

Apologetics Quick Chart®

Terms and Definitions

Apologetics, from the Greek *apologia*: a defense, is that branch of Christian theology which seeks to provide a rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith.
 I Peter 3:15 – “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason [i.e. – *apologia*] for the hope that you have.”
 1. **Offensive Apologetics** – presenting a positive case for the Christian truth claims.
 “There is good reason to think Christianity is true.”-Ex. *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel
 2. **Defensive Apologetics** – answering objections against the truth claims of Christianity.
 “There is no good reason to think Christianity is false.”-Ex. *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel
 Offensive apologetics is the focus of this document.

The Nature of Truth

Truth exists and is knowable. Many would try to deny the existence of truth with one of the following claims: “There is no truth” or “Truth is not knowable” or “Truth is relative.” These claims are self-refuting, meaning they fail to meet their own standard.
Self-defeating claims: fail to meet their own standard and are self-contradictory.
 For example, the claim that “there is no truth” is asserted as true, but that is contradictory. Likewise, the claim that truth is not knowable, simply ask “how do you know that?” The claim that truth is relative is asserted as absolute. But if truth is relative, then so is the claim “truth is relative.” Such claims do not meet the criteria it is asserting. Christianity claims to be true. The following information provides evidence for that truth.

Three Arguments for God’s Existence

Cosmological

P1: Everything that begins to exist has a cause
 P2: The universe began to exist
 C: The universe has a cause
Evidence for P1
 -self-evident
 -nothing comes from nothing
 -seems more plausible than its denial
Evidence for P2
 -impossibility of an actual infinite number of past events necessitates a beginning
 -Big Bang implies a beginning of the universe
Implications of C
 -first cause must be timeless, immaterial, super-powerful, supernatural b/c time, matter, energy, and nature was created at Big Bang
 -this attributes are the very attributes of God



Moral

P1: If God doesn’t exist, objective moral values don’t exist
 P2: Objective moral values exist
 C: Therefore, God exists
Evidence for P1
 -God is the only source for objective moral values, because society and individuals can only provide subjective moral values (i.e., ethical relativism)
Evidence for P2
 -There exists moral obligations that everyone is required to follow whether they do or not or say they believe or not
 -ex.-rape, murder, torture of children are examples of some objective moral truths
Evidence of C
 -objective moral values breed a sense of obligation or duty
 -only a person or authority can give a sense of obligation
 -since the obligation to objective moral values cannot come from society or individuals, God must exist to ground this obligation

Teleological

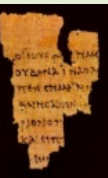
P1: The fine tuning of the universe is either design or chance.
 P2: It is highly improbable that it resulted from chance.
 C: Thus it is highly probable that it resulted from design.
Evidence for P2
 -The existence of life like ours depends upon a complex and delicate balance which must be fine tuned to such a degree that is literally incomprehensible and incalculable that it cannot be a result of chance, thus it must be design.
 -Examples of fine-tuning include the expansion rate of universe, gravitational force, placement of planet to sun, placement of solar system in galaxy, strong nuclear force, oxygen level, moon-earth gravity relation, and over a hundred others. If any one of these constants was different then life would not be possible.



Reasons for the Reliability of the New Testament (NT)

Dates

Reasons to believe the New Testament was written in the 1st century:
 1) **Extant (existing) manuscripts**
 a) The Chester Beatty Papyri contains most of the New Testament and is dated AD 250
 b) The Bodmer Papyri (AD 200) contains most of John
 2) **Early Church Father’s Testimony**
 a) Papias (AD 70-163) – mentions all four gospels
 b) Justin Martyr (AD 100-165)-four gospels, 11 other NT texts
 c) Irenaeus (AD 130-200) – all but four books of NT mentioned
 d) Polycarp (c. AD 110) - four gospels, majority of Pauline texts
 e) Ignatius (c. 107) – 24 books of NT quoted from by Ignatius
 f) There **many** and **early** quotations that push the New Testament well within the first century.
 3) **John Ryland fragment:** contains a fragment of John 18:31- 33, 37-38. Found in Egypt. Dates between AD 117-138.
 4) **Focus of Luke’s writings** (Gospel of Luke and Acts) is Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Does **not** mention the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) thus most likely written before that date. Matthew and Mark written before that and most of Paul’s epistles written well before that. Thus most, if not all, of NT written before AD 70.



Manuscript Evidence

1) Comparing NT textual preservation with other ancient documents.
 a) **Number of manuscript copies:**

Document	Number of Copies
NT	5800+
<i>Iliad</i>	1757
Herodotus	109
Thucydides	96

note: The NT has more manuscripts than any other ancient document

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

Document	Span of Years
NT	50 max
<i>Iliad</i>	400
Herodotus	1350
Thucydides	1300

note: the NT manuscripts are closer to the original copies than any other ancient document



Archaeology

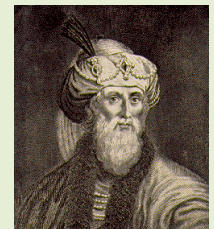
Archaeology has continually affirmed the truth of the historicity of the Bible.
 1) Significant OT archaeological finds:
 a) Dead Sea Scrolls (1947-56)
 Qumran, Israel – provided oldest copies of almost all of the books of the OT confirming reliability of transmission process
 b) House of David Inscription (1993)
 Tel Dan, Israel – Earliest mention of King David outside the Bible
 c) Cylinder of Nabonidus (1854) Ur, Iraq – Corroborates Belshazzar as last king of Babylon (Dan. 5:1-30)
 2) Significant NT archaeological finds:
 a) Pilate Stone Inscription (1961)
 Caesarea Maritima – Confirmed existence and office of Pilate
 b) Caiaphas Ossuary (1990) near Jerusalem-confirmed existence of Caiaphas
 c) Pool of Siloam (2004) Jerusalem– Site of Jesus’ miracle in John 9:1-11
 3) John McRay - Professor of NT and archeology. Wrote *Archaeology and the New Testament*. Supervised excavations at Caesarea, Sepphoris, and Herodium. John McRay has stated that “Archaeology has not produced anything that is unequivocally a contradiction to the Bible.” And “There is no question that the credibility of the New Testament is enhanced” through archaeology.



Caiaphas Ossuary

Non-Biblical Sources

1) There are more than 36,000 New Testament quotations present in writings of early church fathers.
 2) Secular Historians confirming NT accounts:
 a) Josephus (A.D. 37-100) Jewish Antiquities
 b) Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. c. 55-117) Roman historian- names Jesus as the founder of Christianity
 c) Pliny the Younger (c. A.D. 112) Roman governor
 d) Other Historians
 -Lucian, Greek Satirist (2nd cent)
 -Suetonius, Roman Historian (c. AD 120)
 -Thallus, Historian of Samaria (AD 52)
 3) Combining all secular testimony (outside of N.T.) we get the following picture: Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate at Passover time, believed by disciples that Jesus rose on the third day, church leaders charged Christ with sorcery (i.e., miracles), Christianity could not be contained and spread into Roman, Nero and other Roman rulers persecuted Christians, early Christians denied polytheism, live dedicated lives according to Jesus’ teaching, and worshiped Christ – This picture is congruent with the NT accounts
 4) “On the basis of non-Christian sources...it is noteworthy that it does not in any way conflict with, but rather confirms, the historical information in the New Testament.” Paul Barnett, professor of ancient history at Macquarie University



Josephus

The Divine Claims of Christ and Messianic Prophecy

Jesus' Divine Claims

Jesus claimed to be God in direct and indirect ways:

1) Direct Claims:

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

2) Indirect Claims:

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

Options for Understanding

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

The Alternatives - Quadralimma (4 L's)

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

Legend - Never was a Jesus who claimed to be God

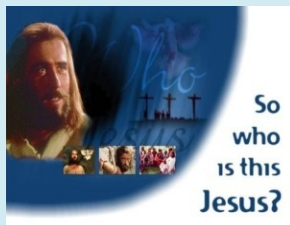
Lunatic - Thought that he was God,

but was wrong

Liar - Jesus deliberately deceived people

Lord - He was who he claimed to be.

In taking the claims of Jesus seriously one cannot dismiss Jesus as just a good moral teacher. Simply being a good moral teacher is not an available option. Only the options of legend, liar, lunatic, or lord are available.



Statistical Prophecy

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

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

Evidence for the Resurrection

Establishing Historical Facts

Historical Facts must . . .

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

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

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



#2 Empty Tomb: Jesus' tomb was found empty

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

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

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

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

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

Best Explanation

What explanation best accounts for these four established facts?

Explanatory Scope: it must explain all the facts

Explanatory Power: it must explain each fact adequately

Proposed Explanations -

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

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

Critique: denies the first historical fact that Jesus died from the crucifixion.

Disciples would not have claimed a miracle resurrection with a tortured and wounded Jesus.

- 3) **Disciples Lied** - Disciples of Jesus intentionally deceived people into thinking that Jesus rose from the dead.

Critique: Disciples wouldn't die for a known lie. Doesn't explain the empty tomb fact.

- 4) **Wrong Tomb** - Women and disciples went to the wrong tomb that was empty and mistakenly believed in resurrection.

Critique: Tomb of Jesus is a known location, the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

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

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

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



References/Resources:

Beginner

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

Intermediate

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

Advanced

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

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

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

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

Web Resources:

www.reasonablefaith.org
www.paulcopan.org

www.str.org
www.bethinking.org

www.crossexamined.org
www.apologetics.com

www.ischristianitytrue.wordpress.com
www.coldcasechristianity.com