

Why Trust Jesus? - Personal Study Notes

(updated 3/12/18)

1. What is Apologetics? Defending the Bible with logic, reason and precision using facts and evidence.

a. There are 4 main reasons people reject Jesus (who is God):

- **Intellectual:** They've never been shown the overwhelming evidence for the truth of the Bible.
- **Emotional:** They've been hurt by someone 'religious', or they have guilt / shame from their past.
- **Choice:** They've willfully chosen to reject God despite the overwhelming evidence.
- **Invitation:** They've never been shown the good news of Jesus Christ.

2. Does Spiritual Truth Exist? With so many different religions, can there be only one true belief system?

a. Christians often do a good job explaining *that* the Bible is true, but we sometimes struggle explaining **WHY**.

b. Truth is simply reality. This applies to all areas of life, including spiritually.

c. Truth is always:

- **Objective:** Exists whether or not we know it or accept it.
- **Unchanging:** Regardless of our beliefs or attitudes.
- **Universal:** True for everyone at all places and all times.
- **Absolute:** Perfect.

d. For example, truth exists in many different areas of our life:

- Laws of physics.
- Laws of logic.
- Moral law: we all know right from wrong).
- Everyday life: relationships, money, speed limit, etc.
- Spiritual laws: God's relationship with His creation, including humanity.

e. Contrary beliefs are possible, but contrary truths are not possible (law of non-contradiction).

f. Spiritual truth does exist, and can be known. The evidence that follows validates this.

3. Does God Exist? If so, what's the evidence?

An important note about science and philosophy:

Philosophy is simply the interpretation of facts made available by the scientific method. Both believers and unbelievers *have the exact same scientific facts*. Facts are neutral. It's the interpretation of facts and evidence that cause differences in beliefs. In other words, science doesn't say anything - scientists do. In fact, we can't do science without philosophy.

Science doesn't have the ability (or authority) to validate or prove:

- Cause of life & universe
- God & miracles
- Historical events
- Darwinian evolution (macro)
- Atheism

...none of these can be observed, repeated, or measured (using the scientific method).

All five of those require some level of faith based on the available evidence. We must follow the evidence to its *most logical* conclusion because 100% proof is impossible.

What is the evidence for God?

- 1) **Beginning:** Science has proven that the universe has a beginning, which requires a ‘beginner’ (or creator).
- 2) **Design:** The complexity found throughout life and the universe is so advanced that the notion that this could have come about through natural, unguided processes (evolution) is statistically impossible.
- 3) **Moral Law:** There is a standard of absolute moral perfection where everyone consciously knows right from wrong. Without an objective source of morality outside of humanity (God), all so-called moral issues are nothing but personal preference. The moral law is written on our hearts. There can’t be a moral law without a moral law giver.
- 4) **Miracles:** The greatest miracle in the Bible has already been confirmed by science: creation of the universe out of nothing. If this has been proved to have taken place, every other miracle in the Bible is certainly believable.
- 5) **Laws of Logic:** The ability to use our intellect to think, reason, and draw logical conclusions.

Important note: The evidence above describes exactly the God of biblical Christianity without referencing the Bible.

It’s also important to remember that the various laws we find throughout life and the universe require a law-giver.

Nature can’t tell itself how to operate. Furthermore, evolution assumes the beginning of life and the universe, but it can’t explain where those things came from.

The Bible not only explains these precisely, but the scientific evidence confirms what the Bible teaches. In fact, no proven scientific, historical, or archaeological fact has ever contradicted the Bible in any way.

4. **Is the Bible God’s Only True Word?** In other words, is the Bible true and trustworthy?

To find out, we need to answer two (2) questions:

- a. Do we have **ACCURATE COPIES** of the original biblical writings (autographs)?
 - Most (if not all) of New Testament T was written prior to 70 A.D.
 - This means that the New Testament was completed within 37 years of Christ’s death.
 - We have 5,686 hand-written Greek manuscripts from the early church era.
 - We also have another 10,000 Latin texts, and 9,300 from other languages.
 - This gives us nearly 25,000 manuscripts: complete sets, individual books, pages, and fragments.
 - To compare, the earliest surviving manuscript for Aristotle was written 1,400 years after the original, and there are only 40 surviving copies. Plato? 1,200 years; 7 copies. New Testament (Bible)? 37 years; 25,000 copies.
 - Any ancient writing that’s written within 200 years of a historical event is considered by all historians to be extremely reliable.
 - We also have 36,289 quotes from the early church fathers (sermon, etc.).
 - From those, we can reconstruct the entire New Testament with the exception of just 11 verses.
 - None of those 11 verses affect any article of important doctrine.
 - The New Testament manuscripts are 99.9% accurate.
 - It’s important to note that there is very little dispute over the reliability of the Old Testament writings.
 - We can be assured that we have an accurate copy of what God originally gave to the biblical authors.

b. Do the original biblical writings **TELL THE TRUTH** (are they trustworthy)?

- **Historical Accuracy:** More than 25,000 archaeological discoveries have verified the names of persons, places, events, and customs mentioned in the Bible. No archeological discovery has ever disputed a Biblical reference.
- **Preservation:** The Bible has withstood all of its attackers and is still the most widely published book ever.
- **Scientific Accuracy:** No scientific fact has ever contradicted the Bible (only unproven philosophies). Scripture tells us what God has done, is doing, and will. Scientific facts always confirm the truths found in Scripture.
- **Unity:** 66 individual books; 40 writers (from 19 walks of life); 1 author (God). The Bible was written on 3 different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe); written in 3 different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek); written over 1,500 years. Furthermore, the individual writers had no clue of the “big picture”. In fact, the unity is so precise that it defies human wisdom. The Bible is clearly ONE book, with perfect unity from beginning to end, and without contradiction.
- **Unique Authority:** Not only does the Bible answer the fundamental questions of life, but it possesses an authoritative and transforming power that is only possible because it’s truly the Word of God.
- **New Testament Evidence:** The testimony found in the New Testament is historically accurate and reliable. This includes testimony that is early, eyewitness, embarrassing, excruciating, expected, and extra-Biblical. In fact, Jesus is mentioned in at least 10 ancient non-Christian sources. When you compile the references from those historical documents, you get a story almost identical to the New Testament.

When we apply these two tests above (accuracy and truthfulness) to every religious text in existence, the Bible is the ONLY one that passes the test of historicity with 100% perfect.

Not only can we prove beyond a reasonable doubt that we have a nearly perfect view of the original biblical writings, but we can also trust what they say. Only the Bible...

- Offers real proof and evidence of its divine inspiration.
- Is 100% accurate and trustworthy in every area.
- Has perfect internal and external accuracy confirmed in:
 - Archaeology
 - Astronomy
 - Authority / Power
 - Eyewitness Testimony
 - Fulfilled Prophecies
 - History
 - Other Sciences / Medicine
 - Personal Change
 - Preservation
 - Societal Influence
 - Solution to Sin / Death
 - Unity & Structure

5. **Is Jesus, God?** If so, what does this mean for me personally? Why is Jesus the only way to heaven?

To determine if Jesus is God, we need to answer six (6) questions:

a. **Did Jesus claim to be God? YES:** see (Exodus 3:14 and John 8:58-59); John 10:28-33; Matthew 28:18.

b. **Does Jesus possess the attributes that belong only to God? YES.**

- John 1:1 Jesus is eternal.
- Hebrews 1:2 Jesus is self-existent.
- Matthew 18:20 Jesus is present everywhere. (omnipresent)
- John 18:4 Jesus is all-knowing. (omniscient)
- John 1:3 Jesus is all-powerful. (omnipotent)
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 Jesus is perfectly sinless.

c. **Did Jesus perform miracles? YES:** see John 10:28-33.

- 4 kinds of miracles. They show God's power over:
 - Death - Hell
 - Disease - Nature
- Miracles in the Bible were intended to confirm the messenger and message of God, while showing His power.
- The purposes of New Testament miracles were to:
 - 1) Prove that Jesus is God (**authenticate the message & messenger**).
 - 2) Show that Jesus was doing the works of God (**display power**).
 - 3) Help people in need (**provide love, grace, and mercy**).
- Jesus performed 45 miracles according to the New Testament, plus "too many others to count". (John 21:25)
- Jesus' greatest miracle has already been confirmed by science: Creation of life and the universe. (John 1:1-3)

d. **Did Jesus rise from the dead? YES.** ...which defeated the power over death, and proved He is God.

The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is so solid that if it were taken to a court of law today, the judge and jury would be forced to admit it's true...based on the indisputable facts:

- The tomb was (and still is) empty.
- **Early** resurrection testimony: 540+ eyewitnesses to Jesus.
- **Enemy** testimony: Roman guards, James & Saul.
- Multiple, independent, eyewitness sources (8-9).
- Extra-biblical references (10 ancient sources*).
- Early church explosion (no other explanation).
- 456 prophecies fulfilled **perfectly**: Jesus' birth, death & resurrection.
- Transformed lives of disciples + conversion of Paul & James.

* The Roman Empire was one of the most powerful of all time, yet the emperor during the time that Jesus lived is mentioned in only 8 sources. Jesus? 10. His existence and accomplishments are historical facts that can't be denied.

People will die for something they believe is true, but no one will ever die for something they know is a lie.

Jesus' disciples were in a perfect position to know whether or not the resurrection was true. Not once did a single disciple or witness to Jesus' resurrection change their story. In fact, many died a brutal death for the truth they personally witnessed.

e. **Did Jesus fulfill prophecy...perfectly? YES.**

- There are over 2,500 **EXTREMELY PRECISE** prophecies in the Bible.
- They describe Bible names, places, events, and people...**in detail**.
- They also predict the future of specific nations, cities & humanity.
- These prophecies were often made hundreds of years in advance...
- ...and took place well **after** most of the prophets passed away.
- There are 456 specific prophecies regarding Jesus' birth, death & resurrection.
- ...including the mention of crucifixion - **800 years before** it was invented!
- To date, about 2,000 biblical prophecies have been fulfilled **precisely without error!**

What are the odds of chance fulfillment **without error**? Less than **1 in 10²⁰⁰⁰** (10⁵⁰ is considered **statistically impossible**)

