess several characteristics that are *distinct* from reincarnation, they are:

1. It will be a *physical* body (Luke 24:39; John 20:27-29 cf. John 2:19 and 1 John 3:2)
2. It will have *identity* (same genetic code) with the body that died (1 Corinthians 15:37-38)
3. The *corruptible* will be changed to *incorruption* (1 Corinthians 15:50-53)
4. Died in *dishonor*, will be raised in *glory* (1 Corinthians 15:43)
5. Died in *weakness*, but raised in *power* (1 Corinthians 15:43)
6. Died a *natural body*, raised a *spiritual body* (1 Corinthians 15:44 cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

B. What are the critics saying about Christ's resurrection?

Rudolph Bultmann (20th century German theologian)

The resurrection "is not an event of past history . . . An historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable. . . . Such a miracle is not otherwise known to mythology"⁶⁵

Robert W. Funk (founder of the Jesus Seminar)

"To ask whether the resurrection really took place - is an idle question. Besides, to the modern mind a mythical event like the resuscitation of a corpse is simply incredible"⁶⁶

John Dominic Crossan (Former Catholic Priest who co-founded the Jesus Seminar and Professor at DePaul University)

"Jesus lived on in the hearts of his followers . . . but he did not physically rise from the dead. Taken down from the cross, his body was probably eaten by wild dogs"⁶⁷

"With regard to the body of Jesus, by Easter morning, those who cared did not know where it was, and those who knew did not care"⁶⁸

C. Why is it important to defend the resurrection?

The Apostle Paul lists 7 consequences that follow a denial of Christ's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:14-19)

1. Our preaching of the gospel is in vain (v 14)
2. Our faith is also in vain (v 14)
3. We are false witnesses of God, namely, for telling others that Christ was raised from the dead when he was not (v 15)
4. Our faith is worthless (v 17)
5. We are still in our sins (v 18)
6. Those who have died believing in Christ have perished (v 18)
7. We are of men most to be pitied (v 19)

D. Further consequences are:

1. The Bible is in error
2. Jesus is a liar
3. The prophecies have failed
4. It would be doubtful that Jesus is God and that his teachings were true

⁶⁵ Bultmann, Rudolph, *Kerygma and Myth* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 38-40.
⁶⁶ Funk, Robert W., *Honest to Jesus: Jesus For a New Millennium* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 257.
⁶⁷ *Newsweek*, April 4, 1994.
⁶⁸ Crossan, John Dominic, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 158.

E. Why do Christians need to defend Christ's resurrected body as being historical, material, and identical?

1. Historicity

- a. First, it must be *historical* because there would be no way to provide evidential proof to confirm the teachings and deity of Christ (Luke 24:39; Acts 1:3).
- b. Lastly, the historical and the spiritual are inseparably connected (John 3:12; Rom 4:25; 10:9-10).

2. Materiality

- a. First, an empty tomb no more proves a resurrection than a body missing from the morgue. The *Materiality* of Christ's resurrected body adds to the weight of historical evidence by providing empirical verifiability.
- b. Second, without a *material* resurrection there would be no identity (sameness of body) with the pre-resurrection body. It wouldn't be one's *own* body, but "another" body.

3. Sameness of Body (Identity)

- a. First, if Christ's resurrected body was not the same body that died on the cross, Christ has not been raised. An immaterial resurrected body with different genetic characteristics from Christ's old body is a different body. Paul's seed analogy in 1 Corinthians 15:37-38 strongly implies a material and genetic identity with the pre-resurrection body. 1 Corinthians 15:42 says, "The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable..." The body that is resurrected is the same body that was sown, yet there is changes *in* it.⁶⁹
- b. **How can we defend Christ's body as being the same when Paul talks about changes that occur in the body?**
 - i. Paul is correct, however, "sameness" or "identity" in Christ's body does militate against change, for change clearly occurred to Christ, however, this change is a change in body, not a change of body. It is a change in *secondary qualities* (wrinkles, tan, injuries) not in *primary qualities* (genetic code, DNA). It is a change in *accidents* (acquired effects) not in *substance* (human spirit/body unity). In other words, it is a change in what you *have* not *what* or *who* you *are*.

II. Alternative Theories to the Resurrection⁷⁰

A. The Swoon Theory

According to this theory, Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but rather swooned, fainted, or feigned death by a drug induced metabolism. Jesus is said to have later revived in the cool damp tomb until he was strong enough to leave.

Problems with this theory:

1. It fails to consider the extent of Jesus' physical condition
 - a. No sleep the night before (Mk 14:32-41)
 - b. He could not bear the weight of the cross (Mt 27:32)
 - c. He was scourged, mocked, and beaten (Mt 26:27-28; 27:26-31)
 - d. His hands and feet had been nailed to the cross (Luke 24:39)
 - e. His side was pierced by a spear (John 19:34)
 - f. He hung on the cross from 9 am until 3 pm (Mk 15:25, 33,34)
 - g. In 1986, medical scholars wrote about the gravity of Jesus wounds:

"Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge"⁷¹
2. It fails to consider those who were witnesses of his death
 - a. Pilate ordered his soldiers to check and make sure Jesus was dead before burial (Mk 15:44-45)
 - b. The Roman soldiers pronounced Jesus dead (John 19:33-34)
 - c. Jesus was embalmed and wrapped with nearly one hundred pounds of material (John 19:39-40)

⁶⁹ N.L. Geisler, *Battle for the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *The Journal of the American Medical Society* 255:11 (21 March 1986), 1463.

- d. A heavy stone was rolled in front of the tomb (John 20:1)
- e. Finally, John the apostle witnessed Jesus' death (John 19:30)
- 3. It fails to consider non-Christian testimony by historians who record Jesus' death ⁷²
 - a. Roman historian, **Tacitus**, asserts that "Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus" ⁷³
 - b. **Josephus** makes reference to Jesus being handed over to "Pilate" and later being "condemned to the cross" ⁷⁴
 - c. The **Talmud** records "on the eve of Passover Yeshu was hanged" ⁷⁵
 - d. In the second-century, **Lucian**, documents Jesus' death when he writes: "The Christians, you know, worship a *man* to this day - the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account" ⁷⁶

B. The Hallucination Theory

According to the hallucination theory, those who reported seeing Jesus after his death were actually not seeing correctly, but rather were hallucinating and probably seeing what they wanted to see in their psyche.

Problems with this theory:

1. It fails to consider the abundant number of witnesses. Hallucinations are private, individual and subjective.
 - a. Christ appeared to over 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) at the same time and place
 - b. He appeared to all the apostles at once (Acts 1:4-8)
2. It fails to consider that Hallucinations usually occur once and only last a few seconds, minutes, and rarely hours.
 - a. If Christ was a Hallucination it would be the longest recorded one in history at "forty days" (Acts 1:3)
 - b. Jesus appeared for prolonged periods of time holding extended conversations (John 21:3-23)
3. It fails to consider that the disciples *touched* and *ate* with Him.
 - a. Showed Himself to Doubting Thomas (John 20:26-30)
 - b. Showed disciples His hands and feet (Luke 24:39)
 - c. Ate broiled fish with disciples (Luke 24:43)
4. It fails to give an adequate answer for the empty tomb (Luke 24:2-3).
5. If the apostles were hallucinating and spreading their story contrary to fact, the Jewish and Roman authorities could have easily squelched the uprising by producing the body of Jesus.

The Conspiracy Theory

According to this theory, either Jewish authorities, the Roman guards, or the disciples conspired to steal the body of Jesus.

Problems with this theory:

1. If Jewish authorities stole the body why didn't they charge the disciples with the theft or produce the body to discredit the early church witness to the resurrection? No motive.
2. The Roman Guards wouldn't take the body for fear of the death penalty. Besides it is unlikely that the Romans had a motive for stealing the body. They wouldn't steal the body because it would be counterproductive for maintaining peace in the region.
3. The disciples didn't steal the body because they later died for what they believed to be true (i.e. the resurrection). Indeed, people do die for what they have been deceived into *thinking* is the truth (e.g. Jonestown, Heavens Gate, Solar Temple Cults, Islamic extremists) but do not die for what they know to be a lie.

⁷² For more information regarding non-Christian testimony concerning Christ see Bruce, F.F. *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

⁷³ Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, trans. by Michael Grant (New York: Penguin Classics, 1989), 365.

⁷⁴ Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. by William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1981), 379.

⁷⁵ Quoted from Habermas, Gary R., *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin: College Press, 1996), 203, who quoted from the reading in *The Babylonian Talmud*, trans. by I. Epstein (London: Socino, 1935), vol. III *Sanhedrin* 43a, 281. Also see Galatian 3:13 and Luke 23:39 for the usage of the word "hanged." Can refer to crucifixion.

⁷⁶ Lucian, *The Death of Peregrine*, 11-13, in *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, trans. by H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), vol. 4.

4. This theory portrays the disciples as schemers who desired to capitalize on the situation. This is contrary to their teaching and high moral character
5. It doesn't account for the twelve appearances of Christ over a span of forty days to more than five hundred people (I Corinthians 15:1-15).

D. **The Wrong Tomb Theory**

According to this view, Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the wrong tomb and discovered it empty. This view holds that early morning darkness, emotional trauma, and wishful thinking can account for this mistake.⁷⁷

Problems with this theory:

1. If Mary went to the wrong tomb because it was dark, the authorities could have found the right tomb in the daylight. Peter and John did successfully (John 20:1-5).
2. If it was so dark that Mary couldn't see, why was the gardener already working? Gardeners rarely work before dawn.
3. This theory does not account for the appearances of Christ or for the empty tomb.

III. **The Historicity of the Resurrection**

In showing that the resurrection of Jesus was a historical event that occurred in time and space, one would do well in presenting reliable eyewitness testimony, empirical verification (i.e. empty tomb and materiality of the body), and evidence indicating it was the same body.

A. **Eyewitness Testimony (credibility and abundance)**

1. First, the authors of the gospels (Matthew, Peter [through Mark], Luke, John) claimed to have been eyewitnesses or to have gathered first hand information by consulting contemporaries of the events (Luke 1:1-3; 3:1 John 15:27; 19:35; 21:24; Acts 2:22; 26:24-26; 2 Pet 1:16; 1 John 1:3).
2. The general presumption that the witnesses are lying is self-defeating, since an inversion of the "guilty until proven innocent" dictum that governs the judicial branch of government, historians, and all of human relations would lead to a breakdown in society.⁷⁸
3. The presence of adverse or contrary witness accounts would have hampered the spread of Christianity.⁷⁹ The disciples stayed in Jerusalem for some time after Jesus' death and resurrection (Acts 1-4). This would not make sense if the disciples were not reporting accurately the events that recently transpired.
4. There is an absence of written evidence from the first-century adverse to the gospel testimonies. Yet, as has been demonstrated, Tacitus, Seutonius, and Josephus provide abundant testimony that corresponds to the gospel portraits of Jesus' words and works.
5. If the New Testament picture of Jesus was not based on eyewitness testimony, how could a consistent tradition about him ever been formed and written?⁸⁰ Otherwise, everyone would have their own version of what happened. Yet we see a consistency between each writer of the epistles and Gospels.
6. To assume that the gospels were not written by credible eyewitnesses or contemporaries leaves several questions unanswered. How could the apostles succeed in Jerusalem if the portrait of Jesus they presented was untrue? Why would they have begun there in the first place?
7. Jesus' death was witnessed by the apostle John (John 19:26), Jesus' mother (John 19:27), as well as by the crowd, soldiers, and others standing nearby (John 19:24; Mk 15:40, 41).⁸¹
8. The gospel record of Christ's resurrection is attested by several *eyewitnesses*. Jesus appeared to:
 - a. Mary Magdalene (John 20:1)
 - b. Mary the mother of James (Mt 28:2)
 - c. Salome and Joanna (Luke 24:10)
 - d. Several other women from Galilee (Luke 23:55).
 - e. Peter (Luke 24:34)
 - f. Cleopas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32).
 - g. The ten apostles in Jerusalem (John 20:24)

⁷⁷ For a refutation of this theory see Morrison, Frank, *Who Moved the Stone?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 97ff.

⁷⁸ Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*, 139.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 138.

⁸¹ Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 314.

- h. The eleven when Thomas was present a week later (John 20:26-29)
- i. The seven disciples on the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-24)
- j. The eleven on the mountain in Galilee (Mt 28:16-20)
- k. The five hundred at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6)
- l. His brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7a)
- m. The disciples on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:4-12).

If one chooses to reject the eyewitness testimony of Christ's resurrection, he must also reject the eyewitness testimony of most ancient events.

Further Considerations

Not only was there an overwhelming number of eyewitnesses to the events contained in the gospels, the nature of their testimony places it beyond reasonable doubt.⁸² Several factors indicate this contention.

1. The witnesses were in most cases independent of each other with at least twelve different appearances occurring over forty days (Acts 1:3).⁸³
2. There was an initial disinclination to believe what they saw, which would eliminate the possibility of hallucination (cf. John 20:25 f.; Luke 24:15 f.; Mt 28:17 f.).⁸⁴
3. The divergent perspectives of the authors argues strongly for the independence and integrity of the witnesses. Further, the apostles' truthfulness and integrity is reflected in their writings. They did not tolerate lying (Acts 5:1 f.), they refused to be bought with money (Acts 8:18), they remained steadfast in their testimony when facing persecution (2 Corinthians. 11:23 f.) even to the point of martyrdom.⁸⁵

A Harvard Lawyer's Assessment

Simon Greenleaf, after examining the evidence, wrote of the testimony given by the gospel authors. Concerning Matthew, he writes,

Matthew must have been familiar with a great variety of forms of fraud, imposture, cunning, and deception, and must have become habitually distrustful, scrutinizing, and cautious; and, of course, much less likely to have been deceived in regard to many of the facts in our Lord's ministry, extraordinary as they were, which fell under his observation. This circumstance shows both the sincerity and the wisdom of Jesus in selecting him for an eyewitness of his conduct, and adds great weight to the testimony of this evangelist.⁸⁶

Concerning the testimony of Mark he records,

Peter's agency in the narrative of Mark is asserted by all ancient writers, and is confirmed by the fact that his humility is conspicuous in every part of it, where anything is or might be related of him; his weakness and fall being fully exposed, while things which might redound to his honor, are either omitted or but slightly mentioned; that scarcely any transaction of Jesus is related, at which Peter was not present, and that all are related with that circumstantial minuteness which belongs to the testimony of an eyewitness. We may, therefore, regard the Gospel of Mark as an original composition, written at the dictation of Peter, and consequently as another original narrative of the life, miracles, and doctrines of our Lord.⁸⁷

Concerning the testimony of Luke he adds,

If, therefore, Luke's Gospel were to be regarded only as the work of a contemporary historian, it would be entitled to our confidence. But it is more than this. It is the result of careful inquiry and examination, made by a person of science, intelligence, and education, concerning subjects which he was perfectly competent to investigate, and as to many of which he was peculiarly skilled . . . and perhaps an eye-witness . . . whom it would not be for the interest nor safety of the writer to deceive or mislead.⁸⁸

Elsewhere, Greenleaf writes of Luke,

Such a document certainly possesses all the moral attributes of an inquest of office, or of any other official investigation of facts; and as such is entitled to be adduced as original, competent, and satisfactory evidence of the matters it contains.⁸⁹

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid. 315.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists*, 21.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 23.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 25-26.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 26.

Concerning John he asserts,

He was the only apostle who followed Jesus to the cross, he was the first of them at the sepulcher, and he was present at the several appearances of our Lord after his resurrection. These circumstances, together with his intimate friendship with the mother of Jesus, especially qualify him to give a circumstantial and authentic account of the life of his master.⁹⁰

B. The Evidence that Christ's Body is Physical and Material⁹¹

1. Jesus' body was physically recognized (Mt 28:7, 17; Mk 16:7; Luke 24:24; John 20:14, 20; 1 Corinthians 9:1)
2. Jesus offered it to be touched (John 20:17, 27; Mt 28:9)
3. Jesus ate physical food (Luke 24:30, 41-43; John 21:12-13)
4. His body was made of "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39)
5. It was seen and heard with physical senses (Mt 28:17; Luke 24:31; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:5-8)
6. Jesus' body will be recognized at the second coming (Rev 1:7; Acts 1:11)
7. Jesus' burial clothes were disturbed (i.e. face cloth was folded) (John 20:6-7)

Grammatical evidence for the materiality of Christ's body

1. The Greek word for body, *soma*, always means a physical body when used of human beings (see Robert Gundry, *Soma*)
2. John warns against those who deny that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh," (1 John 4:2). Again, he warns against those who "do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh," (2 John 7). When John refers to "has come," he uses the perfect tense (*eleluthota*) which indicates that Jesus *has come* in the flesh and *continues/abides* after his resurrection in the flesh. 2 John 7 is similar as John uses the present middle participle (of *erchomai*) which treats the incarnation as a *continuing* fact.⁹² Any denial of this would be a post-resurrectional "docetism."⁹³
3. John uses the same Greek word (*sarx*) to describe the "flesh" of Jesus' incarnate human body (John 1:14) as he does to describe His resurrection body (Luke 24:39; Acts 2:31)

C. The Evidence that Christ's Body was the same body

1. The tomb where Jesus was buried is empty (Mt 28:6)
2. The "stigmata" (crucifixion scars) shows it was the same body (Luke. 24:39; John. 20:25-28)
3. Jesus prophesied that it would be the same body (John 2:19-22)
4. Jesus did not see corruption after death (Acts 2:31)
5. Paul's "seed" comparison shows its the same body (1 Corinthians. 15:35-44) (notice pronouns "it" and "this")

Early and Medieval Church Believed in the Resurrection of the Flesh

Irenaeus (c. AD 130-200)

. . . the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; . . . and the resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord. . .⁹⁴

Justin Martyr (c. AD 100-165)

There are some who maintain that even Jesus Himself appeared only as spiritual, and not in flesh, but merely the appearance of flesh: these persons seek to rob the flesh of the promise.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Ibid. 26-27.

⁹¹ N.L. Geisler, Apologetics class notes, Southern Evangelical Seminary, 1996.

⁹² N.L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 34, 222. Also see A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933), vol. 6, 253, and J.A. Schep, *The Nature of the Resurrection Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 71-72. In light of 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7, those who *deny* that Christ has come in the flesh (in the past) and remains in the flesh (body) in the present have adopted a doctrine of "anti-Christ."

⁹³ Docetism is from the Greek word *dokein* which means "to appear" or "to seem." It is the belief that Christ's humanity only *seemed* real but actually was not. The opposite of Docetism would be Arianism (a belief held by modern day Jehovah's Witnesses) which stressed Christ's humanity at the expense of His deity.

⁹⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.10.1 in *The Apostolic Fathers of the Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted from the 1885 ed.), vol. 1, 330., from N.L.G., *Battle for the Resurrection*.

⁹⁵ Justin Martyr, *On the Resurrection, Fragments* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, sec. 10, 298.

Tertullian (c. AD 160-230)

He rose again the third day; . . . will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life . . . and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of there flesh.⁹⁶

Epiphanius (fourth-century)

For the Word became flesh, . . . the same suffered in the flesh; rose again; and went up into heaven in the same body, sat down gloriously at the right hand of the Father; is coming in the same body in glory to judge the quick and the dead; . . .⁹⁷

Augustine (c. 354-430)

The world has come to the belief that the earthly body of Christ was received up into heaven. Already both the learned and the unlearned have believed in the resurrection of the flesh . . .⁹⁸

Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274)

. . . signs were enough to show both the genuineness and the glory of the resurrection. His body was genuine because it was solid: *touch me and see for yourselves: spirits don't have the flesh and blood you see I have; it was human*; . . . it was Christ's own body, as was shown by His wounds . . .⁹⁹

IV. Answering Objections to the Bodily Resurrection¹⁰⁰

A. When Paul calls the resurrection body a “spiritual body” he means an invisible body (1 Corinthians 15:44)

1. “Spiritual” means in “**source**,” not in “substance.” Means “**immortal**,” not “immaterial.” It refers to a spirit dominated body which draws its sustaining power from heaven, not lacking matter.
2. The Greek word for “spiritual” (*pneumatikon*) can be translated “**supernatural**,” (1 Corinthians 10:4). The resurrection body will be one that is characterized by the supernatural (rapid travel, never hungry, tired, etc.).
3. The same word “spiritual” (*pneumatikon*) is used of **material objects** such as “spiritual food,” “spiritual drink,” “spiritual rock” (1 Corinthians 10:3-4), and “spiritual man,” (1 Corinthians 2:15) (cf. Ex 17 and Num 20).
4. The Greek word for “body” (*soma*) always refers to a **physical body** when used of human beings in the New Testament (Mk 15:43; Luke 23:55)

B. Jesus Only Appeared to Believers

1. Because Jesus was **selective** does not mean He was invisible.
2. This claim is untrue; Jesus appeared to **Saul** who was one of the worst persecutors of the church at that time (Acts 9).
3. Jesus also appeared to James, Jesus' younger brother, who apparently never believed in Jesus during His lifetime (Mk 3:21, 31-35; John 7:1-10)

C. Luke Calls the Resurrection a “Vision” (Luke 24:23)

1. When Luke uses the word “vision” he is not applying it to the resurrection but to the women who had “seen a vision of angels” (v 23b) at Jesus' tomb.
2. The Bible uses the word “appearance” or “appeared” (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:6) when referring to Jesus' post resurrection body. The word “appearance” differs from “vision” (2 Corinthians 12) in that the former (appearance) speaks of a **physical manifestation** whereas the latter (vision) refers to a **spiritual experience with no physical manifestation**.
3. The resurrection is never called a *vision* in the gospels or the epistles.

D. Christ's Body Couldn't be Material because the Bible says “He Appeared” (Luke 24:34)

1. This claim confuses *what* appeared with *way* it appeared. What appeared is **material**; the way it appeared was **supernatural**.

⁹⁶ Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*, Chapter XIII in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, 249.

⁹⁷ Epiphanius, *Two Creeds of Epiphanius: Second Formula* in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983), 37.

⁹⁸ St. Augustine, *City of God* (New York: Image Books, 1958), 509.

⁹⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. by Timothy McDermott (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1989), 536.

¹⁰⁰ Based on Geisler, *Battle for the Resurrection*. See his work for complete answers to these objections.

2. Luke uses the Greek word *ophthe* which is aorist passive. This passage could be read “allowed himself to be seen” which indicates that Jesus took the initiative and made himself visible in order to “come into view.” It does not necessarily mean that what was *invisible* by nature came to be *visible* (see examples in 2 Chronicles 25:21; Acts 7:26). In other words, it means to move from a place where one is not seen to a place where one is seen.
3. This word (appeared) shouldn’t cause one to jump to unnecessary conclusions since the same word is **used of pre-resurrection bodies** (Acts 7:26).
4. The fact that Jesus appeared shows that His resurrection body **could be seen** with the human eye (*horaō*), hence indicating empirical verification of materiality. This word can be used of seeing a vision but often means to see with the naked eye (John 6:36; 14:9).

E. **Jesus Appeared and Disappeared Immediately**

1. Because Jesus disappeared from human sight does not mean. He became immaterial. Miracles by nature are **immediate** (Mt 8:3; Mk 2:10-12).
2. Philip was suddenly taken away in a physical body (Acts 8:39).
3. Jesus’ resurrection body had **more power**, but did not become less physical.
4. The discovery of **Quantum laws** have opened the door to the possibility of matter (Jesus’ body) being transported miraculously to another location.

William Lane Craig asserts, “Now since macro-scopic objects [i.e. objects visible to the eye], like the human body . . . are composed of sub-atomic particles governed by quantum laws, there is some non-zero probability that each of the particles composing the body should travel to some distant location, and if all the particles did this in concert, the whole body would be “miraculously” transported to another location. . . Given quantum indeterminacy, there is at least *some* chance of an event’s occurring, regardless of how bizarre it might be.”¹⁰¹

F. **Jesus Walked Through Closed Doors (John 20:19)**

1. This is an **unwarranted assumption** since the passage does not reveal how Jesus entered the room. Jesus or an angel could have opened the door (cf. Acts 12:10).
2. Jesus did not have to become invisible to get into the room. Physical bodies (matter) are mostly empty space. The proper **alignment of particles** would allow for the possibility of Christ’s body to pass through the wall or door with no problem.
3. Because Jesus can perform miracles (like walking through doors) does not mean that He is immaterial. He walked on water before the resurrection (John 6:16-20) in a material body.

G. **The Bible Says “Flesh and Blood Cannot Enter” Heaven (1 Corinthians 15:50)**

1. This is a Hebrew idiom meaning “mortal humanity” (see Mt 16:17) not that a physical body can’t exist in heaven.
2. The context shows that Paul is referring to “corruptible” flesh and blood (v 50b-53).
3. The resurrection body has incorruptible flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).

H. **The Bible Says Jesus Appeared in a “Different Form” (Mk 16:12-13)**

1. The “different form” was from an **observational perspective**. The parallel passage in Luke 24:16 says it was due to the fact that “their eyes were restrained so they did not know Him.” Later in that same chapter Luke reported “that their eyes were opened” (24:31) after Jesus left. The miracle was not in the Jesus’ body but rather in the disciples understanding.
2. Must be a physical form since He sat at the table, broke bread, and gave it to them. Spirits do not have hands or physical bodies (Luke 24:39-40).

I. **The Resurrection body will be invisible since Jesus said we will be “Like the Angels” (Mt 22:30)**

1. The context of the passage (marriage in the resurrection) suggests that Jesus is referring to the deathlessness and sexlessness (Luke 20:36) of angels and not to some bodiless existence.
2. The context also allows for Jesus to be indicating that procreation (offspring) will not be necessary to sustain life after the resurrection.

¹⁰¹ Craig, William Lane, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 141. Brackets mine.

V. Conclusion

The resurrection of Christ is one of the most well documented historical events of ancient history. The attempts to explain away the empty tomb by naturalistic processes have been inadequate on several counts leaving Christ's bodily resurrection as the best solution to account for the facts. Not only does the resurrection correspond to the evidence, it confirms the New Testament's divine authority of Jesus' message of forgiveness, His claim to be divine, and His miraculous and sinless life. The many appearances of Christ in His physical, material, and numerically identical resurrection body provides ample empirical proof that Jesus rose from the dead just as the Bible records. If one denies the resurrection event based on abundant documentation and credible eyewitness testimony, and considers himself consistent, he must also reject the weight of our judicial system which is also based on the same.

Sources and Books on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Bruce, F.F., *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* Craig, William, *The Son Rises* (Moody)

Greenleaf, Simon, *The Testimony of the Evangelists* (Kregel)

Geisler, Norman L. *Battle for the Resurrection*

Habermas, Gary, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Baker)

Morrison, Frank, *Who Moved The Stone?* (Zondervan)