

Answering the Critics

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Introduction:

If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies.
If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let
no one go there unwarned and unprayed for. --Charles Spurgeon

2 Tim. 3:16-17:

- 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.¹

All Scripture...We believe all of Scripture is inspired, inherent and infallible.

is inspired by God...lit., "God-breathed"

We believe that though the authors were human, God the Holy Spirit so superintended and guided them so that the words were God's words.

profitable

teaching...Only in NT do we have an account of Christ's teaching, life.

Christianity was founded on a "living" person, not a holy book. The NT is our record of that life.

We can learn how to live from the accounts of Christ's life.

reproof

¹ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

...for convincing men of the error of his ways and for pointing him to the right path.

William Barkley gives these examples of the Bible's ability to change a man:

In Brazil, a señor bought a NT to burn. He went home and flung it on the fire. It did not burn. He opened it so the leaves could catch and burn. It opened to the Sermon on the Mount. His mind was caught and he began to read. Forgetful of time, he read all night and as dawn was breaking, he declared, "I believe."

One dark night in a forest in Sicily, a Bible distributor was held up by a thief with a revolver. He was ordered to light a fire and burn his books. Before he burned each one he asked if he could read a little from the book before he dropped it into the fire. He read the 23rd Psalm, the story of the good Samaritan, 1 Corinthians 13 and the Sermon on the Mount.

Each time he finished reading, the thief said, "That's a good book—We won't burn that one. Give it to me." In the end, not a book was burned. The thief went off into the night with the books. Years later the thief returned as a Christian minister. He attributed the change to the reading of the books.

correction

...The Scriptures are the final test of all our theories, theologies and ethics. If any of them are contradicted by the Bible, they are to be rejected.

training in righteousness

...The study of the Scriptures must never be for selfish reasons. We must allow the Scriptures to "equip" us to make us useful to God and fellow men.

2 Peter 1:20-21:

20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation,

21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.²

No one has a right to insist on his own "private" interpretation.

We need to be sure we are in harmony with great scholars who were guided by the Holy Ghost.

Just like no Scripture was written without God's direction, we must look to God the Holy Spirit to guide our interpretation.

moved... "Borne along", "Locked in a gale", "Carried along by the storm"
God so controlled the writers that his words were written.

The skeptic will say, "You believe that, but who says the Bible is true?"

- The Bible has been "corrupted" by translators and scholars.
- The Bible is full of contradictions and myths.
- No one takes the Bible seriously today. Science and technology are all we need.
- The Bible records miracles! Miracles have been proven to be fake.
- Evolution has disproved the Bible's account of creation.

I. So Prove to me that the Bible is true!

Good question! If we base all our evidence on God's Word, how do we know that is is really God's Word?

(We will assume for now that God exists and is the ultimate source of truth—this will be dealt with later)

First we will look at a number of tests that can be applied to any ancient document to determine whether it is a genuine historical document.

1. Bibliographical (External)

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

This deals with the way a document or documents were transmitted to us. None of the original documents survive today (called autographs).

So how do we know that the copies we have accurately reproduce the autographs? There are two tests to determine this:

- A. The number of copies we have
- B. How close the copies were made to the original

When we examine an ancient document for historical authenticity, the more copies that exist, the stronger the case for its authenticity.

Homer's Iliad is the secular writing with the most copies (643 manuscripts still survive).

(Discuss hand-copying of manuscripts before the invention of the printing press in 1453)

The Iliad was written around 800 B.C. Today there are 643 copies in existence.

The second test is the distance in time between the original and the earliest copy we have.

The earliest copy of The Iliad dates to appo. 400 B.C.—(400 years between original and the copy).

Herodotus' History was written from 480-425 B.C. Today there are eight copies, the earliest of which was copied 1,350 years after Herodotus wrote it.

Plato wrote appo. 400 B.C. Today, seven copies exist. The closest to the original was copied 1,300 years after Plato wrote.

Does anyone know how many NT manuscripts we have today? Appo. 25,000! Do you know how close to the originals the copies were?

114 fragments dated at appo. fifty years from the originals.

Magdalene Fragment of Matt. 26 thought to possibly be part of an original autograph. If not, it probably coexisted with the original.

[Until quite recently,] ...the oldest assumed manuscript which we possessed was the St. John papyrus (P52), housed in the John Rylands museum in Manchester, and dated at 120 AD (Time April 26, 1996, pg.8). Thus, it was thought that the earliest New Testament manuscript could not be corroborated by eyewitnesses to the events. That assumption has now changed, for three even older manuscripts, one each from the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke have now been dated earlier than the Johannine account. It is two of these three findings which I believe will completely change the entire focus of the critical debate on the authenticity of the Bible. Let me explain.

The Lukan papyrus, situated in a library in Paris has been dated to the late 1st century or early 2nd century, so it predates the John papyrus by 20-30 years (Time April 26, 1996, pg.8). But of more importance are the manuscript findings of Mark and Matthew! New research which has now been uncovered by Dr. Carsten Thiede, and is published in his newly released book on the subject, the Jesus Papyrus mentions a fragment from the book of Mark found among the Qumran scrolls (fragment 7Q5) showing that it was written sometime before 68 AD It is important to remember that Christ died in 33 AD, so this manuscript could have been written, at the latest, within 35 years of His death; possibly earlier, and thus during the time that the eyewitnesses to that event were still alive!

The most significant find, however, is a manuscript fragment from the book of Matthew (chapt.26) called the Magdalene Manuscript which has been analysed by Dr. Carsten Thiede, and also written up in his book The Jesus Papyrus. Using a sophisticated analysis of the handwriting of the fragment by employing a special state-of-the-art microscope, he differentiated between 20 separate micrometer layers of the papyrus, measuring the height and depth of the ink as well as the angle of the stylus used by the scribe. After this analysis Thiede was able to compare it with other papyri from that period; notably manuscripts found at

Qumran (dated to 58 AD), another at Herculaneum (dated prior to 79 AD), a further one from the fortress of Masada (dated to between 73/74 AD), and finally a papyrus from the Egyptian town of Oxyrynchus. The Magdalene Manuscript fragments matches all four, and in fact is almost a twin to the papyrus found in Oxyrynchus, which bears the date of 65/66 AD Thiede concludes that these papyrus fragments of St. Matthew's Gospel were written no later than this date and probably earlier. That suggests that we either have a portion of the original gospel of Matthew, or an immediate copy which was written while Matthew and the other disciples and eyewitnesses to the events were still alive. This would be the oldest manuscript portion of our Bible in existence today, one which co-exists with the original writers!

What is of even more importance is what it says. The Matthew 26 fragment uses in its text nomina sacra (holy names) such as the diminutive "IS" for Jesus and "KE" for Kurie or Lord (The Times, Saturday, December 24, 1994). This is highly significant for our discussion today, because it suggests that the godhead of Jesus was recognised centuries before it was accepted as official church doctrine at the council of Nicea in 325 AD There is still ongoing discussion concerning the exact dating of this manuscript. However, if the dates prove to be correct then this document alone completely eradicates the criticism levelled against the gospel accounts (such as the "Jesus Seminar") that the early disciples knew nothing about Christ's divinity, and that this concept was a later redaction imposed by the Christian community in the second century (AD).

We have 200 complete books, written within 100 years of the originals.

We have 250 manuscripts containing most of the NT written within 150 years of the originals.

Today, no one questions the historical authenticity of Homer, Herodut or Plato. But there are all kind of critics attacking the NT. Incredible!

Ravi Zacharias concludes: "In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the document, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity."

Aside: The very fact that it is attacked so strongly can be an argument for its authenticity.

Why would Satan attack a book that isn't true anyway?

Chart from Evidence That Demands a Verdict, by Josh McDowell:

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	NO. OF COPIES
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.	c. 400 B.C.	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 B.C.	c. AD 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-420 B.C.	c. AD 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	8
Plato		400 B.C.	c. AD 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	7
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	c. AD 900	c. 1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C.-AD 17	4th cent. (partial) mostly 10th cent.	c. 400 yrs. c. 1,000 yrs.	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	AD 100	c. AD 1100	c. 1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny Secundus	<i>Natural History</i>	AD 61-113	c. AD 850	c. 750 yrs.	7
New Testament		AD 50-100	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of N.T.) c. 325 (complete N.T.)	+ 50 yrs. 100 yrs. 150 yrs. 225 yrs.	5366

C. A few of the major manuscripts are...

John Ryland's MS (AD 130) is located in the John Rylands Library of Manchester, England (oldest extant fragment of the New Testament).

"Because of its early date and location (Egypt), some distance from the

traditional place of composition (Asia Minor), this portion of the Gospel of John tends to confirm the traditional date of the composition of the Gospel about the end of the 1st century." (Geisler, GIB, 268)

Codex Vaticanus (AD 325-350), located in the Vatican Library, contains nearly all of the Bible. After a hundred years of textual criticism, many consider Vaticanus as one of the most trustworthy manuscripts of the New Testament text.

Codex Sinaiticus (AD 350) is located in the British Museum. This MS, which contains almost all the New Testament and over half of the Old Testament, was discovered by Dr. Constantin Von Tischendorf in the Mount Sinai Monastery in 1859. It was presented by the monastery to the Russian Czar and bought by the British Government and people from the Soviet Union for 100,000 pounds on Christmas Day, 1933.

The discovery of this manuscript is a fascinating story. Bruce Metzger relates the interesting background leading to its discovery:

In 1844, when he was not yet thirty years of age, Tischendorf, a Privatdozent in the University of Leipzig, began an extensive journey through the Near East in search of Biblical manuscripts. While visiting the monastery of St. Catharine at Mount Sinai, he chanced to see some leaves of parchment in a waste-basketful of papers destined to light the oven of the monastery. On examination these proved to be part of a copy of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, written in an early Greek uncial script. He retrieved from the basket no fewer than forty-three such leaves, and the monk casually remarked that two basket loads of similarly discarded leaves had already been burned up! Later, when Tischendorf was shown other portions of the same codex (containing all of Isaiah and I and II Maccabees), he warned the monks that such things were too valuable to be used to stoke their fires. The forty-three leaves which he was permitted to keep contained portions of I Chronicles, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Esther, and upon returning to Europe he deposited

them in the university library at Leipzig, where they still remain. In 1846 he published their contents, naming them the codex Frederico-Augustanus (in honor of the King of Saxony, Frederick Augustus, the discoverer's sovereign and patron). (Metzger, TNT, 43)

A second visit to the monastery by Tischendorf in 1853 produced no new manuscripts because the monks were suspicious as a result of the enthusiasm for the MS displayed during his first visit in 1844. He visited a third time in 1859, under the direction of the Czar of Russia, Alexander II. Shortly before leaving, Tischendorf gave the steward of the monastery an edition of the Septuagint that had been published by Tischendorf in Leipzig.

Thereupon the steward remarked that he too had a copy of the Septuagint, and produced from a closet in his cell a manuscript wrapped in a red cloth. There before the astonished scholar's eyes lay the treasure which he had been longing to see. Concealing his feelings, Tischendorf casually asked permission to look at it further that evening. Permission was granted, and upon retiring to his room Tischendorf stayed up all night in the joy of studying the manuscript—for, as he declared in his diary (which as a scholar he kept in Latin), *quippe dormire nefas videbatur* ("it really seemed a sacrilege to sleep!") He soon found that the document contained much more than he had even hoped; for not only was most of the Old Testament there, but also the New Testament was intact and in excellent condition, with the addition of two early Christian works of the second century, the Epistle of Barnabas (previously known only through a very poor Latin translation) and a large portion of the Shepherd of Hermas, hitherto known only by title. (Metzger, TNT, 44)

D. The NT was copied into various versions and translated into various languages—This was rare with ancient literature

1) Syriac versions

"Syriac" is a name given to Christian Aramaic. It is written in a distinctive variation of the Aramaic alphabet.

a. Old Syriac (appo. 300 AD)

...contained the four gospels

b. Syriac Peshitta (150-250 AD)

Basic meaning is "simple". This was the standard Syriac version. More than 350 mss. survive today.

c. Palestinian Syriac (400-450 AD)

d. Philoxenian (508 AD)

...translated for Philoxenas, Bishop of Mabug, by Polycarp

e. Harkleian Syriac (616) AD)

...by Thomas of Harkel

2) Latin Versions

a. African Old Latin (400 AD)

...copied from a second-century papyrus

b. Codex Corbiensis (400-500 AD)

...four gospels

c. Codex Vercellensis (360 AD)

d. Codex Palatinus (5th century AD)

e. Latin Vulgate (366-384 AD)

"common" or "popular" ...translated by Jerome, secretary to Damasus, Bishop of Rome

3) Egyptian Versions

a. Sahidic (210 AD)

b. Bohairic (300 AD)

c. Middle Egyptian (300-400 AD)

4) Other Versions

a. Armenian (400+ AD)

...apparently translated from a Greek Bible obtained from Constantinople

b. Gothic (appo. 300 AD)

c. Georgian (appo. 400 AD)

d. Ethiopic (appo. 500 AD)

e. Nubian (appo. 500 AD)

E. Lectionaries Support the NT Text

To date, 2,396+ have been catalogued.

They were established to provide a set course of reading of Scripture through the church year. Usually a gospel, an epistle, and an Old Testament reading.

Their value lies in:

- 1) They contain all of the NT, many times over, with the exception of Revelation and parts of Acts.
- 2) They often contain older, more conservative texts
- 3) They have helped establish the meaning of various passages.

F. Early Church Fathers

Church fathers quoted extensively from Scripture.

This does not prove the authenticity of the NT text, but it is important for two reasons:

- 1) Proves the fathers considered the same 27 books to be the NT Scriptures
- 2) If we lost all the NT manuscripts, we could almost completely reproduce the NT from quotations by church fathers.

Early Patristic Quotations of the New Testament, J. McDowell, NETDAV from Geisler, GIB, 431						
Writer	Gospels	Acts	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	Revelation	Total
Justin Martyr AD 133	268	10	43	6	3 (266 allusions)	330
Irenaeus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
Clement (Alex.) AD 150-212	1,107	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
Origen AD 185-253	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,992
Tertullian AD 160-220	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus AD 170-235	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
Grand Totals	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

The Encyclopaedia Britannica says: "When the textual scholar has examined the manuscripts and the versions, he still has not exhausted the evidence for the New Testament text. The writings of the early Christian fathers often reflect a form of text differing from that in one or another manuscript...their witness to the text, especially as it corroborates the readings that come from other sources, belongs to the testimony that textual critics must consult before forming their conclusions. (EB, Vol 3, 579)

We still haven't proven that the Bible is true, but any honest person has to admit the facts support (in an overwhelming way) its historical authenticity.

2. Internal Evidence

A. Benefit of the Doubt

Aristotle said, "The benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself."

Internal evidence deals with what the document claims for itself and whether there are contradictions in it.

B. General Principles in Dealing with Bible Difficulties

1) The unexplained is not necessarily unexplainable.

Just because we don't know why now doesn't mean we will never know.

The bumblebee should not be able to fly.

Scientists have only recently discovered how it flies.

This didn't stop them from scientific investigation.

Critics once said that Moses could not have written; writing wasn't invented in his lifetime—

We now know writing predated Moses by several thousand years.

2) Fallible interpretations do not mean fallible revelation.

Humans make mistakes—erasers, delete keys on computers. So just because a fallible human makes a wrong interpretation about God's Word doesn't make it wrong.

3) Understand the context

The Bible says "There is no God."³ (Psalm 14:1)

4) Interpret difficult passages in light of clear ones

James/Paul; Faith/Works

Philippians 2:12: "...work out your salvation with fear and trembling..."⁴

So many Scriptures declare salvation is by grace through faith.

This cannot mean we can "work" for our salvation.

5) Don't build major doctrines on obscure texts.

Doctrine should be supported by many texts. When a passage is not clear, never assume it opposes other clear passages.

6) An incomplete report doesn't mean it is false

Gospel accounts—blind Bartimaeus—2 blind men—entering Jericho—Leaving Jericho.

7) NT quotes of OT may not be exact.

Translation, quoting from memory, paraphrasing

³*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

8) Just because the Bible records it doesn't mean it approves it.

Proverbs says a bribe will get the job done—Doesn't mean Bible approves of bribes. Lies recorded—Satan's (You shall not die)

Rahab—Does not condone lying.

The Bible records immorality, murder (David), does not condone.

9) The Bible uses non-technical language

(Sun running through its circuit)

Not a textbook on science, but accurate when it touches on science

10) The Bible sometimes uses round numbers as well as exact numbers.

11) Mark Twain said it was not the parts of the Bible that he did not understand which bothered him the most, but the parts he did understand.

A good technique for one who accuses the Bible of myths or contradictions is to simply hand him a Bible and say, "Here, show me what bothers you about the Bible." Bill Bright in *Witnessing Without Fear* demonstrates this technique for us:

"I don't believe in God, I don't believe in the Bible, and I don't believe in Christ and Christianity."

Ken's eyes flared at me from under the blond hair on his forehead as he cornered me after a campus lecture on the deity of Jesus Christ. He was a philosophy student, and I learned later from some other students that he seemed to delight in tearing Christianity apart. He seemed ready to tear me apart that night.

I put my hand on his shoulder and asked, "Why don't we sit down and talk?"

As we pulled two chairs into position for conversation, I quickly asked God for wisdom. He seemed to be reminding me: Don't argue. Ask questions to find out why he feels the way he does.

"Tell me what you don't believe about the Bible," I began.

"I just don't believe it. It's filled with all kinds of contradictions and myths." Ken slouched back in his chair, his arms folded tightly across his chest.

"Have you ever read it?"

"Oh, yes—I've read it through, cover to cover."

I handed Ken my Bible. "Can you show me what troubles you?"

"Well, there are thousands of contradictions..." his voice faded as he thumbed at the pages.

"Ken, if you'll show me just one problem or contradiction, maybe we can talk about it."

By now, Ken was flustered. He leaned forward, elbows on knees, and leafed through the Bible half-heartedly, realizing he couldn't produce evidence to back up his contentions.

"You say you've read the Bible, Ken?"

"Yes."

"How long ago did you read it?"

"Some time ago."

"How long? How old were you when you read it?"

"Oh...I guess I was twelve."

"Are you letting what you read when you were twelve years old influence your lifelong decisions? Ken, I think I understand how you're feeling. In my days of agnosticism, I would often parrot what I had heard other agnostics say, without checking the facts for myself. But do I discern, Ken, that the real reason you've come to me tonight is that you really want to know God personally?"

He leaned back in his chair and his cheeks bellowed as he exhaled loudly. "Yes," he sighed. "I do."

"Would you like to examine what Jesus Christ Himself said about how to know God? Here's a booklet that explains it..."

Together, we went through the Four Spiritual Laws booklet, and Ken invited Christ into his life. We talked for quite awhile about his new commitment, prayed together, then rose to leave.

"Mr. Bright—" Ken stopped us, his hand on my arm.

"Yes?"

His blue eyes had been transformed from hostility to peace. "Thank you. Thank you for not letting my big mouth prevent you from showing me the truth."

Despite Ken's loud protests and seeming hostility, God had made special plans for him that night. Frankly, I don't enjoy confrontations, but I have learned from many experiences that, like Ken, people who initially respond to the gospel with hostility are often the ones who are the most ready to receive Christ. Deep down, they are crying out for help—their visible belligerence is only a smokescreen to hide their hurt and hunger.

C. Sources

Eyewitness? Firsthand? (friendly)

Luke 1:1-3:

- 1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,
- 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,
- 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus...5

2 Peter 1:16:

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. **6**

⁵*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

(Unfriendly) Those who had a motive for discrediting the writings of the NT. There are many eyewitnesses who could have come forward and said, "I was there. That's not how it happened" No one did.

William Foxwell Albright, one of the world's foremost biblical archaeologists, said in 1963:

In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century AD (very probably some between about AD 50 and 75).

D. Archaeology

Note: Archaeology doesn't "prove the Bible to be true".

Archaeology is quite useful in confirming the accuracy and credibility of the Bible's account.

People, places and things listed in the Bible can be found and verified by archaeologists.

Some examples of archaeology confirming the Bible's account:

1) Hittites

For many years, anti-Bible scholars pointed to the Bible's references to the Hittites as "proof" that the Bible was not accurate. There was simply no evidence that the Hittites ever existed. Beginning in 1871, Archaeology has now confirmed their existence as a powerful nation for over 1,200 years.

2) Israelites in Egypt

Archaeologists have recently found evidence of the Israelites in Egypt. At Tell el-Dab'a, the ancient city of Ra'ames, they have discovered a house that is nothing

like the Egyptian houses around it. It is of the same type and pattern as those that the Israelites would later build in Canaan.

3) Joseph's Tomb

In the last verses of Genesis it is told how Joseph adjured his relatives to take his bones back to Canaan whenever God should restore them to their original home, and in Joshua 24:32 we are told how his body was indeed brought to Palestine and buried at Shechem. For centuries there was a tomb at Shechem revered as the tomb of Joseph. The tomb was opened. It was found to contain a body mummified according to the Egyptian custom, and in the tomb, among other things, was a sword of the kind worn by Egyptian officials.

--John Elder, Prophets, Idols and Diggers, p. 54

4) Dibon

The Bible states that the Israelites camped at the city of Dibon as they left Egypt. Skeptics had long insisted that Dibon didn't exist at that time. Archaeologists have since found inscriptions in Egypt at the temple of Amon, that indicate the ancient trade route from Egypt to Palestine. One of the cities mentioned along this route is none other than Dibon.

5) Sodom and Gomorrah

For many years these biblical cities were thought to be mythological. Excavations at Tell Markikh, the city of Elba, have produced finds of over 15,000 inscribed tablets. Some of these make mention of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

6) Jericho

One of the most famous Bible stories, skeptics for decades believed that Jericho didn't exist in the time of Joshua. Some archaeological textbooks went so far as citing this example to show that the Bible was not historically accurate. Charles Pellegrino, an agnostic, set out to examine the archaeological remains of Jericho and indeed found remains of a city existing during that period. What is more, the evidence showed that the walls surrounding the city had fallen down in an outward manner, when the laws of physics say that they should have fallen in. Furthermore, the evidence showed that the city had fallen after a short siege and that the grain had been scattered and burned along with the city. The usual practice was for invaders to simply take anything of value, especially food, with them. Again this fits with the biblical account where God told the Israelites not to loot the city but to utterly destroy it.

7) David

Was King David a myth too? A product of generations of story-telling about the "golden years" of the Israelites history? Many thought so until the summer of 1993 when Avraham Biran made an amazing discovery. He found an ancient Aramean (Syrian) inscription in the city of Dan in northern Israel. The inscription has been dated to the 9th century BC, refers to the "House of David" and describes the battle we find referenced in 1 Kings 15:16-22.

8) Prism of Sennacherib

Numerous inscriptions, some which mention the King of Judah, Hezekiah.

9) Cyrus Cylinder

A Clay piece with inscriptions showing the Persian king Cyrus' policy of allowing peoples like the Jews to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples.

10) The Incredible Accuracy of Luke

It was fashionable at the turn of the century to doubt Luke's accuracy. Thanks to the careful work of Sir William Ramsay, Luke has been vindicated. Ramsay was a skeptic who set out to do archeological work in Europe and Asia in order to prove the Scripture in Acts was wrong.

After thirty years of finding confirmation after confirmation of Luke's text, Ramsay wrote,

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. Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness

a. The Census

Skeptics charged that the census Luke refers to in Luke 2 could not possibly have taken place. How could the Roman government force all of its citizens to return to their birthplace to be counted? Documents dated at 48 AD and 104 AD have since been found which show that this type of census was carried out in the Roman world.

b. Quirinius

A famous example of the critics speaking too soon. Luke 2 indicates that the census took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. According to what was known of the rulers of the time, it was long believed that Quirinius didn't rule Syria until 6 AD, or 10 years after Christ was born. Then a coin was found which showed a proconsul named Quirinius who ruled Syria and Cilicia from 11 BC until after the death of Herod in 4 BC. The conclusion is that either there were two Quiriniuses or that the same man ruled Syria on two separate occasions.

c. politarchs

In Acts 17:6, Luke refers to politarchs or city officials in the city of Thessalonica. This term had never been found in any ancient Roman document however, and questions were raised about the accuracy of Luke. Later on, an inscription was found on a first century arch that begins, "In the time of the politarchs...". The arch is held today in the British Museum. Since that time, over 35 inscriptions, some in Tesselonica, have been found which refer to politarchs.

d. Lysanias

In Luke 3:1, Luke refers to Lysanias as the tetrarch of Abilene in about 27 AD. Scholars pointed out that Lysanias wasn't a tetrarch, but rather the ruler of Chalcis 50 years earlier. Again an inscription was found, dated between 14-37 AD which refers to Lysanias as tetrarch in Abila near Damascus. Luke was proved correct.

e. Nazareth

This boyhood home of Jesus had no evidence of being in existence before the 4th century AD for quite some time. Archaeologists have found a list describing relocations of priests after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. One of them is listed as having been shifted to Nazareth with his family. Additionally, tombs have been uncovered at Nazareth containing first-century objects.

f. Pilate

For quite some time there was no direct evidence for the existence of Pontius Pilate. In 1961, two Italian archaeologists found a 2X3 foot inscription in Latin at the city of Caesarea. It read, "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has presented the Tiberium to the Caesareans."

g. Names

Critics said Luke was incorrect with his naming of countries, cities and islands.

Dr. Geisler says, "In all Luke names 32 countries, 54 cities and 9 islands without an error.

11) The Nazareth Decree

In 1878, a stone slab was found which contained a decree from Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54). He said no graves should be disturbed or bodies extracted or moved. The offender was liable to capital punishment.

Apparently a reaction to the report of Jesus' resurrection. Early testimony to the belief that Jesus rose from the dead.

12) Yohanan—Crucifixion Victim

In 1968 an ossuary was discovered in ancient Jerusalem containing the bones of a victim of Roman crucifixion. The bones were in every detail like the NT description of crucifixion.

- a. Seven-inch Roman nail through both heels
- b. Bones of wrist had been nailed.
- c. Leg bones crushed by blunt blow

Flash! Israeli Antiquities Dept. just declared Ossuary and Temple inscription to be fakes (6-19-03)

13) James Ossuary

--Recently surfaced stone burial box containing an ancient Aramaic inscription: "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus"

- a. Ossuaries were used only from about 20 BC to AD 70 (James' death occurred 63 AD).
- b. Scientific analysis of the box and the inscription have pronounced it to be a genuine first-century artifact.

- c. James, Joseph and Jesus were all common names in the first century, but the chances of all three being linked as they are here is very slim.
- d. The inscription is in a form of Aramaic which was only used at the approximate time of James' death.

Note: A new stone inscription listing repairs to Solomon's first temple has just surfaced in Jerusalem (May '03). If genuine, it would be a very important confirmation of Bible history.

These could well be two very important archaeological links to the authenticity of the Bible text.

So much more could be said about archaeology. Let's just say there is a great debate among scholars and archaeologists today. The debate ranges all the way from the minimalist (which declares that the Bible accounts are myth and fable which were written hundreds of years after the events described (redacted) to those who take the Bible history as accurate and supported by archaeology.

A closing thought on archaeology: There has never been an archaeological discovery which disproves a Bible fact. There have been many which confirm the Bible's account of people and history.

E. The Bible is a unique book.

1) The Bible is unique in its composition.

The Bible was written over
a 1500-year time period,
over 40 generations,
by over 40 authors,

from many occupations. There were

kings

peasants

philosophers

fishermen

poets

statesmen

scholars.

- Moses was a political/military leader trained in the universities of Egypt.
 - Peter was an uneducated fisherman.
 - Amos was a herdsman.
 - Joshua was a general.
 - Nehemiah was a cupbearer and confidant of the king of Persia.
 - Daniel was a Prime Minister in the court of Babylon
 - Luke was a doctor—a Gentile!
 - Solomon was a king/philosopher
 - Matthew was a tax collector.
 - Paul was a brilliant, highly educated man, Rabbi, tentmaker
-
- The Bible was written in different places:
 - Moses wrote in the wilderness.
 - Jeremiah wrote in a dungeon.
 - Daniel wrote on a hillside and in a palace.
 - Luke wrote while travelling.
 - John wrote on the Isle of Patmos while in exile.
 - Some of it was written in the rigors of a military campaign.
 - It was written during war and peace.

- It was written while in different moods—
- some at the height of joy,
- some from the depths of sorrow and despair.

- It was written on three continents:
- Asia, Africa, Europe

- It was written in 3 languages:
- Hebrew was the language of the OT.
- Aramaic was the common language of the Near East until the time of Alexander the Great.
- Greek was the language of the NT.

- Its subject matter includes hundreds of controversial subjects which would normally create opposing opinions when mentioned or discussed.
- Yet there is one harmonious story from Genesis to Revelation—The redemption of man by a God who loves him.

2) The Bible is unique in its circulation.

The Bible continues to be the all-time bestseller.

It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book ever printed—2233 at last count. There have been more copies, or portions, of the Bible produced than any other book in the world.

The first major book printed on Gutenberg's new printing press was the Latin Vulgate Bible (1453).

The publication figures for the Bible are staggering.

It is unusual to have a book which sells over a million copies. Occasionally a book will sell 5 or 10 million copies.

In 1998 the United Bible Society alone distributed 585 million copies of the Bible!

If you were to line up all the people who received Bibles or Scripture portions in 1998 from only the United Bible Society and were to hand them each a Bible every 5 seconds it would take more than 92 years to do just what this single organization alone has done in 1998.

The Bible is unique in its circulation.

3) The Bible is unique in its survival

Many of you know that my wife is a "book lady". She sells books. It is very rare for a popular religious or secular book to remain in print for more than a few years. Books come and go.

Occasionally a very important book will be revived and reprinted, but that is the exception.

Contrast that with the Bible.

The Bible has been continuously in publication since the invention of the printing press in the mid-1400s (1453). It was copied by hand for many hundreds of years before that.

It was copied and recopied on perishable materials.

Even though it was copied and recopied for many hundreds of years, even though thousands of copies were destroyed by the authorities, even though many of the copies were literally worn out from constant use, today there are more manuscript copies of all or parts of the NT than any other 10 ancient writings combined.

Benjamin Warfield said,

"Quote"

If we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing we must...declare it to be marvelously correct. Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied—A care which has doubtless grown out of true reverence for its holy words. Such has been the providence of God in preserving his church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures, that not only is the New Testament unrivalled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use, but also in the abundance of testimony which has come down to us for castigating its comparatively infrequent blemishes.

"End of quotation"

4) Its Ability to Change Lives

Time after time skeptics have set out to prove the Bible untrue only to be convinced by the overwhelming evidence that it is true.

Over and over again men and women who did not believe the Bible have been converted to Christianity by researching its pages.

Frank Morrison was a brilliant lawyer who did not believe the fact of Christ's resurrection. He set out, by his own admission, to write a book which would prove that the resurrection never happened. As he researched, the facts began to affect him till he surrendered to Christ and wrote a moving defense of the resurrection called *Who Moved the Stone?*

Josh McDowell relates the following:

"Quote"

A representative of the Great Books of the Western World came to my house recruiting salesmen for their series. He spread out the chart of the Great Books of the Western World series. He spent five minutes talking to us about the Great Books of the Western World series, and we spent an hour and a half talking to him about the Greatest Book.

I challenge him to take just 10 of the authors, all from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language and just one controversial subject (the Bible speaks on hundreds with harmony and agreement).

Then I asked him: "Would they (the authors) agree?" He paused and then replied, "No!" "What would you have?" I retorted. Immediately he said, "A conglomeration."

Two days later he committed his life to Christ (the theme of the Bible).

Lee Strobel was a brilliant, hard-nosed newspaper reporter. He was accustomed to basing his stories only on facts, nothing else. He scoffed at the claims of Christ. His wife was converted, and as he watched her quiet Christianity and saw the change in her life, he was intrigued. He resisted for many months. Then he decided to use his investigating skills to see if the facts of Christianity would stand up to investigation.

He compiled a list of tough questions about Christ and the early Christians.

He crisscrossed the country to interview 10 world religious experts.

He posed his questions. They gave their answers. He studied the NT. In the end, driven to his knees by the overwhelming evidence, he became a Christian and wrote a brilliant defense of Christianity called *The Case for Christ*. Today he is a teaching pastor at one of America's largest churches.

We met Sir William Ramsay earlier. He is regarded as one of the greatest archaeologists who ever lived. His many books defending the authenticity of the Bible are still regarded as authoritative today.

Ramsay didn't start out as a believer. He was thoroughly schooled in the liberal German historical school of the mid-19th century. He was an atheist, and highly educated.

He believed that the Book of Acts was a product of the mid-second century AD and that it was full of factual errors. He gave his whole life over to archaeology and determined to prove to the world through archaeology that the Bible was not accurate.

He went to Asia Minor and began to dig. He dug and studied for appo. 25 years. As he did his work, the overwhelming evidence he discovered convinced him that, in every detail, Luke was incredibly accurate. Ramsay moved from an unbelieving atheist to a converted believer in Christ and a staunch defender of the historicity of the Bible.

Ramsay wrote about his investigation...

"Quote"

I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without prejudice in favour of the conclusion which I shall now seek to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavourable to it, for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tubingen theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not then lie in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.

"End of quotation"

Ramsay recognized Luke as a "historian of the first rank". His life was changed by an encounter with the Bible and its confirmation by archaeology.

Josh McDowell researched the Christian faith for 1000s of hours. He was deeply skeptical of the claims of Christianity.

He attended college and university all the while putting on a front that he was an agnostic.

He continued to search for meaning, truth and purpose in life, but they eluded him.

Then he noticed a small group of Christians on the campus of the university he was attending. They had conviction, and they practiced love.

Josh decided to make friends with these intriguing people.

One day they were talking about God.

He looked at one of the Christians, a young woman, and said, "Tell me, what changed your life? Why are your lives different from the others on campus?"

She looked at him and said two words: "Jesus Christ".

Josh said, "Don't give me that garbage about religion. I'm fed up with church. I'm fed up with religion."

She shot back, "Mister, I didn't say religion. I said Jesus Christ."

Out of pride,

to refute them,

Josh accepted their challenge to investigate the claims of Jesus Christ.

After 1000s of hours, Josh McDowell prayed the sinner's prayer and accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He has written many books defending the faith and is a tireless defender of the Bible claims.

Josh writes,

"Quote"

But I hated one man more than anyone else in the world. My father. I hated his guts. To me he was the town alcoholic....I'd go out in the barn and see my mother beaten so badly she couldn't get up, lying in the manure behind the cows. When we had friends over, I would take my father out, tie him up in the barn, and park the car up around the silo. We would tell our friends he'd had to go somewhere. I don't think anyone could have hated anyone more than I hated my father.

After I made that decision for Christ—maybe five months later—a love from God through Jesus Christ entered my life and was so strong it took that hatred and turned it upside down. I was able to look my father squarely in eyes and say, "Dad, I love you." And I really meant it. After some of the things I'd done, that shook him up.

When I transferred to a private university I was in a serious car accident. My neck in traction, I was taken home. I'll never forget my father coming into my room. He asked me, "Son, how can you love a father like me?" I said, "Dad, six months ago I despised you." Then I shared with him my conclusions about Jesus Christ: "Dad, I let Christ come into my life. I can't explain it completely, but as a result of that relationship I've found the capacity to love and accept not only you but other people just the way they are."

Forty-five minutes later one of the greatest thrills of my life occurred. Somebody in my own family, someone who knew me so well I couldn't pull the wool over his eyes, said to me, "Son, if God can do in my life what I've seen Him do in yours, then I want to give Him the opportunity." Right there my father prayed with me and trusted Christ.

Usually the changes take place over several days, weeks, or months, even a year. My life was changed in about six months to a year-and-a –

half. The life of my father was changed right before my eyes. It was as if somebody reached down and turned on a light bulb. I've never seen such a rapid change before or since. My father touched whiskey only once after that. He got it as far as his lips and that was it. I've come to one conclusion. A relationship with Jesus Christ changes lives.

"End of quotation"

John McArthur was preaching in Florida. When he was finished, a man came up to him and said, "I've got to talk to you. I am a 5th generation Jehovah's Witness. My dad is in charge of all the Jehovah's Witnesses' work in Florida. I train all the local Jehovah's Witness pastors. About 4 weeks ago I was driving down Alligator Alley when I heard you preaching on the radio. I didn't know who you were. As I listened, I heard you say that Jesus was God and read some Scripture to prove it. I reached over and turned the radio off. I said, 'that's a lie!' Then I wanted to hear what you were saying, so I turned it on again.

"You said you were going to continue the series on Christ the next day. So I listened—All that week. Then you said you were going to continue the next week. So I listened. At the end of that week in a motel not too far from here I sat on a bed, looked up and said, "Jehovah, if you revealed yourself to mankind through Jesus Christ, reveal yourself to me, and before that morning I was a believer in Jesus Christ. I am a Christian. Now I am going back to those Jehovah's Witness churches and I'm telling them the only message I know, 'Jesus is God!'

John, I'd like you to pray for my father, mother, wife and 3 grown sons who are Jehovah's Witnesses. Please pray that they may come to Christ."

6 months later John received a beautiful letter from the man telling him that all of them were believers in Christ. That's the power of God's Word!

John McArthur tells how he received a phone call one evening. The young man on the other end of the line said, "John, I've got to see you." John made an appointment and when the man came to see him he said, "My life is coming apart. You've got to help me."

John said, "I'll do what I can. What's on your mind?"

The young man said, "My name is Steve. I'm a Jew. I don't believe in your Jesus. "I've been coming to your church for the past four weeks."

John said, "Why?"

He said, "Because my life is so messed up, someone said I should come to your church." John had been doing a series on being delivered to Satan (not exactly seeker-friendly) The man said, "You have been describing me. I am damned!"

John said, "Why is that?"

He said, "I am a doctor who kills babies. My clinic did 9 million dollars worth of abortions last year. If a woman doesn't need an abortion I give her a reason to have one so I can get her money. I divorced my wife. I married a 2nd wife. I left her and am living with another woman. I really want to go back to my wife because I like her better, but I don't have the courage.

"I just bar-mitzvahed my two children. I have been seeing a psychiatrist for the past year and I am about to go bankrupt! Can you help me?"

John said, "No! How could I help a Jewish abortionist?"

"But I know someone who can transform your life."

Steve said, "Who?"

John replied, "Jesus Christ."

Steve said, "Oh yeah. I thought you'd say that. I don't want him."

John said, "Well, the choice is yours. But if you want help, Jesus is who you need,"

Steve said, "But I don't know who he is."

John picked up a Bible and turned to the Gospel of John. He said, "Do you see this book named John? I want you to take this Bible home and read the Book of John and call me when you know who Jesus is."

On Thursday the man called John. He came to see him and sat down and said, "I know who he is."

John said, "Who is he?"

"He is God."

John said, "Steve, this is pretty fast! This is only Thursday and on Monday you had been a Jew for 50 years, didn't believe in Jesus, now on Thursday you know that Jesus is God! How do you know it?"

Steve said, "He has to be God. No one else could do and say what he did if he wasn't God." (John's gospel says that! If you don't believe what I say, believe me for what you see me do) Then Steve said, "Do you know what else he did?"

John said, "No, what?"

"He rose from the dead!"

And then he said as if he was in awe, "And he did it fast!"

"It is fast in 3 days—But if you are reading it it's about 1 ½ minutes!"

Then Steve said, "He died for my sins."

John said, "How do you know that?"

He said, "I found this book called Romans. And now I am a believer in Jesus Christ."

John said, "Steve, what does this mean in your life?"

Steve said, "It means I am meeting my wife tonight for church service and I have today written my letter of resignation to the abortion clinic."

What an incredible book! A book that has the power to single-handedly transform lives.

5) Its Scientific Accuracy

The Bible is not a textbook on science, but every time it touches on science it is 100% accurate.

The technique of sterilization and proper cleansing of instruments and doctors' hands did not come into use until the 1890s. It was in 1846 that a Hungarian physician observed that many mothers were dying of "child bed fever". He began to wash his hands between patients and there was a dramatic decrease in the number of deaths. Even though the evidence was overwhelming it took another 40-50 years for the simple technique of washing hands between patients to be adopted.

The principle of separating people with certain diseases was well-known in the book of Leviticus.

The principles of sanitation and cleanliness specified in the Mosaic Law were for the protection of the people.

God said in Exodus 15:26:

" If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee..."⁷ It took science more than 2000 years to catch up with what the Bible already taught.

The Bible says that the "life of the flesh is in the blood".

It wasn't till the 17th century that an English physician names William Harvey figured out that the blood circulates through the heart.

The Bible knew about the hydrological cycle where rain falls to earth, evaporates, and returns to the clouds and repeats the cycle 100s of years before science did. Job, perhaps the most ancient writing in the Bible, says,

" For He draws up the drops of water,
They distill rain from the mist,
Which the clouds pour down,
They drip upon man abundantly."⁸

⁷The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁸The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

In the 1400s it was believed that the earth was flat and rested on the backs of elephants. Columbus was warned that if he sailed too far he would fall off the edge.

But God told Isaiah that he sits above the "circle" of the earth many hundreds of years before Columbus.

The workings of the universe and the solar system have only relatively recently begun to be understood.

But the Bible says that the sun's rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit is to the other end of them; and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The Bible tells us that each star is different. It took science 1000s of years to learn that.

Isostasy, the study of the balance of the earth, is a fairly recent discipline. Astronomers now know that the earth is perfectly balanced. The workings of the tides and boundaries of the ocean are precisely controlled by God.

God knew this in Isaiah's time...

Isaiah 40, v. 12 is an amazing verse from a scientific standpoint...

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,
 And marked off the heavens by the span,
 And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure,
 And weighed the mountains in a balance
 And the hills in a pair of scales?

The earth spins on its axis. It travels around the sun in a giant orbit. It is travelling through space as a part of the vast constellation The Milky Way. The stresses on it are enormous, but it is balanced. God created it balanced, and Colossians chapter 1 tells us the Jesus Christ keeps it all running smoothly in such an orderly fashion that NASA can set their instruments by the movement of the heavenly bodies. What an awesome God we serve!

6) Its Ability to Remain Fresh

I love to read. Give me a good book and some time and I'm a happy man. But I have discovered an amazing difference between the books I read and the Bible. The books I read once are usually placed on the shelf and retired. Only occasionally will I go back and reread a secular book.

But what a difference in "The Book", God's Holy Word. I have been reading its pages for over 50 years and have never failed to find it fresh and new. I am constantly amazed at the fresh new insights I can glean from its pages. I am continually hearing my bros. and sisters in the faith say the same thing— How they just saw something fresh and new in the pages of the book they have been reading for years.

Its precepts are ever new, its lessons are always relevant, and its principles never go out of style. Its pages address the needs and wants of each passing generation. It is as fresh and relevant in the 21st century as it was when it was written.

7) Prophecy

The Bible is filled with prophecies predicting events, people, and places hundreds of years before they happened. These prophecies were fulfilled exactly as spoken.

There are over 300 Messianic prophecies in the OT which were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Just a sample:

- a. Messiah was to born of a virgin.

OT – Isaiah 7:14 NT – Matt. 1:18,24,25; Luke 1:26-35

b. Messiah was to be of the House of David.

OT – Jer. 23:5 NT – Luke 3:21,31

c. Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem

OT – Micah 5:2 NT – Matt. 2:1

d. Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents

OT – Jer. 31:15 NT – Matt. 2:16

e. His name shall be Immanuel (God With Us)

OT – Isaiah 7:14 NT – Matt. 1:23

f. To Enter Jerusalem on a Donkey

OT – Zechariah 9:9 NT – Luke 19:35-37

g. 29 prophecies of his betrayal, trial, death and burial were spoken between 1,000 – 500 BC. All 29 were fulfilled in one 24-hour period

Peter Stoner in his book Science Speaks says the chance of any man fulfilling just eight of the prophecies of Messiah are 10^{17} .

Like if we would cover the state of Texas two feet deep with silver dollars. One would be marked. The dollars would be mixed. A blindfolded man could travel anywhere he wished in the state and pick up just one coin.

That's the chance that any one other than Christ could have fulfilled just eight of the Messianic prophecies!

h. Some Specific Prophecies

(1) Ezekiel prophesied against the city of Tyre in 587 BC.

Tyre was an ancient, powerful city at that time. The people of Tyre had strong navies and considered themselves invincible. Ezekiel's prophecy sounded impossible to them. Tyre was very wealthy from the manufacture and sale of purple dye, glassware and metalwork.

Ezekiel prophesied that Tyre would be destroyed. It would be scraped clean, like a rock top, and would become a place for fishermen to dry nets (Ez. 26).

There is some disagreement among historians about the details of the history of Tyre. This much is clear: There were two parts to the city. Old Tyre was on the mainland. New Tyre was located on two small rocky islands appo. half a mile offshore. When the two parts of the city were occupied is in dispute.

in 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city (apparently the mainland one) for thirteen years. Historians disagree on the outcome. Some say that he conquered the city. Others say that he was unsuccessful.

Apparently, the city paid some kind of tribute to Nebuchadnezzar.

In 332 BC, Alexander the Great conquered most of Palestine and Syria. He demanded the surrender of Tyre, but they laughed at him.

The island city was surrounded by tremendous walls. Smith's Bible Dictionary says the walls were at least 150 feet high. Alexander had his engineers knock down the old mainland city and throw the debris into the sea. He brought cedars from

Lebanon and used them as giant "piles". He filled the space between them with the debris. He built a causeway 200 feet wide and appo. half a mile long to the island city. After a seven-month siege, the island city fell.

In destroying the mainland city, Alexander literally scraped the very dust from the rocks into the sea. The mainland city was left as a flat rock. And today fishermen dry their nets there.

(2) Joshua 6:26

In Joshua 6:26, Joshua says,

**Cursed before the LORD is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho:
At the cost of his firstborn son
will he lay its foundations;
at the cost of his youngest
will he set up its gates. (NIV)**

Appo. 350 years later, in the days of King Ahab, we are told in 1 Kings 16:34...

...Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun. (NIV)

(3) Ezekiel 12:12-14:

- 12 "The prince who is among them will load *his baggage* on *his* shoulder in the dark and go out. They will dig a hole through the wall to bring *it* out. He will cover his face so that he can not see the land with *his* eyes.
- 13 "I will also spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. And I will bring him to Babylon in the land of the Chaldeans; yet he will not see it, though he will die there.
- 14 "I will scatter to every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will draw out a sword after them."¹⁰

¹⁰The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

What a strange prophecy! Ezekiel says Zedekiah, the last king of Judea, would be taken to Babylon but he would not see it?!

2 Kings 25:3-7:

3 On the ninth day of the *fourth* month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.

4 Then the city was broken into, and all the men of war *fled* by night by way of the gate between the two walls beside the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah.

5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho and all his army was scattered from him.

6 Then they captured the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he passed sentence on him.

7 They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.¹¹

About ten years after Ezekiel's strange prophecy it was literally fulfilled.

While none of these reasons "prove" the Bible to be God's Word and the Truth, the evidence is simply overwhelming for an honest person who examines the evidence.

II. Why would a good God allow suffering, pain and evil?

Most of us are familiar with the name William Franklin Graham. But have you ever heard the name of Charles Templeton?

Graham and Templeton were once pulpit partners and close friends. Some predicted that Templeton would become a more popular evangelist than Billy. Something happened to the two men which radically changed the course of their lives. In 1949 at 30 years old, Billy was unaware that he was on the brink of

¹¹ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

worldwide fame. He and Templeton were roommates and travelling evangelists. Templeton started a church that soon overflowed a 1,200-seat sanctuary.

But then doubts began to gnaw at Templeton. He began to express his skepticism to Billy. Billy sensed a struggle in his spirit. He could not answer all of Templeton's questions. He searched the Scriptures and prayed and pondered.

Finally in a walk in the moonlit San Bernardino Mountains, Billy's questions came to a head.

Dropping to his knees, he confessed that he could not answer all the skeptical questions. Then he said, "Father, I am going to accept this Bible as your Word by faith. I'm going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts. And I will believe this to be your inspired Word."

Graham rose from the ground with a new sense of God's power and anointing on his ministry.

Templeton became decimated by doubts. He resigned from the ministry and moved to Canada where he became a commentator and novelist. He is presently living with the bitterness of rejecting faith in Christ and is losing his mental abilities to the terrible disease of Alzheimer's.

Lee Strobel, in his book *The Case for Faith*, tells how he interviewed him and how in an emotional moment he admitted with tears in his eyes that he missed his relationship with Jesus. Strobel tried to follow up on it, but Templeton was too hardened to allow a discussion of it.

Templeton's doubts centered around the question of evil.

Why, he said, would a good God allow a starving mother to be forced to watch her child die just because there was no rain?

It's an age-old question.

If God is good and all-powerful, why does he allow suffering and pain?

If he could prevent it and does not, he is not good.

If he cannot prevent it, he is not all-powerful.

The ancient philosopher Epicures wrote,

Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to; or he cannot and does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, and does not want to, he is wicked. But, if God both can and wants to abolish evil, then how comes evil in the world?

John Scott the theologian wrote,

The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation. Its distribution and degree appear to be entirely random and therefore unfair. Sensitive spirits ask if it can possibly be reconciled with God's justice and love.

So what do we say to this skeptic?

1. God did not create the world in its present state.

Gen. 1:31:

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.¹²

Gen. 3:17-19:

¹²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

17 Then to Adam He said, " Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.
 18 " Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;
 19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."¹³

God created a world that was very good. There was no pain, suffering or evil. Evil comes as the result of man's selfishness.

God is neither evil nor did he create evil. Man brought evil upon himself by selfishly choosing his own way apart from God's way.

2. God gave man free choice (free will).

God loved us and desired our love / fellowship.

True love must be voluntary.

If love is commanded or given because of fear or coercion, it is not love.

(Our romantic experiences)

So God created man with the ability to choose good or evil.

If man chose good and love for God, there was good and fellowship with God.

If man chose evil and disobedience to God's laws, there was evil and broken fellowship.

Evil came when Satan rebelled against God and when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God.

3. Much suffering / evil around us can be traced to human causes.

¹³ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

All crime exists because a human being has made a bad choice and commits an evil act, causing someone else to suffer. Our greed, pride, lust, etc. cause us to bring much evil and suffering upon the world. Much of what we consider bad in our world is a simple consequence of us exercising our God-given free will to make a choice that is wrong.

4. Suffering can also be caused by Satan and demons.

We see numerous examples of this fact in Scripture. Job was tormented by Satan himself and lost his wealth, possessions, family, and health. See Job 1,2. Paul had his "thorn in the flesh", and while we are not sure exactly what it was, he attributed it to a "messenger of Satan" (2 Cor. 12:7). Other instances are recorded in Matt. 12:22 and 17:14-18.

5. Natural Disasters

Ultimately, these events are caused by mankind's rebellion against God in the garden. The curse that was visited on human beings also affected the natural world. While earthquakes, famines, and volcanoes are beyond human control today, the amount of devastation they cause is magnified many times over by the impact of human choices. When we choose to live in areas known to be likely problem areas, we are displaying arrogance. When shoddy construction causes vastly increased devastation during an earthquake, we are to blame. When observers warn of impending famine and the world does nothing to help, God is not at fault.

Because of the fall, the world is now abnormal. Man is sinful and separated from God. Nature is not always kind to man and the animal world can also be his enemy. There is a conflict between man and fellowman. None of this was true

before the fall. Any discussion of evil and its effects must take into consideration that our world now is not normal and is not as God created it.

6. Benefits of Suffering, Evil and Pain

Suffering, pain and evil can actually have benefits for us – The simplest example is the pain that we feel as an early warning when in our body. When you touch a hot stove, the pain that you immediately feel serves as a protection against you keeping your hand there. Pain is usually only a symptom of a real problem.

- A. Suffering alerts us to the fact that there is something wrong with our world.

It can be a device which God uses to bring people to the place where they see their need of Him. C.S. Lewis once said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His mega-phone to rouse a deaf world."

- B. Suffering can serve to direct us.

How many times have you heard a person describe a time of great trial in their life, only to end with telling you how that time also served to re-direct their life or to help them see life more clearly. Sometimes suffering can serve to greatly sharpen our focus.

- C. Suffering can also unite us.

When we suffer, we see our great need for others. We are reminded how weak and fragile we really are and that others can come around us to share our burdens and sorrows.

2 Cor. 1:3-4:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 14

D. Pain keeps us from self-destruction.

The leper loses fingers, toes, nose because they lose the sensation of pain. They harm themselves because they aren't aware of pain. so they bump too hard, they hold on to hot things till they are burned.

The Gift of Pain

Dr. Paul Brand, a leading researcher and therapist of Hansen's disease, expressed significant insights on the problem of pain. Having just examined three patients, Lou—who may lose his thumb to infection from playing the autoharp, Hector—who can't feel the damage he is doing to his hand while mopping, and Jose—who is unwilling to wear special shoes to prevent the loss of the nubs that were once his feet, Dr. Brand says this:

Pain—it's often seen as the great inhibitor which ropes off certain activities. But I see it as the great giver of freedom.. Look

at these men. Lou: we're desperately searching for a way to give him simple freedom to play an autoharp. Hector: he can't even mop a floor without harming himself. Jose: too proud for proper treatment, he's given a makeshift shoe which may keep him from losing even more of his feet. He can't dress nicely and walk normally: for that, he would need the gift of pain [from Where Is God When it Hurts? by Phillip Yancey]

7. Sometimes some evil brings a greater good.

A. Joseph

How would Israel have survived the famine if Joseph had not been sold into slavery by his brothers?

B. Job

Real suffering brought real answers to Job.

C. Samson

Real pain brought Samson to a right relationship with God. The destruction of the temple brought punishment to his enemies.

D. Christ on the Cross

The ultimate good coming from evil is Calvary. Through Christ's sufferings, salvation was opened to the whole world.

On the Cross

Why would God allow His own Son to suffer and die a cruel and violent death as a criminal when He had done nothing wrong and, by nature, had no need to die? This injustice is very hard to explain unless there is some greater good accomplished by Christ's death which overshadows the evil of it. Jesus' own explanation was that He had come "to give His life [as] a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45) and saying "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for [on behalf of] his friends" (John 15:13). Hebrews 12:2 states the purpose of Jesus, "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame," meaning that the reconciliation of sinners was worth the suffering. As Isaiah says, "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed" (53:5). The higher purpose and greater good derived from Christ's death as our substitute for the penalty of our sins is more important than the evil inherent in the process.

8. Suffering and evil are only temporary.

Because of His undying love for us, God has provided a way of escape from the evil and suffering in our world. He has given us His Son to die for our sins so that we have the hope of eternal life with Him. He has also given us His Word so that we have a guide for making wise decisions as we journey through life. By following the guidelines given to us in the Bible, we can avoid some of the suffering that we would otherwise experience. Christians have also been given the ministry of

reconciliation, meaning that we bring healing to our world by applying the truth of God's Word to our relationships, policies, laws, environments, etc.

9. God's ways are not our ways.

Just because we don't understand why God does or allows something does not say that God doesn't know or care.

Just because God hasn't fixed the problems of evil so far, doesn't say he can't or won't.

Isaiah 55:8-9:

8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.¹⁵

Rom. 11:33:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!¹⁶

We know that God is sovereign, all-wise, all-knowing and that he has reasons for allowing things to happen which are totally beyond our comprehension.

Someone has written:

1. God's timing is always perfect.

¹⁵*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

¹⁶*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

2. God loves us more than we could possibly love our children.
3. God will never do anything that is not for our good and His glory.

10. What is the alternative?

If we do not accept the reality of the existence of God simply because of the evil and suffering in our world, how else will we explain it? The humanist's or atheist's alternative is very bleak indeed. To blame it on God, one would have to admit that God exists. Not only can they not explain where pain and suffering ultimately come from, they have no hope of ever being released from it. The Buddhist or Hindu will tell you that evil and suffering are not real, but are only an illusion. Small comfort that is!!

11. What to do if you are dealing with a seeker who is experiencing suffering or pain:

- A. Try to be physically present with them if possible.
- B. Remember the power of the human touch.
- C. Allow them to express their feelings honestly. Don't condemn their emotions. Argument may win the battle but lose the war.
- D. Learn about the problems they are facing.
- E. Don't pretend that you have all of the answers and never struggle. Being authentic is incredibly powerful to a pagan.
- F. Be brief, not lengthy.
- G. Pray for them and with them.
- H. Keep in touch.
- I. Encourage them to take one day at a time.
- J. Be a good listener.

Conclusion – Ultimately, because God is sovereign and we are not, we cannot hope to know or understand all of the reasons and purposes for the suffering, pain, and evil that exists in our world. When Job asked God why he was suffering, God responded with four chapters (38-41) of questions, showing Job how ridiculous he was to believe he had any understanding of why the world was the way it was!!

Illustrations:

Imagine a tiny cottage on the beach at Normandy on D-Day. Offshore, thousands of ships are disgorging equipment on to the beach. Overhead, huge shells are flying and exploding. From the bunkers behind the cottage, machine gun fire rakes the beach. Inside the cottage is a badly frightened family. As they grovel on the floor in fear, they send a wireless message to the invasion forces asking for rescue. The man of the house is the commander's son. He desperately tells his father how bad the situation is and pleads to be rescued. From his position, Dad can see the entire battle. He is responsible for the safety of the thousands of men who are in the war theater. He cannot, even if he wants to, leave his post to rescue his son. He is responsible for the entire battle. Sometimes he can answer his family's requests. Sometimes, because of the battle, he cannot.

Sometimes it is not even in the family's best interest to have their request granted. They only know that the commander is on their side...That he hears their requests...and that sometimes their requests are granted and sometimes not. Because they have a limited perspective, they don't know why the requests are answered or not answered.

We just don't see the whole picture.

The Bear, the Trap and the Hunter:

We would agree that the difference between God and us is greater than the difference between a bear and us.

Imagine a bear in a trap and a hunter who feels sorry for him and wants to release him. He tries to make the bear understand that he means to help, but the bear doesn't get it. So the hunter shoots the bear full of drugs. The bear thinks the hunter is attacking it and trying to kill it.

Then to get the bear loose, the hunter has to push its paw tighter in the trap to release the spring.

The bear is semi-conscious and, feeling the pain, is convinced that the hunter is his enemy trying to cause him suffering and pain, but he is wrong.

He reaches his incorrect conclusion because he isn't human and doesn't understand the hunter's motives.

How can anyone be certain that that isn't an analogy between God and us? We can't comprehend what God does anymore than the bear does.

As the bear could have trusted the hunter, so we can trust God.

12. How can we say Christianity is loving / kind when throughout history so many Christians were involved in fighting with and killing others?

How can we say Christianity is loving / kind when throughout history so many Christians were involved in fighting with and killing others?

Examples:

- Crusades
- Spanish Inquisition
- Religious strife in Northern Ireland

A. We must remember who is a Christian.

Many groups / people calling themselves Christians have acted in very unchristlike ways. Calling oneself a Christian or having a Christian heritage doesn't make one a Christian.

Matt. 7:18-23:

- 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.
 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.
 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*.
 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'
 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'¹⁷

The Bible and Christ clearly teach us to treat others with love and respect.

Christians are also commanded not to murder, to live at peace, forgive their enemies, turn the other cheek, and not to seek revenge against someone who has wronged them. Don't allow the behavior of false Christians or hypocritical Christians to determine what the behavior of a true Christian should be.

B. Some Perspective

While there were certainly evils perpetrated through the Crusades and the Inquisition, they should be looked at from a balanced perspective.

The Crusades

¹⁷ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

There were actually at least four major crusades and many more minor ones over a period of approx. 200 years from 1096-1291. The Muslim conquest that had begun in the late 600's had swept across the Middle East, Northern Africa, and what is now modern Spain and Portugal. The Crusades began (at least in theory) as a movement to force the Muslims from the Holy Land. In all reality however, they were as much about political power, kingdom expansion, adventure, glory, plunder and reasserting the preeminence of the Roman Catholic Popes as they were about religious conflict. In calling the First Crusade against the Holy Land in 1095, Pope Urban II declared that participation in the Crusade was an act of penance for sin. Other popular preachers went even further, promising recruited warriors that the penalties for their sins would be cancelled. There were many atrocities committed by "Christians". One example is to be found during the First Crusade. In August of 1099, after a two-month siege, the Crusaders broke through the walls of Jerusalem and slaughtered the city's inhabitants, Jews and Muslims alike.

The Spanish Inquisition

As much a political tool as a religious one, the Spanish Inquisition existed in various forms for approx. 300 years. Torture was its general method of "interrogation", and it had the legal authority to burn heretics at the stake. Approx. 30,000 people died as a result of the Inquisition. Certainly Spain was not the only place where such atrocities were perpetrated in the name of Christianity, but it was the most notorious.

A Christian Response – While it must be conceded that many atrocities have been committed by people calling themselves Christians, we must keep in mind the other side of the coin. It is estimated that 170 million people have died in the 20th century alone at the hands of leaders of atheistic nations.

- Hitler killed appo. 16 million.
- Stalin killed appo. 40 million.
- Chairman Mao killed appo. 72 million.

Also, it should be noted that true Christians have arguably done more to influence our world in a positive way than any other single religious group.

III. Why would a good God send people to hell?

The short answer is God doesn't. Men choose either heaven or hell by their choice of what they do with Jesus Christ.

John 3:16-18:

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.¹⁸

John 3:36:

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."¹⁹

John 8:24:

"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."²⁰

¹⁸*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

¹⁹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²⁰*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

John 12:48:

“He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”²¹

Eph. 2:4-9:

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,
 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;
 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ²²

Rom. 6:23:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.²³

Rom. 10:9:

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ²⁴

Ezekiel 18:23:

“Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?” ²⁵

²¹ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²² *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²³ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²⁴ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²⁵ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Some may say, "I just don't believe a good God could send anybody to hell."

The argument could look like this:

1. The greatest good is to save all men.
2. Even one person in hell would be less than the greatest good.
3. Therefore God cannot send anyone to hell.

It is true that God desires all men to be saved.

2 Peter 3:9:

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.²⁶

God can't force anyone to love Him. Love must be free. Some men do not choose to love Him. All who go to hell do so because of their free choice. They may not wish to go to hell (who would?), but they do will it when they make the decision to reject God.

God respects people's choice. He does not send them to hell. They choose to go by rejecting Him.

There are basically two kinds of people:

Those who say to God, "Thy will be done"...

and those to whom God says, "Thy will be done".

A world in which some go to hell is not the best of all conceivable worlds, but it is the best of all achievable worlds if free will is to be maintained.

The world would be better with less crime, but the would-be criminal must make that choice.

²⁶ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

IV. How do I know God exists?

There are four basic arguments to prove God:

1. Cosmological (based on creation)
2. Teleological (based on design)
3. Axiological (based on moral law)
4. Ontological (based on being)

Let's look at them one at a time:

1. Creation

Since there is a universe, it must have been caused by something beyond itself.

The law of causality says that every limited thing is caused by something other than itself.

The argument can be stated like this:

- A. The universe had a beginning.
- B. Anything that had a beginning must have been caused by something else.
- C. Therefore, the universe was caused by something else and this cause was God.

The reasons for reasoning the cause was God.

Whatever caused the universe to exist must be:

Uncaused...Only uncaused cause could bring anything into being from nothing.

Timeless, Changeless...Whatever created the universe created time and change.

Change is simply a product of time.

Immaterial...Created space from nothing

Unimaginable Power

Only God can fit this list of requirements.

The skeptic will say, "The universe is eternal. It never had a beginning."

Carl Sagan said, "The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be."

Science has pretty much proven the universe had a beginning point. The Second Law of Thermodynamics says the universe is running out of usable energy. If it is running down it can't be eternal.

Most scientists who study the origins of the universe agree that it came into being in a sudden, cataclysmic way. They call it the "big bang".

Scientists can still find radiation from the big bang and see the movement that it caused.

God surely could have "created" the worlds with a "big bang", but if he did or not, the point is science sees a beginning point for the universe.

Scientists cannot push the study of the past beyond the point of creation. If the world was created, that argues powerfully for the existence of a Creator.

Also, there is a philosophical reason to believe the world had a beginning point. Time cannot go back forever.

When we speak of an infinite series of something, we mean it will never end.

If the past is infinite, we could never have passed through time to get to today.

If the past is infinite it would never stop. We would never have today. But we do

have today, so time must have begun at a point and today is a definite point since that beginning.

Therefore, the world is finite and needs a cause for its beginning.

2. Design

Can be stated thus:

- A. All designs imply a designer.
- B. There is great design in the universe.
- C. Therefore, there must be a great Designer of the universe.

Watches imply watchmakers.

Buildings imply architects.

Paintings imply artists.

Coded message implies intelligent sender.

The more complex the design, the greater the designer.

Beavers make log dams, never Hoover Dam.

1. The fine-tuning of the initial conditions of the universe is due to either natural law, chance or design
2. It is not due to natural law or chance.
3. Therefore, it is due to design.

It has been stated by Stephen Hawking:

Why did the universe start out with so nearly the critical rate of expansion that separates models that recollapse from those that go on expanding forever, so that even now, ten thousand million years later, it is still expanding at nearly the critical rate? If the rate of expansion one second after the big bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have recollapsed before it ever reached its present state.

Psm. 139:13-14:

13 For You formed my inward parts;
You wove me in my mother's womb.

14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.²⁷

A single DNA molecule carries the same amount of information as one volume of an encyclopaedia. No one finding an encyclopaedia lying in the forest would hesitate to think that it had an intelligent cause.

Each of us contains millions of DNA-based cells. Why would we not assume intelligent design for our bodies?

Carl Sagan says,

The information of the human brain is appo. a hundred trillion bits.
Appo. the same information written out would fill 20 million

²⁷ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

volumes. Every one of us has the equivalent of 20 million books inside our heads! The brain is a very big place in a very small space. The neurochemistry of the brain is astonishingly busy, the circuitry of a machine more wonderful than any devised by humans.

One scientist figured the odds for a one-cell animal to emerge by pure chance to be one in $10^{40,000}$. The odds of an infinitely more complex human being emerging by chance are too high to calculate.

The only reasonable conclusion is that there is a great Designer behind the complex design in our world.

Jean-Paul Sartre, a French philosopher, said, "The greatest philosophical question is, 'Why is there something rather than nothing?'. Anything we believe must answer that question. A belief in God gives a credible explanation for that question.

Since there is something, there are three possibilities:

1. The "something" is eternal. It has always existed.
2. Originally there was "nothing" and "something" has come from nothing.
3. Some one created the "something".

Evolution doesn't require a God. But it cannot explain where the universe came from.

There are two choices:

1. that God created the universe
2. that the universe came into existence by itself.

If you believe #2, you must also believe the universe came from nothing. Or that the stuff of the universe came from has always existed. Both are hard to swallow.

Those who believe the universe is eternal believe that after an interminable length of time, this matter simmered and cooked. Finally it exploded in a great big bang. All the matter began flying out to the far cosmos of the universe to become stars and planets.

Then on our planet things simmered and cooked and pretty soon primitive life appeared.

Some became plant and some animal. Some mice, some monkeys and some man. All random chance. All one big happy accident.

Several Flaws:

First: Science doesn't support it.

Francis Schaeffer said, "If you believe that, you are locked into the equation 'Nothing + The impersonal + Time + Chance = Everything there is'"

Something doesn't come from nothing.

Personal doesn't come from impersonal.

Design, order and symmetry do not come by chance.

Imagine:

A watch without a maker

A 747 that resulted from an explosion in a junkyard

A hundred monkeys typing on a hundred typewriters producing Shakespeare's
McBeth.

Second: It violates the laws of probability.

A fellow, Murray Eden, at MIT used a high-speed computer to answer the question: "Beginning with chaos at any acceptable amount of time up to eight billion years ago, could the present complexity of the universe come about by chance? The computer said absolutely no!

Why we need to know this:

How it can be used to challenge the skeptic:

1. If there is a God, then I must discover if I am accountable to Him.
2. I have an explanation for the existence and design of the universe.
3. I have answers to the great philosophical questions of meaning.
4. I have hope for meaning in life and for life after death.
5. I have a way of helping others. I have a background and information I can share with others when they are searching for answers in life.

3. Moral Law

The argument can be stated thus:

- A. All men are conscious of an objective moral law.
- B. Moral laws imply a moral lawgiver.
- C. Therefore, there must be a supreme moral Lawgiver.

Objective moral laws are laws which we can all agree are right or wrong.

Moral laws tell us not what is, but what ought to be.

They tell us what man ought to do, whether they are doing them or not.

Moral laws come from beyond the natural universe.

They are not explained by anything that happens in the universe.

Moral laws are universal.

All men hold some things to be wrong...

Murder, rape, theft, lying...

Without an objective moral law there could be no right or wrong.

People who deny this say that moral laws are subjective, not objective.

But this is a subjective judgement. If our views of morality are subjective, so are theirs. But if they claim to be making an objective statement about moral law, they are implying that there is a moral law in their very act of denying it.

They are basing their objection on some standard.

Even those who say there is no moral order expect to be treated with fairness, courtesy and dignity.

Everyone expects others to follow some moral codes, even those who try to deny them.

Moral law is an undeniable fact.

The evidence for God from moral laws can be stated as:

1. If God does not exist objective moral laws do not exist.
2. Objective moral laws do exist.
3. Therefore God exists.

4. Being

- A. Whatever perfection can be attributed to the most perfect being possible must be attributed to it (otherwise it would not be the most perfect being).
- B. Necessary existence is a perfection which can be attributed to the most perfect being.
- C. Therefore, necessary existence must be attributed to the most perfect being.

Necessary existence means that someone or something exists and it cannot not exist. This is applied to God. We mean it is impossible for Him not to exist. This is the most perfect kind of existence because it can't go away.

This shows us that our idea of God must include necessary existence. It does not show God actually exists.

It shows that we must think of God as existing necessarily, but it does not prove that he must necessarily exist.

It talks about God as we think of Him. Not whether or not He really exists.

We could restate it as:

- D. If God exists, we conceive of Him as a necessary being.
- E. By definition, a necessary being must exist and cannot not exist.
- F. Therefore, if God exists, then He must exist and cannot not exist.

This argument never gets past the first "if". The only way to make it prove that God exists is to smuggle in the argument from creation.

It does prove though, that if God exists He exists in a necessary way.

5. What kind of God exists?

We can show that God exists and is the God of the Bible by showing that He meets all four arguments.

Each argument gives us part of the picture, and taken together, they form a picture that can only fit the one true God.

A. God is powerful.

Creation proves that God is a God of power. He created and sustains the universe.

He would have needed to have more energy than all the energy in the entire creation. That is more power than we can imagine.

B. God is intelligent.

Even Carl Sagan admits that the design of the universe is far beyond anything man could devise. It goes without saying that whatever created the universe had more intelligence than it.

God knows everything.

God knows everything there is to know about how we think because He designed our brains.

C. God is moral.

God thought up the moral law. The moral law in His mind shows He is a moral being. God knows right and wrong. He is neither above nor beneath morality. He is by nature moral. God is also good. Part of His creation is people.

In and of themselves persons are good.

Not in a sense of righteousness, but in a sense of value/worth/dignity

We know that because people always expect to be treated better than things.

Whatever created good things must be good itself (A cause can't give what it hasn't got). So God is moral and good.

D. God is necessary.

While this argument doesn't prove God, it tells us much about Him.

Necessary existence means He cannot not exist. So He has no beginning or ending.

He cannot "come to be" in any other way.

He must be as He is necessarily.

He cannot become something new.

So He cannot change – He is unchanging.

Without change, time is not possible (Time is a way to measure change).

So He is eternal.

Since a Necessary being cannot not be, He has no limits.

Anything that God is, He must be in accordance with his nature, so His power, knowledge and goodness are as perfect as His being.

E. God is unique.

We have seen God is:

All-powerful

All-knowing
All-good
Infinite
Uncreated
Unchanging
Eternal...

So how many beings are there like that? He is in a class of one. By definition there can be only one infinite being and no other.

F. God is Lord over creation.

The argument from creation shows that God exists (He created) and also that He is the Creator. God is distinct from the finite world He made.

The universe cannot explain its own creation.

It is not God.

Consider yourself. You exist, but you cannot account for your existence in yourself. You and I are not necessary beings. Every day people die and the world continues to go on.

It is only by recognizing an infinite being, a necessary cause for our being, can we make sense of our existence.

The all-powerful, all-knowing creator God has control over the creation. Not only does God exist, but His creation exists distinct from Him.

G. God is Yahweh.

Is this the God of the Bible?

God told Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"²⁸. This relates to His eternal self-existence. Only God can say, "I am who I am".

The Bible calls God:

Eternal (Col. 1:17, Heb. 1:2)

Unchanging (Mal. 3:6, Heb. 6:18)

Infinite (1 Kings 8:27, Isa. 66:1)

All-good (Ps. 86:5, Luke 18:19)

All-powerful (Heb. 1:3, Matt. 19:26)

Since all beings we have been looking at are the same in all these respects, and since there can't be two infinite beings, then this God that the arguments point us to is the God of the Bible.

6. Some Objections

A. Q: Since everything needs a cause, then who caused God?

A: Everything doesn't need a cause. Everything which had a beginning needs a cause. Only finite things need a cause. God didn't have a beginning. He is infinite and He is necessary.

God is the uncaused cause of all finite things.

God is the first cause. You can't go back further than a first.

B. Q: Can God make a mountain so big that He can't move it?

A: This is a meaningless question.

²⁸*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

It is really asking if there is something more than infinite.

That is logically impossible (infinite has no end).

The question is like asking, "Can God make a square circle?" or "What does blue smell like?"

These are logical impossibilities.

God's omnipotence doesn't mean that He can do what is impossible.

He has the power to do anything that is actually possible, even if it's impossible to us. Any mountain that God makes, he can control, put where he wants, and disintegrate if he wishes. You can't ask for more power than that.

C. Q: If God knows everything and His knowledge can't change, then everything is predetermined and there is no free will.

A: There is a difference between knowing what men will do and ordaining what men must do.

God could create men with free will, so they could return His love, even though He knew some of them would not.

God is responsible for the fact of freedom; Men are responsible for the acts of freedom. God might even persuade men to make certain decisions, but He does not coerce them.

D. Q: God is simply a crutch—a wish, a projection of what we hope is true.

A: How can men know that God is nothing but a projection without more than mere knowledge?

This objection says that nothing exists outside our minds. But a person must go outside the boundaries of his own mind to say that.

V. How can miracles be true?

1. Introduction

The virgin birth, the Resurrection, the raising of Lazarus, even the Old Testament miracles, all are freely used for religious propaganda, and they are very effective with an audience of unsophisticates and children.

--Richard Dawkins, atheist

It is not just a provocative rumor that God has acted in history, but a fact worthy of our intellectual conviction. The miracles of Christianity are not an embarrassment to the Christian worldview. Rather, they are testimony to the compassion of God for human beings benighted by sin and circumstance.

--Gary Habermas, Christian

Charles Templeton, who we met earlier, wrote,

Our early forefathers sought within the limits of their experience to interpret life's imponderables, usually attributing the inexplicable to the intervention of one or more of their gods, demi-deities and evil spirits, but surely...It is time to have done with primitive speculation and superstition and look at life in rational terms.

In 1937 a German physicist, Max Planck, said, "Faith in miracles must yield ground, step by step, before the steady and firm advance of the forces of science, and its total defeat is indubitably a mere matter of time."

Recently, a "futurist" speculating about what things would be like from the perspective of a scientist in the year 2090 wrote:

It seems amazing now that there was a time when science was supposedly the "enemy" of faith, and religion was deemed hostile to technological investigation. The end of atheism and agnosticism became inevitable as soon as computer calculations made improbable the odds that random natural selection [the process central to the theory of evolution] could be the sole explanation for the ever increasing intricacies found in biology. Equally influential was the discovery of multiple universes, which astronomers found at the macrocosmic level and physicists detected in the microcosmic. Science thus established the current Age of Faith, re-creating the Creator. Nowadays, only the fool says in his heart, "There is no God." (Time Magazine special issue, Fall, 1992. "Kingdoms to Come," Richard Ostling, 61.)

This was written in the context of "faith in God," but I think it is applicable to the study of "miracles" and how the scientific community is turning to a belief in at least some kind of divine author of the universe. This belief obviously can be transferred to a belief in "miracles". If one believes there is a God who can and did create everything in the universe from nothing, it's not a very big stretch to believe that God can perform miracles.

A little boy was given six dozen eggs. They were poor and he decided it would be nice to make hard-boiled Easter eggs for his family. On Sunday in church the pastor asked for donations of eggs to be used in the church's Easter hunt. The little boy volunteered four dozen of his eggs. He still had two dozen left. He decided to get them ready for coloring. Not knowing much about cooking, he took

the cold eggs from the fridge, dropped them into the boiling water and had pieces of egg everywhere.

The little boy had a simple faith. He prayed, "Lord, heal my eggs". The pan only held seven eggs, so there were still five good eggs on the counter. The boy's father came in and saw the mess and heard his son's prayer.

He said, "Let's go get another dozen eggs to replace them."

The little boy said, "No Dad, I prayed for God to heal these eggs. As they watched, the eggs were healed. The pieces of white that had squeezed out through the broken shells squeezed back again. The broken shells were completely whole.

The father couldn't believe it. He checked the counter to be sure someone hadn't switched the good eggs for broken ones.

He cut one of the eggs in half. It was perfectly normal. He peeled another egg. The membrane which had been fractured and torn was perfect and whole. He closely examined all seven of those eggs, and they were all perfect in every way!

The minister I heard telling this story said he told the story to a Baptist group and they didn't believe it! He said to them, "Do you believe God created the entire universe from nothing?" They agreed that they did believe that.

Then he said, "If you can believe that, why can't you believe God could take broken eggs and put them back together?" He made them from nothing. Surely it would not be as hard to fix them with more egg.

God still works miracles, and in the pages of the Bible, we are introduced to a God who worked miracles.

Definition: Miracle – An event which cannot be produced by the natural causes that are operative at the time and place that the event occurs

We are comfortable with natural laws like:

Gravity: If something is released from high up it will fall to the ground.

Fire: Fire consumes flammable materials.

Water: Except in the Dead Sea, water does not support people.

Death: Most dead people stay dead.

These are examples of natural laws that we are familiar with. We expect them to function in these ways.

When considering miracles we need to consider at least three things:

First: Miracles are no problem to an all-powerful God. God can heal eggs, raise the dead and do things that we can't.

Colossians 1:16-17:

16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.²⁹

Second: The all-powerful God of the Bible operates outside the limits of normal time / space and natural laws.

God simply is not bound by the laws of nature. He operates outside them.

So if he chooses to do something which is contrary to natural laws, it is no problem for Him.

Third: The all-powerful God of the Bible can suspend, override or supercede the natural laws of the universe

²⁹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Illustrations:

Many complicated machines or systems are designed to work automatically. They will perform their set functions, but many of them have "override" switches which cause the normal operation to change.

Example: An automatic thermostat will regulate temperature, humidity, etc., but it can be switched to manual override to change the normal operation.

The paper baler at work has an automatic cycle. It will go down till a pre-set pressure has been reached, stop, reverse and return to the top.

There are two override switches. One is the big red stop button. No matter where the machine is in its automatic cycle, it will stop when the red button is pushed.

The second override button is manual. The machine can be manually driven up or down by this button.

Another example is an apple falling from a tree. The law of gravity says the apple will fall to the ground. You or I can step under the tree and "interrupt" gravity by catching the apple. The law of gravity is still valid. Someone outside the law interrupted its normal working.

Our creator can do similar things which are "outside" the normal laws.

God's ways "are not our ways". His understanding is far above our ways. We simply cannot expect to understand what he does all the time.

The fact that the Bible is trustworthy and backed by excellent evidence should lead us to believe its accounts of miracles.

Some skeptics claim the accounts of miracles "grew" from fact to legend over the passage of time.

The answer to this is that there simply was not enough time for this to happen. Legends take many (several hundred at least) years to develop. We have seen that the gospel accounts were written very close to the actual events themselves.

Basically what we have said is that "if" God exists then it's not difficult to believe in miracles.

In his interview with Lee Strobel, Dr. William Lane Craig, P.H.D., gives five reasons to believe God exists and could do miracles.

2. Reason #1: God makes sense of the universe's origin

Philosophy and science both argue for the fact that the universe had a beginning. Nothing comes from nothing. There had to be a creator outside time and space to bring the universe into being.

Even atheists and skeptics accept this. Kai Nielsen, a philosopher and atheist, said, "Suppose you suddenly hear a loud bang and you ask me, 'What made that bang?' And I reply, 'Nothing. It just happened.' You would not accept that."

We can summarize like this:

Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

The universe began to exist.

Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Sir Arthur Eddington said, "The beginning seems to present insuperable difficulties unless we agree to look on it as frankly supernatural."

This points to a God who is:

Uncaused – There cannot be an infinite regress of causes.

Timeless / Changeless – Because it was the creator of time. If it is not subject to time, it does not change.

Immaterial Being – It created space; It transcends space, and therefore is immaterial rather than physical in nature.

3. Reason #2: God makes sense of the universe's complexity.

In the last 35 years scientists have been stunned to discover that creation was a highly ordered event which required an enormous amount of information and fine-tuning.

It is far more probable scientifically speaking for a life-prohibiting universe to exist than a life-sustaining one.

Stephen Hawking has calculated that if the rate of the universe's expansion one second after the big bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have collapsed into a fireball.

- British physicist P. C. W. Davies has concluded the odds against the initial conditions being suitable for the formation of stars—a necessity for planets and thus life—is a one followed by at least a thousand billion billion zeroes.

- Davies also estimated that if the strength of gravity or of the weak force were changed by only one part in a ten followed by a hundred zeroes, life could never have developed.
- There are about fifty constants and quantities—for example, the amount of usable energy in the universe, the difference in mass between protons and neutrons, the ratios of the fundamental forces of nature, and the proportion of matter to antimatter—that must be balanced to a mathematically infinitesimal degree for any life to be possible.

These facts support the conclusion that there's an intelligence behind creation. Harvard-educated Patrick Glynn abandoned atheism and became a Christian. In his book *God: The Evidence* he writes:

Today, the concrete data point strongly in the direction of the God hypothesis.... Those who wish to oppose it have no testable theory to marshal, only speculations about unseen universes spun from fertile scientific imagination.... Ironically, the picture of the universe bequeathed to us by the most advanced twentieth-century science is closer in spirit to the vision presented in the Book of Genesis than anything offered by science since Copernicus.

4. Reason #3: God makes sense of objective moral values.

The existence of moral values, which are valid whether one believes them or not, points to the existence of God.

If there is no God, morality is just a matter of personal taste. It depends on how I feel about it.

Without God there is no absolute right and wrong which imposes itself on our conscience.

We all know deep down that objective moral values do exist.

Actions like rape and child abuse aren't simply socially unacceptable. They are objectively wrong.

Love, equality and self-sacrifice are objectively good. We all know this deep down.

Since these objective moral values cannot exist without God and they unquestionably do exist, then it follows logically and inescapably that God exists.

5. Reason #4: God makes sense of the resurrection.

If Jesus really came back from the dead, then we have a divine miracle on our hands, and thus, evidence for the existence of God.

Four facts about the fate of Jesus are widely accepted by NT historians...

First: After the crucifixion, Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb. This is important because it means the location of the tomb was known to Jew, Christian and Roman.

Evidence to support this:

- Paul reports Jesus' burial in 1 Cor. 15:4 which can be dated to within five years after Jesus' death (Too early to form legend).
- The burial story is part of very old material that Mark used in writing his gospel.
- There are no traces of a competing burial story.
- It would be inexplicable for anyone to make up Joseph's involvement since he was a member of the Sanhedrin which condemned Jesus to death.

Second: The tomb was found empty the Sunday after the resurrection by a group of women.

- Paul substantiates this in his early letter to the Corinthians.
- Mark's very old material agrees with this.
- There are no signs of legendary embellishments in the empty tomb story.
- The fact that women reported the empty tomb is a very strange argument for its authenticity (Women could not testify in Jewish courts because their testimony was not considered to be reliable). The only reason to include the embarrassing fact of the women witness was because that was how it happened.

Third: On multiple occasions and under different circumstances individuals or groups of people saw Jesus alive after his death.

- Again, Paul's letter to the Corinthians clinches the argument. Its early date and Paul's own acquaintance with the people involved cannot be dismissed as legendary.
- The gospels provide multiple independent confirmation of his appearances after death.
- Even skeptical NT critic Gerd Lüdemann has concluded "It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ."

Fourth: The disciple's sudden and sincere belief that Christ had risen from the dead despite their Jewish predisposition to the contrary

Jewish belief precluded anyone rising from the dead before the general resurrection at the end of the world.

These guys, in spite of predisposition against it, became so convinced of the truth of the resurrection that they were willing to die for that belief.

No one willingly, knowingly dies for a lie.

New Testament scholar Luke Johnson said, "Some sort of powerful, transformative experience is required to generate the sort of movement earliest Christianity was."

6. Reason #5: God can immediately be experienced.

Those who know God in a personal way know absolutely that He exists and that He has power to do miracles. God can invade a life that will yield to Him. That person can walk with God, talk with God and feel the self-authenticating witness of God's Spirit.

To illustrate:

Suppose you go to the office to see if the boss is in. You see his car parked in the parking lot. You ask the secretary if he's in, and she says, "Yes, I just spoke to him." You see light under his office door. You hear his voice as he speaks on the phone. On the basis of this evidence you have good grounds for concluding that your boss is in his office.

But you could also go to the door, knock, and meet your boss face to face. At that point all the other evidence would be secondary. You have met him face to face.

So when we meet God face to face, all the evidence for his existence—though still perfectly valid—takes a secondary role.

It's no exaggeration to say that knowing God personally and seeing Him change lives are the greatest miracles of all.

Lee Strobel says in *The Case for Faith*,

Based on how God had transformed my life, my attitudes, my relationships, my motivations, my marriage, and my priorities through his very real ongoing presence in my life, I realized at that moment that miracles like manna from heaven, the virgin birth, and the resurrection—well, in the end, they're child's play for a God like that.

VI. How can you say Jesus is the only way to God?

1. Introduction

John 14:6 (spoken to Thomas):

Jesus *said to him, " I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.³⁰

John 8:24 (spoken to the Jews):

"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."³¹

Acts 4:12:

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."³²

1 Tim. 2:5:

³⁰*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,
33

The Bible's position is pretty clear.

Let's examine the question.

The real problem is the exclusive requirements of the Christian religion.

That argument goes like this:

This is the age of tolerance. All roads lead to the same place. It's arrogant for you to require a person to go through Christ for salvation.

Christianity is not the only religion that claims exclusivity.

Muslims radically claim exclusivity. In theology (you must adhere to their theology), but surprising in language. Muslims believe the sole, sufficient miracle of Islam is the Koran. But they say it's only recognizable in Arabic. Translation into any language desacralizes it. Mind you it's not just basic Arabic that's required, but a sophisticated knowledge of Arabic.

Buddhism is absolutely uncompromising on several issues.

- The authority of their sacred writings
- The law of Karma (the law of moral cause and effect)
- Reincarnation

Hinduism believes that many different beliefs can be blended together.

32 *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

33 *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Atheists reject the viewpoint of those who believe in God.

So we see that the charge that Christians are arrogant by claiming exclusivity ignores the reality that every other major religion does as well.

One response to someone who accuses Christianity of being narrow-minded is to ask if they believe Jesus was an intolerant, narrow-minded bigot. Jesus said in John 14:6, "No one comes to God except through me."

A significant number of people will not be comfortable accusing Jesus of this.

Tolerance doesn't equal equality – Tolerance and diversity are highly valued in our modern-day American culture. So much so, that I would argue that sometimes it seems that they are the only absolute values that are acceptable to hold. One of the basic assumptions of this question is that all religions are basically equal. If we are to accept all religions as equal, we must accept that they are all essentially the same. That simply is not the case. There are vast differences between religions. They cannot all be viewed as the same. This brings us to the fact that...

Truth is exclusive. Not relative.

"A" cannot both be "A" and not be "A". When a matter of truth is stated, it is exclusive by its very nature (of being true). So when the Bible says "There is salvation in no other name than Jesus," that is exclusive truth.

Truth is exclusive – the law of non-contradiction tells us that A cannot be A and non-A at the same time. Because of the law of non-contradiction, religious systems that espouse diametrically opposing viewpoints cannot both be true.

The country club analogy – Suppose that there are two country clubs which are next door to each other. The first one is very exclusive and has many rules which determine who can be a member and who cannot. One's social standing in the community, race, gender, skill level, job, and socio-economic status are all taken into account. Only those who contribute enough to the club or are deemed worthy enough are privileged to become members.

The second country club is just next door to the first one, but it is very different. This club has no restrictions on who can join its membership roles. All are welcome, regardless of their wealth or status. Which one is exclusive, narrow-minded, bigoted, and arrogant?

The analogy has application to religious systems. Christians are told that we are the narrow-minded ones because we dare to buck the prevailing sentiment of tolerance. While the Christian faith offers salvation to all mankind as a free gift of God, most other religious systems impose all manner of rules and requirements on how eternal life can be obtained and on who may obtain it. How can a God who offers the free gift of eternal life to all who will accept it be accused of being arrogant?

2. What about people who never hear about Jesus Christ?

On the front end, I must tell you that I have found this question to ultimately be one of the most difficult to answer. I believe that this is the case because we simply don't really know the answer. At the risk of

oversimplifying the issue, let me suggest that there are basically two schools of thought on this matter.

- A. Those who don't hear cannot be saved – The Bible explicitly states that the only way to be saved is to trust by faith in Jesus Christ. Period. End of conversation.

- B. Those who don't hear can be saved anyway – This camp doesn't deny that the Bible explicitly states that the only way to be saved is to trust in Jesus Christ. They do however believe that although the Bible doesn't explicitly speak to the issue of those who haven't ever heard of Jesus Christ, that it infers that they could be saved. In other words, God wouldn't damn someone to hell simply because they are born in the wrong place at the wrong time.

- C. The following is a listing of the relevant scriptures:
 - A. Romans 1:19-20, 2:12-15, 3:23
 - B. 2 Peter 3:9
 - B. Romans 5:8, 10:9-15
 - C. Revelation 5:9
 - D. Acts 10 (Cornelius)
 - E. Hebrews 11:6
 - F. Joshua 2 (Rahab)
 - G. John 3:19, 8:24, 14:6
 - H. Acts 4:12, 17:24-31
 - I. 1 Tim. 2:5
 - J. Ephesians 2:8,9

D. Conclusions? –

1. The Bible indicates that no one is innocent when it comes to sin. All of mankind has sinned and broken God's laws. God doesn't owe anyone anything. His free gift is a matter of grace, not fairness. He may offer it to anyone he pleases.
2. Salvation always comes by faith, not through anything we do.
3. The "seek and you will find" principle seems to apply. Those who are serious about finding God, will. God can bring His truth to anyone. He can send a missionary, a Bible, a vision, or an angel.
4. Ultimately, God is sovereign and He will judge all people with justice, no matter what their circumstances. (Acts 17:31)
5. No matter what we think about who may or may not be admitted into heaven, it doesn't release each of us who have heard from our own personal responsibility. In other words, if you are talking to a seeker about this, it is really a moot issue. Someone has said, "Many things in the Bible I cannot understand; many things in the Bible I only think I understand; but there are many things in the Bible I cannot misunderstand." - Anonymous

Several illustrations:

A missionary in South America had a deep longing to reach an unreached tribe with the gospel. He loaded supplies and a stack of Bibles in their language in his canoe and started off. After several days, his canoe capsized, he lost all his supplies, contracted malaria and almost died before he found his way back. He was so sick it took him a whole year to regain his strength and return. When he reached the tribe, he found that the entire tribe was Christians.

The natives told how one of the tribesmen had found a Bible (from his canoe wreck). He had brought it back and the entire tribe had found Christ through its message.

A Muslim woman told Ravi Zacharias how she left her office at the end of the day. She was very unhappy in her heart. As she walked she muttered, "I don't know why I am so empty." And after that, out of the blue, she said, "Jesus, can you help me?" She stopped on the sidewalk and said to herself, "Why did I name him?" She ended up becoming a Christian.

Sundar Singh came to know Christ in India through an appearance of Christ in his room in a dream one night. It had a tremendous impact on his life and he became a Christian.

3. Reaching out to the Seeker/Skeptic

A. Things to remember in your approach:

- 1). Be patient – remember that for most people the process of seeking after truth can be a lengthy one. Most people don't fall down at your feet and ask "What must I do to be saved" simply because you pointed out a single error in their beliefs.
- 2). Ask a lot of questions – What do you believe about God?, Heaven?, Hell?, Salvation?, Church?, Religion?, Prayer? What is (are) your truth source(s)? How reliable is your truth source? What are the assumptions of the questions you are asking me? Can I pray for/with you?

- 3). Find an entry point – Do you have anything in common?
Hobbies?, Favorite restaurant?, Sports?, Stamping?, Social concerns?, etc.
- 4). Show concern for their causes as appropriate
- 5). Give them a good book or tape as a way to begin a dialogue.
- 6). Try to utilize neutral settings as much as possible – churches are probably intimidating at first.
- 7). When you use logic, do so very gently – no one likes to be told that what they just said isn't logical or valid.
- 8). Pray, Pray, Pray – for yourself, your family, the seeker, for discernment and direction from the Holy Spirit.
- 9). Treat the person with gentleness, kindness, respect and dignity.
- 10). Remember the goal!! – The goal is saving souls from eternal separation with God, NOT having the most logical, airtight presentation that includes all the answers.
- 11). Remember that the most powerful apologetic you possess is you – No one can tell you that your testimony isn't valid. The story of how Christ changes lives, and specifically how He has changed yours, is very compelling.

12). I don't have all the answers. [It's OK to admit you don't know it all]

B. When they are ready to accept the Lord

- 1). Remember the urgency of the task at hand – while patience must be exercised, there will be times when you feel the Holy Spirit telling you to push / and asking you to back off
- 2). A good question to ask when the time is right – "Is there anything keeping you from accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior right now?"
- 3). Give 'em the scriptures:

a. All have sinned; Sin brings death

Romans 3:23

Romans 5:12

b. God has provided the gift of salvation for us through the sacrifice of His Son.

Ephesians 2:8.9

John 3:16

c. We must receive the free gift from God.

John 1:12

Revelation 3:20

d. When we are saved our lives and conduct will change.

1 John 1:6,7

1 Peter 2:2,3

VII. So prove to me that Jesus even existed (Was he a man of history?).

Some critics question whether Jesus even existed (this question). Some admit that He existed but hold that he was not God.

We will deal with the question "Did Jesus exist?" first.

There are a number of extra-biblical historical sources to prove Jesus' existence.

In his essay *Why I Am Not a Christian*, philosopher Bertrand Russell says, "Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we do not know anything about him."

Today it would be difficult to find too many people who agreed with him.

1. Cornelius Tacitus

Cornelius Tacitus (AD 55-120) was a first-rate Roman historian who wrote,

Nero falsely charged...the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius.

(Note: Nero charged the Christians with setting Rome on fire).

2. Pliny the Younger

Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor AD 112. Wrote of Christians, "They are in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang...a hymn to Christ as to a God."

3. Thallus... AD 52. Historian

...spoke about the darkness which enveloped the land while Jesus hung on the cross. He explained away the darkness as being an eclipse of the sun.

Another writer wrote, "This seems unreasonable because a solar eclipse could not take place at the time of the full moon, and it was at the season of the Paschael full moon that Christ died."

These references show that Christ's crucifixion and the darkness were well known.

4. Mara Bar-Serapion...appo. AD 75

...wrote a letter to his son in which he compared Jesus to Socrates and Pythagoras.

5. Babylonian Talmud

...speaks about the crucifixion of "Yeshua the Nazarene" on the eve of Passover.

There is a later passage which asserts that "Yeshua had five disciples". (Not the correct amount, but showing the fact that the Rabbi Jesus had followers)

6. The Virgin Birth

The Talmud (A Jewish commentary on the Law) contains several references to the fact that Jesus was born out of Mary's unfaithfulness.

In John 8:41 we see the scribes and Pharisees leveling the same charge against Christ...

"You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." 34

We know this charge is groundless, but it shows that unbelievers responded to the Christian claim of a miraculous birth. Note also they do not deny his birth, simply the circumstances of it.

7. Josephus (Jewish historian, died around 100 AD)

...has two passages that mention Jesus Christ.

The first is called the "Testimonium":

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had

34 *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

There is some difference of opinion among scholars as to whether Josephus actually said all that, but no one disputes the references to Jesus as a historical person.

The second passage describes the stoning of "James the brother of Jesus"...

Ananus thought that with Festus dead and Albinus still on the way he would have the proper opportunity. Convening the judges of the Sanhedrin, he brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, whose name was James, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the Law and delivered them up to be stoned.

Josephus, writing appo. 50 years after the crucifixion, affirms the fact that Jesus was a historical person.

8. The following post-apostolic writers refer to Jesus of Christianity:

- A. Clement of Rome
- B. Ignatius
- C. Quadratus
- D. Aristides
- E. Justin Martyr

9. Conclusion

We see that without the NT books we have historical evidence for the following facts:

- A. Jesus was a Jewish teacher.
- B. Jesus performed miracles.
- C. Jesus was rejected by the Jewish leaders.
- D. Jesus was condemned to be crucified under Pontius Pilate.
- E. In spite of the crucifixion, Christianity quickly spread beyond Palestine.
- F. Many people, men and women, slave and free, worshipped Christ as God by the beginning of the second century.

VIII. OK. Jesus lived as a man of history, but prove to me that he was God.

1. First we will look at what Jesus said...

Some critics say Jesus never really claimed to be God.

John 10:30-33:

30 "I and the Father are one."

31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

32 Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

33 The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." 35

Here Jesus clearly claimed equality with the Father. The word for "one" means one in essence.

The Jews obviously understood, for they accused Him of blasphemy.

³⁵*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

John 5:17-18:

17 But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. 36

Here Jesus claimed full equality with God. Just as a human father's son must be fully human, so God's Son must be fully God.

Again the Jews understood and tried to kill Him for blasphemy.

John 8:58-59:

58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. 37

Verily, verily³⁸ (KJ), "Most assuredly" (NKJ), Truly, truly (NAS).

Using a strong double oath, Jesus claims the divine Name. Again the Jews got it and tried to stone Him.

Exodus 3:13-14:

¹³And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them? ¹⁴And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. 39

John 8:19:

³⁶*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³⁷*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³⁸*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³⁹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, *Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.*⁴⁰

John 14:8-9:

⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. ⁹Jesus saith unto him, *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?* ⁴¹

Jesus clearly claimed deity.

2. Jesus was worshipped as God.

Deuteronomy 6:13-15:

¹³Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. ¹⁴Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you; ¹⁵(For the LORD thy God *is* a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.⁴²

Jesus told Satan in Matt. 4:10, "*Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*"⁴³

The word "serve" means "fulfill religious duty to him".

Exodus 20:3-5:

⁴⁰*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴¹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴²*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴³*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ⁴Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: ⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me...44

Matt. 8:2:

And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 45

John 9:35-39:

³⁵Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, **Dost thou believe on the Son of God?** ³⁶He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? ³⁷And Jesus said unto him, **Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.** ³⁸And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

³⁹And Jesus said, **For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.** 46

Matt. 14:33:

Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.47

3. Others did not accept worship.

Acts 10:25-26:

²⁵And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. ²⁶But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 48

44 *The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.*

45 *The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.*

46 *The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.*

Peter refused worship.

Rev. 19:10:

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.⁴⁹

Angel refused worship.

Oxford University theologian Alister McGrath says, "Within the Jewish context in which the first Christians operated, it was God and God alone who was to be worshipped. Paul warned the Christians at Rome that there was a constant danger that humans would worship creatures when they ought to be worshipping their Creator (Rom. 1:23). Yet the early Christian church worshipped Christ as God—a practice which is clearly reflected even in the New Testament.

4. What Others Say About Christ

Rom. 9:5:

Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.⁵⁰

Philippians 2:6-11:

⁴⁷ *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴⁸ *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴⁹ *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁵⁰ *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 51

Here we see two natures:

The nature of God (v. 6)

The Nature of a servant (v. 7)

We see Christ as fully God and fully human in this passage.

Colossians 1:15-17:

¹⁵Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: ¹⁶For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: ¹⁷And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 52

Colossians 2:9:

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 53

Titus 2:13, KJV:

...Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ...54

51 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

52 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

53 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

54 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Titus 2:13, NASB:

...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus...⁵⁵

Matt. 16:15-17:

¹⁵He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?** ¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.** ⁵⁶

2 Peter 1:1, KJV:

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ⁵⁷

2 Peter 1:1, NASB:

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ...⁵⁸

John 20:26-29:

²⁶And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, **Peace be unto you.** ²⁷Then saith he to Thomas, **Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.** ²⁸And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

⁵⁵*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁵⁶*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁵⁷*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁵⁸*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²⁹Jesus saith unto him, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* 59

Hebrews 1:3:

Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high...60

Hebrews 1:8:

But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. 61

John 1:1, 14:

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 62

¹⁴And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. 63

5. Things Jesus Did

A. Forgave Sins

Mark 2:5-7:

59 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

60 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

61 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

62 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

63 *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*
⁶But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷Why doth this *man*
 thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?⁶⁴

Only God can forgive sins committed against God.

John Stott: "We may forgive the injuries which others do to us; but the sins we commit against God only God Himself can."

Mark 2:9-12:

⁹Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee;* or to say, *Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?* ¹⁰But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) ¹¹I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. ¹²And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. ⁶⁵

Jesus proved His ability to forgive sins by healing the paralytic.

B. Raised the Dead

John 11:1-44:

⁴¹Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.* ⁴²And I knew that thou hearest me *always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.* ⁴³And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth.* ⁴⁴And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, *Loose him, and let him go.* ⁶⁶

⁶⁴*The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.*

⁶⁵*The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.*

Widow's son at Nain (Luke 7)

Jarius' daughter (Mark 5)

C. Healed the Sick

In Mark chapter one, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law and many others.

³⁴And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. ⁶⁷

A leper in v. 40

In chapter two, a paralytic let down thorough the roof was healed.

In chapter three, a man with a withered hand

In chapter five, the Gerasene demoniac

Mark 5:15:

¹⁵And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.⁶⁸

sitting, clothed, right mind.

Many, many others.

Only God can heal the sick.

D. Controlled the Elements

⁶⁶*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁶⁷*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁶⁸*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Stilled the storm (Mark 4, Luke 8)

Walked on water (Luke 8)

Increased loaves and fishes (Matt. 14, Mark 6)

Only God can do these things.

E. Knew Things without Being There

John 1:47-49:

⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, **Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!** ⁴⁸Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, **Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.** ⁴⁹Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. ⁶⁹

An amazing scripture...Nathanael realized that Jesus could not have seen him sitting under the fig tree. He recognized Him as the divine Messiah.

Matt. 17:24-27:

²⁴And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? ²⁵He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, **What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?** ²⁶Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, **Then are the children free.** ²⁷Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee. ⁷⁰

Matt. 12:24-25:

⁶⁹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁷⁰*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²⁴But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. ²⁵And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, **Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand...**⁷¹

VIV. Lord, Liar or Lunatic? (McDowell)

Many people today have no problem with a historical Jesus. They think He lived, but that He was just a good man—a teacher who was good and did good, but who was not God.

Josh McDowell shows the absurdity of that position in "Lord, Liar, Lunatic".

The basic facts about the life and works of Jesus are nothing short of incredible. His influence is seen in the forms of:

- Hospitals started to help the needy by Christians
- Most universities were started by Christians.
- Literacy and education of the masses
- Representative government
- Civil liberties
- The abolition of slavery
- Benevolence and charity
- High regard for human life
- Countless changed lives
- Elevation of women
- The eternal salvation of countless souls.

⁷¹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

You probably have heard the famous words written by a nineteenth-century writer:

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant. He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. Then, for three years, he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never lived in a big city. He never traveled 200 miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his garments, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned--put together--have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one, solitary life.

C.S. Lewis tells us we have to make a choice when considering who Jesus was:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

Jesus claimed to be God.

That is either true or false.

If true, then we must accept His lordship.

If false, there are two options:

Option #1: Jesus knew his claims were false.

(Jesus was a liar)

If He was lying, He was a hypocrite (He told others to be honest).

But He was more than that—He was a demon from Hell, for he told others to trust their eternal destinies to Him.

He would also be a fool because His claims of deity would lead to His death by crucifixion.

Josh McDowell writes, "If Jesus was a liar, a con man, and a fool, how do you explain the fact that he left us with the most profound moral instruction and powerful moral example that anyone ever has left?"

Could a deceiver—an imposter of monstrous proportions—teach such unselfish ethical truths and live such a morally exemplary life as Jesus did? The very notion is incredulous.

The great historian Phillip Schaff has this to say about the idea that Jesus was a liar and a deceiver:

The hypothesis of imposture is so revolting to moral as well as common sense, that its mere statement is its condemnation. It was invented by the Jews who crucified the Lord to cover their crime, but has never been seriously carried out, and no scholar of any decency and self-respect would now dare to profess it openly. How in the name of logic, common sense, and experience could an impostor - that is a deceitful, selfish, depraved man - have invented, and constantly maintained from the beginning to end, the purest and noblest character known in history with the most perfect air of truth and reality? How could he have conceived and carried out a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude, sublimity, and sacrificed his own life for it, in the face of the strongest prejudices of his people and ages?"

Was He a lunatic?

If it is inconceivable for Jesus to have been a liar, could He have been mistaken? Could He have sincerely thought He was God when in fact He wasn't?

Philosopher Peter Kreeft writes,

Well, then, why not liar or lunatic? But almost no one who has read the Gospels can honestly and seriously consider that option. The savviness, the canniness, the human wisdom, the attractiveness of Jesus emerge from the Gospels with unavoidable force to any but the most hardened and prejudiced reader. Compare Jesus with liars like the Reverend Sun Myung Moon or lunatics like the dying Nietzsche. Jesus has in abundance precisely those three qualities that liars and lunatics most conspicuously lack: (1) his practical wisdom, his ability to read human hearts, to understand people and the real, unspoken question behind their words, his ability to heal people's spirits as well as their bodies; (2) his deep and winning love, his passionate compassion, his ability to attract people and make them feel at home and forgiven, his authority, "not as the scribes"; and above all (3) his ability to astonish, his unpredictability, his creativity. Liars and lunatics are all so dull and predictable! No one who knows both the Gospels and human beings can seriously entertain the possibility that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, a bad man.

Phillip Schaff, the noted historian, wrote,

Is such an intellect clear as the sky, bracing as the mountain air, sharp and penetrating as a sword, thoroughly healthy and vigorous, always ready and self-possessed - liable to a radical and most serious delusion concerning His own character and mission? Preposterous imagination!

There was in every way a saneness, a calmness, a sincerity about Jesus' ministry which excluded delusion. There was absolutely none of the aberrations of behavior which mark those who are unbalanced in mind.

Jesus was not only sane, but His counsel provides the most concise and accurate formula for peace of mind and heart.

The Sermon on the Mount is a blueprint for successful human life with optimism, mental health and contentment.

No lunatic could have possibly been the source of such perceptive and effective psychological insight.

Jesus Christ was no lunatic!

He is Lord!

If He is neither liar or lunatic, he must be Lord.

Peter proclaimed in Matt. 16:16, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."^{7 2}

Martha confessed in John 11:27, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world."^{7 3}

Thomas said in John 20:28, "My Lord and my God!"^{7 4}

We must decide who Jesus is. We do not have the option of calling Him a great moral teacher. He is either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord.

If we honestly consider the evidence, we will be driven to the conclusion that Jesus is Lord.

^{7 2} *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

^{7 3} *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

^{7 4} *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Josh McDowell depicts the Lord, Liar or Lunatic proposition as shown here:

JESUS CLAIMS TO BE GOD

