

# 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

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

#### 1. Bibliographical (External)

- A. The number of copies we have
- B. How close the copies were made to the original
- C. A few of the major manuscripts
- D. The NT was copied into various versions and translated into various languages—This was rare with ancient literature

#### 1) Syriac versions

- a. Old Syriac (appo. 300 AD)
- b. Syriac Peshitta (150-250 AD)
- c. Palestinian Syriac (400-450 AD)
- d. Philoxenian (508 AD)
- e. Harkleian Syriac (616 AD)

#### 2) Latin Versions

- a. African Old Latin (400 AD)
- b. Codex Corbiensis (400-500 AD)
- c. Codex Vercellensis (360 AD)
- d. Codex Palatinus (5<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- e. Latin Vulgate (366-384 AD)

#### 3) Egyptian Versions

- a. Sahidic (210 AD)
- b. Bohairic (300 AD)
- c. Middle Egyptian ( 300-400 AD)

#### 4) Other Versions

- a. Armenian (400+ AD)
- 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

- 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

- 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.

2. Internal Evidence

A. Benefit of the Doubt

B. General Principles in Dealing With Bible Difficulties

- 1) The unexplained is not necessarily unexplainable.
- 2) Fallible interpretations do not mean fallible revelation.
- 3) Understand the context
- 4) Interpret difficult passages in light of clear ones
- 5) Don't build major doctrines on obscure texts.
- 6) An incomplete report doesn't mean it is false
- 7) NT quotes of OT may not be exact.
- 8) Just because the Bible records it doesn't mean it approves it.
- 9) The Bible uses non-technical language
- 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

C. Sources

D. Archaeology

- 1) Hittites
- 2) Israelites in Egypt

- 3) Joseph's Tomb
  - 4) Dibon
  - 5) Sodom and Gomorrah
  - 6) Jericho
  - 7) David
  - 8) Prism of Sennacherib
  - 9) Cyrus Cylinder
  - 10) The Incredible Accuracy of Luke
    - a. The Census
    - b. Quirinius
    - c. politarchs
    - d. Lysanias
    - e. Nazareth.
    - f. Pilate
    - g. Names
  - 11) The Nazareth Decree
  - 12) Yohanan—Crucifixion Victim
    - a. Seven-inch Roman nail through both heels
    - b. Bones of wrist had been nailed.
    - c. Leg bones crushed by blunt blow
  - 13) James Ossuary
    - 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.
- E. The Bible is a unique book.
- 1) The Bible is unique in its composition.

The Bible was written over  
 a 1,500-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
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- 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.
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- It was written while in different moods—
  - some at the height of joy,
  - some from the depths of sorrow and despair.
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- 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.

3) The Bible is unique in its survival

4) Its Ability to Change Lives

5) Its Scientific Accuracy

6) Its Ability to Remain Fresh

7) Prophecy

a. Messiah was to be 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. 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.

h. Some Specific Prophecies

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

(2) Joshua 6:26 / 1 Kings 16:34

(3) Ezekiel 12:12-14 / 2 Kings 25:3-7

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

1. God did not create the world in its present state.
2. God gave man free choice (free will).
3. Much suffering / evil around us can be traced to human causes.
4. Suffering can also be caused by Satan and demons.
5. Natural Disasters
6. Benefits of Suffering, Evil and Pain
  - A. Suffering alerts us to the fact that there is something wrong with our world.
  - B. Suffering can serve to direct us.
  - C. Suffering can also unite us.
  - D. Pain keeps us from self-destruction.
7. Sometimes some evil brings a greater good.
  - A. Joseph
  - B. Job
  - C. Samson
  - D. Christ on the Cross
8. Suffering and evil are only temporary.
9. God's ways are not our ways.
10. What is the alternative?
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.
12. How can we say Christianity is loving / kind when throughout history so many Christians were involved in fighting with and killing others?
- A. We must remember who is a Christian.
  - B. Some Perspective
- III. Why would a good God send people to hell?
- IV. How do I know God exists?
- 1. Creation
    - 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.
  - 2. Design
    - 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.
  - 3. Moral Law
    - 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.
  - 4. Being
    - A. Necessity of Perfection
    - B. Necessary Existence
    - C. Necessity of Attributing Necessary Existence
    - 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.

5. What kind of God exists?

- A. God is powerful.
- B. God is intelligent.
- C. God is moral.
- D. God is necessary.
- E. God is unique.
- F. God is Lord over creation.
- G. God is Yahweh.

6. Some Objections

- A. Since everything needs a cause, then who caused God?
- B. Can God make a mountain so big that He can't move it?
- C. If God knows everything and His knowledge can't change, then everything is predetermined and there is no free will.
- D. God is simply a crutch—a wish, a projection of what we hope is true.

V. How can miracles be true?

- 1. Introduction
- 2. God makes sense of the universe's origin.
- 3. God makes sense of the universe's complexity.
- 4. God makes sense of objective moral values.
- 5. God makes sense of the resurrection.
- 6. God can immediately be experienced.

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

- 1. Introduction
- 2. What about people who never hear about Jesus Christ?
  - 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

### 3. Reaching out to the Seeker/Skeptic

#### A. Things to remember in your approach:

- 1). Be patient.
- 2). Ask a lot of questions.
- 3). Find an entry point.
- 4). Show concern.
- 5). Give them a good book or tape.
- 6). Try to utilize neutral settings.
- 7). When you use logic, do so very gently.
- 8). Pray, Pray, Pray.
- 9). Treat the person with gentleness, kindness, respect and dignity.
- 10). Remember the goal!!
- 11). Remember that the most powerful apologetic you possess is you.
- 12). I don't have all the answers.

#### B. When they are ready to accept the Lord

- 1). Remember the urgency of the task at hand.
- 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

VII. So prove to me that Jesus even existed.

1. Cornelius Tacitus
2. Pliny the Younger
3. Thallus
4. Mara Bar-Serapion
5. Babylonian Talmud
6. The Virgin Birth
7. Josephus
  
8. Post-Apostolic Writers
  - A. Clement of Rome
  - B. Ignatius
  - C. Quadratus
  - D. Aristides
  - E. Justin Martyr
  
9. Conclusion
  - 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. What Jesus Said
2. Jesus was worshipped as God.
3. Others did not accept worship.
4. What Others Say About Christ
  
5. Things Jesus Did
  - A. Forgave Sins – Mark 2:5-7
  - B. Raised the Dead

- C. Healed the Sick
- D. Controlled the Elements
- E. Knew Things without Being There

VIV. Lord, Liar or Lunatic? (McDowell)