

RESPONDING TO HARD QUESTIONS

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FAITH AND REASON: HOW DO I KNOW CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE?

Do I know it's true because of reason, argument and evidence? Or do I simply know it's true by faith? In answering this question it is helpful to distinguish between knowing Christianity is true and showing that it is true.[1]

KNOWING CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

- I. We know Christianity is true primarily by the self-authenticating witness of the Holy Spirit.
 - A. Scriptural Support: Romans 8:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 John 2:20, 27; John 14:16-17, 20; 1 John 3:24; 4:13.
 - B. Note that this is true for the unbeliever as well: John 16:7-11.
- II. Reason supports this knowledge through the weight of argument and evidence. See 1 John 5:6-10.

SHOWING CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

- I. We show Christianity to be true to the unbeliever or skeptic by appealing to their reason using logical arguments and evidence.
- II. The Holy Spirit uses our arguments to convince the unbeliever of the truth of Christianity.

HAS SCIENCE BURIED GOD?

- I. The Myth of Conflict between Science and Faith.
 - A. The percentage of university scientists who believe in a personal God who answers prayer has remained more or less constant at around 40% since 1916.
 - B. Between 1901 and 2000 over 60% of Nobel Laureates were Christians.
 - C. Modern science was born out of the belief that the universe is rational and intelligible based on the prevailing theistic worldview at the time.
 - D. Science also depends on faith. Scientists believe in
 1. the effectiveness of mathematics in the natural sciences.
 2. the laws of nature.
 3. human reason.

1. William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith, 3rd Ed., pp 29-60.

II. The Limits of Science.

- A. Science answers the question, how? Science cannot answer the question, why?
- B. Science cannot replace other disciplines such as philosophy, ethics, literature, poetry art, and music.
- C. Science does not compete with God as an explanation.

The question really becomes: which worldview fits best with the evidence, naturalism or theism?

THE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

I. God makes sense of the origin of the universe.

- A. Everything that comes into being must have an adequate cause.
- B. The universe has come into being.
- C. Therefore, the universe must have an adequate cause.

II. Scientific Pointers to Creation

- A. The second law of thermodynamics - states that entropy (the measure of disorder at the macroscopic level) may be created but not destroyed. This means that the amount of usable energy is decreasing. In other words, the universe is winding down or wearing out.
- B. The expanding universe - Einstein's equations of general relativity imply that the universe cannot be static but must be expanding or contracting. Observations of distant galaxies indicate that the universe is and has been continually expanding.
- C. The cosmic microwave background radiation gives evidence of the creation event itself. The latest measurements from the COBE satellite show the precise amount of fluctuation in this radiation consistent with the observed structure in the universe.

We may deduce from this that a personal Creator of the universe exists, who is uncaused, beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, and unimaginably powerful.

III. God makes sense of the complex order in the universe.

- A. Order and design always imply an intelligent and purposeful designer.

- B. The universe exhibits order and design.
- C. Therefore, the universe must have an intelligent and purposeful designer.

IV. Evidence for Fine Tuning of the Universe

- A. The nuclear ground state energies of carbon and oxygen are precisely the values needed to produce the proper amounts of each for life to exist.
- B. The ratio of proton to electron mass is just right to allow the molecules necessary for life to form.
- C. The expansion rate of the universe is just right for stars and galaxies to form.
- D. The initial low entropy state of our universe still has no natural explanation.

V. Evidence for Design in Biology

- A. The odds that all of the functional proteins necessary for life might form in one place by random events is 1 to 1040,000.

THE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE (PART 2)

- I. God makes sense of objective moral values and duties.
 - A. If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
 - B. Objective moral values and duties do exist.
 - C. Therefore, God exists.
- II. Apart from God, moral values and duties cannot be objective.
 - A. This does not mean that:
 - 1. Atheists cannot live moral lives.
 - 2. One cannot construct a system of ethics without reference to God.
 - 3. One cannot recognize that objective moral values exist without reference to God.
 - B. Any other basis for moral values is necessarily arbitrary and therefore, not objective.
 - C. Evolutionary theory cannot explain moral obligation.

- III. Objective moral values and duties do exist.
 - A. Just as there are physical laws that govern nature there are moral laws that operate in the world of humans. The difference is that the latter may be broken.
 - B. All people everywhere believe certain things to be intrinsically right or wrong.
 - C. There may be diversity of moral practice but there is much less diversity of moral standards.
- IV. Therefore, God exists.
 - A. What then is the relationship between God and moral values?
 - 1. God is the greatest conceivable being, the source and measure of all goodness.
 - 2. Moral values and duties flow necessarily from God's nature. They are not arbitrary.

HOW COULD A GOOD GOD ALLOW EVIL AND SUFFERING?

- I. The mere raising of this question assumes that God exists.
 - A. To affirm that evil exists we must also affirm that good exists.
 - B. We must then affirm that a moral law exists to tell the difference between good and evil.
 - C. If a moral law exists, then there must be a moral law giver.
- II. What are some possible reasons for why God allow evil?
 - A. For love to exist and to exist among created beings, the world must allow for its opposite.
 - B. God sometimes allows evil to bring about a greater good.
 - 1. The life of Joseph.
 - 2. The death of Christ.
 - 3. Knowledge of God.
 - C. God also allows evil and suffering to make us aware that something is wrong.

- III. God is not unaffected by evil and suffering in the world.
 - A. God's words to the prophet Hosea.
 - B. Jesus weeping over Lazarus and Jerusalem.
 - C. The death of Jesus on the Cross.
- IV. The best way to understand evil and suffering is through the cross
 - A. Through Jesus God Himself took on all the evil and suffering of the world. The result is that we have a God and Savior who can completely empathize with us.
 - B. The cross shows evil to be utterly evil.
 - C. This life is not all that there is.
 - D. Suffering has redemptive value.
 - E. God gives us the grace to endure.

CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

THE RELIABILITY OF THE GOSPELS

- I. Normal procedure in historical research is to accept a source as reliable until proven otherwise. Historical research and archeology have proven over and over again that the Gospels are remarkably accurate. Only a bias against the supernatural events that are described in them can lead one to rejecting them as unreliable.
- II. The contrast between the Gospels and numerous other ancient religious writings is stark. They are not replete with fanciful, unverifiable assertions. Accounts of miracles are matter of fact and mostly take a secondary place in the context.
- III. The time gap between the writing of the Gospels and the events they record is a mere 30 to 60 years, too short a time for legendary embellishments to arise.
- IV. Research on non-literate people groups indicates that large amounts of oral history can be memorized and recited very accurately. This strongly suggests that in an ancient culture with little free access to books, the works and sayings of Jesus could certainly have been accurately passed down by eye witnesses and later recorded.
- V. The sheer number and antiquity of New Testament manuscripts in existence today demonstrate the accuracy and integrity of the Gospel texts.

- VI. The Gospel accounts are consistent within themselves and with each other.
- VII. The Jesus we find in the Gospels is not one the disciples or the early church was likely to invent.
- VIII. The disciples gained nothing (in a worldly sense) by sticking to their story and most of them paid with their lives.

CORROBORATION FROM SOURCES OUTSIDE THE NEW TESTAMENT

Even if we did not have the New Testament or Christian Writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger that:

- I. Jesus was a Jewish teacher.
- II. Many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms.
- III. He was rejected by the Jewish leaders.
- IV. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius.
- V. Despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by A.D. 64; all kinds of people from the cities and countryside—men and women, slave and free—worshiped him as God by the beginning of the second century.

Taken from chapter 8 of Jesus Under Fire, “Jesus Outside the New Testament: What is the Evidence?” by Edwin Yamauchi.

THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

- I. The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus is central to the Gospel. (See 1 Corinthians 15:12-19)
- II. Four Significant Facts regarding the Resurrection of Jesus:
 - A. Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in his own tomb.
 1. The burial site would be known to everyone.
 2. This account comes from the earliest material.
 3. Joseph was a member of the Jewish Council.
 4. There are no competing accounts.

- B. Jesus' tomb was found empty the first Sunday after his crucifixion.
 - 1. Again, this comes from the earliest material.
 - 2. The empty tomb was first discovered by women.
 - 3. The earliest Jewish polemic assumed that the tomb was empty.
 - 4. After his death, Jesus appeared alive to various individuals and groups at different times and places.
 - a. These claims were made while the persons who saw Jesus were still alive.
 - b. Jesus appeared to skeptics and unbelievers as well as believers.
 - c. These appearances were over a limited period.
 - 5. The earliest disciples came to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead under the most unlikely circumstances.
 - a. Jesus had died a criminal's death.
 - b. The Jewish belief in resurrection was at the end of the world.
 - c. All but one of the original eleven disciples were put to death for this belief.

III. Possible Explanations:

- A. Jesus' disciples stole the body.
- B. Jesus did not actually die.
- C. The disciples hallucinated or saw a vision.
- D. The women and the disciples went to the wrong tomb.
- E. God raised Jesus from the dead.

IV. The Significance of the Resurrection of Jesus

- A. This world is not an accident.
- B. This world matters.
- C. There is hope.

ONLY ONE WAY TO GOD?

- I. All major religions of the world have a point of exclusion.
- II. Most religions have some system of punishment or payment for sins. Only Christianity offers the certainty of forgiveness.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

- III. The exclusive claims of Christ are backed up by the unique person of Christ. He is unique in
 - A. His birth.
 - B. His life.
 - C. His death.
 - D. His resurrection.

- IV. Jesus Christ provides the best answers to our deepest questions:

- A. Origin
- B. Meaning
- C. Morality
- D. Destiny

- V. The exclusive claim must be seen in light of the inclusive invitation.

(See John 3:16; 7:37; Matthew 11:28)

Q: Isn't it good enough just to be good?

Q: What about those that haven't heard the Gospel?