Hadavar School of Jewish & Biblical Studies & Apologetics.com present:

Jesus Apologetics

TEARING DOWN THE WALLS

(Actual Photo of Jesus)

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Jesus Apologetics Synopsis

Synopsis:

Christianity is completely futile if Jesus didn’t live, die, and rise again.

But how do we know if Jesus really did exist? Can we be sure he really was the Son of God? Did he believe it himself or was divinity attributed to him through legendary developments? Did Jesus alone match the identity of the prophesied Messiah? What evidence do we have for the Resurrection and is it possible that any evidence equally supports an alternative theory.

These questions any many others arise when considering the most compelling and influential man in history. Apologetics help both the Christian and non-Christian alike determine answers concerning the central figure of Christianity.

By studying the historical background, extra-biblical sources, and all available first century evidence, one can be intellectually satisfied and confident that Jesus did exist, he was the son of God, and he did rise again.

Join us as we investigate the undisputed evidence revealing the most important life and afterlife of all.
1. **Popular Challenges to Jesus’ Existence**

   a. “Jesus didn’t exist! No more believing in fairytales. It’s time to grow up!”

   b. “Santa, leprechauns, unicorns, and Jesus are my special helpers.”

   c. “Christians can’t be objective historians because they have a biased view and want Jesus to exist.”

   d. “He did not write anything down or leave any evidence. There is no way to know he existed.”

   e. “The disciples of Jesus merely copied from the life of Apollonius of Tyana to create the story of Jesus.”

   f. “The legend of Jesus is simply a retelling of similar stories from ancient mystery religions such as Mithraism.”

   g. A major atheist 20th century philosopher (Note: Not a Historian), Bertrand Russell, made this claim in the 1927 in his famous talk *Why I Am Not a Christian*¹: “Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we know nothing about Him.”

2. **Popular Skepticism & Denial of Jesus’ Existence**

   a. Some popular online atheists/agnostics have strong views that Jesus did not exist.

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¹ This was later published as an essay.
i. They passionately spread this view online and in podcasts. It picks up a lot of traffic because it is so enticing.

ii. They laugh at Christians and blow up online discussion forums forcefully saying that Christians are irrational holding that Jesus existed.

iii. The rapid propagation of this view is daunting.

iv. The Richard Dawkins Foundation website also couldn’t resist stooping to an all time low, as they recently used their online clout to propel the rumor that Jesus didn’t exist when they allowed a guest blog post on the topic.²,³

b. But it’s not just online. In a recent poll, as much as 33% of non-church-goers claim Jesus did not exist.⁴

c. You may have encountered this view before. My brother did in his office with his boss.

d. But many well informed atheists/agnostics argue back to the fringe atheists that Jesus did exist.

e. The issue is more of a disagreement within atheist/agnostic circles online between atheists/agnostics.

i. Christians are even told, don’t get involved because the atheists/agnostics know it’s between them.⁵

f. It seems that this is a very recent and unique skepticism.

² https://richarddawkins.net/2014/12/did-historical-jesus-really-exist-the-evidence-just-doesnt-add-up-2/
³ Raphael Lataster, *There was no Jesus. There is no God: A Scholarly Examination of the Scientific, Historical, and Philosophical Evidence & Arguments for Monotheism.*
⁴ Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey, 04 Apr 2010, [www.rasmussenreports.com](http://www.rasmussenreports.com)
i. Up until our time, people in the west usually knew of the church’s teachings. If they were not church attendees, they just wanted nothing to do with Jesus. Not believing in Jesus would have been ridiculous.

1. I haven’t come across anything in my reading of literature, philosophy, or history from the 1st century to the 21st, that indicates people who have heard of him, did not believe he existed.

ii. But the level of skepticism of our current postmodern culture is drastically different from that of even the previous generation.

iii. From what I understand, the claim that Jesus did not exist is a very new belief.

iv. The “non-existence” belief is striking.

3. **Academic Roots Popular Skepticism & Denial of Jesus’ Existence**

   a. From what I have determined, a group of influential German Bible scholars from over 100 years ago may be the academic source of the popular belief we encounter today on the street.

      i. The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (“History of Religion School”) in Germany was influential between 1880 and 1920.

      ii. They began to compare other ancient religions to Christianity to look for parallels and influences.

         1. Oxford Reference: “At first they tried only to trace historical developments within Judaism and Christianity, but soon they came to search for parallels in Egyptian, Babylonian, and Hellenistic religious
systems.”

iii. But this group of liberal theologians and Bible scholars were more interested in comparative religions and showing the influences of neighboring religions - than in showing that Jesus didn’t exist.

1. One of their more prominent scholars wrote to American theologians explaining their views: “Moreover, the same must be said concerning the exceedingly difficult task of explaining the origin of Christianity, which already in the preaching of Jesus presupposes the peculiarly complicated religious history of late Judaism.”

iv. Their work had been refuted long ago and is “now regarded as out of date” as they “are known a good century later to have been mistaken.”

v. However, this group brought academic credibility to the skeptical views concerning the uniqueness of Jesus.

b. Every other scholar, philosopher, writer I have read never questioned Jesus’ existence.

c. But how can Jesus’ existence be demonstrated?

4. **Question to Consider**

a. What evidence is available?

b. How do we make sense of the evidence?

c. Can we show Jesus existed without the Bible?

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7 Ernst Troeltsch, The Dogmatics of the "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule" The American Journal of Theology; Vol. 17, No. 1 (Jan., 1913), pp. 1-21

5. **The Existence Evidence**

a. Interestingly, there is more credible evidence for Jesus’ existence than most other famous persons of history.

b. So for historians, it’s not an issue or a question.

c. 99.9% of historical scholars confirm the existence of Jesus.

d. The 0.1% (actually it’s probably even less than that) of scholars who are skeptical or deny his existence.

e. There is much more evidence that Jesus existed 2,000 years after his death, than there will be for our existence 2,000 years from now.

   i. Consider if 2,000 years from now, will people be able to confirm that you existed – this is highly improbable as there will be less evidence around for our life than many other famous people of our time.

   ii. The basic outline of facts about the life of Jesus are extremely hard to reject: from Nazareth, lived in Galilee, died in Jerusalem, etc.

f. The evidence pointing toward the existence of Jesus of Nazareth is internal to the Bible and external.

g. Externally,

   i. Several Greco-Roman and Jewish historians and authors explicitly and/or implicitly confirm Jesus existence.

   ii. These historical sources in the form of a variety of letters/documents mentioning him by name, as they discuss events in that timeframe.
iii. They speak of a Jew who worked as a teacher and wonder-worker in Palestine during the reign of Tiberius, and even mention him being executed by crucifixion under the prefect Pontius Pilate and continuing to have followers after his death.

iv. Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus (not a Christian; employed by Rome)

1. “…and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned”.⁹

2. “At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned Him to be crucified to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had

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appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive.”

v. Jewish Talmud (Mishnah & Gemara) from the 2nd century and 5th century mentions Jesus (controversial)

1. Sanhedrin 43a: “Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and deceived and led Israel astray... Jesus the Nazarene was hanged and a herald went forth before him forty days heralding, Jesus the Nazarene is going forth to be stoned because he practiced sorcery and instigated and seduced Israel to idolatry. Whoever knows anything in defense may come and state it.” But since they did not find anything in his defense they hanged him on (Sabbath eve and) the eve of Passover.”

vi. Roman Historian, Cornelius Tacitus:

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10 Josephus, Testimonium Flavium; Jews contend that Christian Scribes wrote this in centuries later. According to the world’s leading Jospehus Flavius scholar Louis Feldman “almost universally acknowledged.”
1. "Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular."

1. “He expelled from Rome the Jews constantly making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus”

viii. Roman-Syrian Historian, Mara Bar-Serapion:

1. “What advantage did the Athenians gain from murdering Socrates? Famine and plague came upon them as a punishment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? It was just after that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea and the Jews, desolate and driven from their own kingdom, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates is not dead, because of Plato; neither is Pythagoras, because of the statue of Juno; nor is the wise king, because of the “new law” he laid down.”

ix. Roman Governor of Bithynia-Pontus (Turkey), Pliny the Younger:
1. “They affirmed, however, that the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up.”

x. Roman Historian, Lucian of Samosata wrote in his *The Passing of Peregrinus*:
1. "The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day - the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult to the world...You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property."

xi. Greek Historian, Phlegon of Tralles is quoted in 4 different sources:

1. "And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place..." - Origen, "Against Celsus", Book 2.33

2. "Phlegon mentioned the eclipse which took place during the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus and no other (eclipse); it is clear that he did not know from his sources about any (similar) eclipse in previous times... and this is shown by the historical account of Tiberius Caesar." - Phiopon, De. opif. mund. II21

3. "Phlegon records that, in the time of Tiberius Cæsar, at full moon, there was a full eclipse of the sun from the sixth hour to the ninth - manifestly that one of which we speak. But what has an eclipse in common with an earthquake, the rending rocks, and the resurrection of the dead, and so great a perturbation throughout the universe?... And calculation makes out that the period of 70 weeks, as noted in Daniel, is completed at this time." - Julius Africanus, Chronography, 18.1

xii. Roman author Celsus, who hated Christianity:
1. “While there he acquired certain [magical] powers”.

2. “she gave birth to Jesus, a bastard.”

3. “…on seeing him subjected to punishment and death, neither died with nor for him… but denied that they were even his disciples, lest they die along with Him.”

4. “He was therefore a man, and of such a nature, as the truth itself proves, and reason demonstrates him to be.”
xiii. Papyri Graecae Magicae (100 to 400 AD)

1. F. F. Bruce, “The closest parallel to the Ephesian exorcists' misuse of the name of Jesus appears in a magical papyrus belonging to the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, which contains the adjuration: "I adjure you by Jesus, the God of the Hebrews."”

xiv. Interestingly, 2nd century Christian Apologists, Justin Martyr and Tertullian, refer others to the Roman archives of the region for the registration of Joseph and Mary during the census when Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus.

1. They wanted people to know that there the story that can be shown to be true with evidence.

2. They were convinced that such a record was available.

3. “There is a village in Judea, thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ was born, as you can see from the tax registers under Cyrenius, your first procurator in Judea.” - Justin Martyr (First Apology)

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xv. Many other Christian bishops and theologians write concerning the historical Jesus within 150 years of Jesus’ life.

1. Ignatius
2. Polycarp
3. Justin Martyr
4. Tertullian
5. Irenaeous
6. Epistle of Barnabas
7. Didache
8. Clement, bishop of Rome
9. Quadratus bishop of Athens wrote to Emperor Hadrian and referred to Jesus: “The deeds of our Savior were always before you, for they were true miracles. Those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They remained living a long time, not only while our Lord was on earth, but likewise when he had left the earth. So that some of them have also lived to our own times.” (Eusebius IV III)

xvi. Gospel of Thomas

xvii. Gnostic Gospels

xviii. These external non-Christian documents alone corroborate that Jesus reportedly:

1. Was a teacher
2. Was a philosopher
3. Was a good man

4. Was a miracle worker

5. Had disciples

6. Had fulfilled prophecy

7. Had people refer to him as a deity

8. Had a message that included conversion, denial of gods, fellowship, and immortality.

9. Was crucified for blasphemy

10. Was apparently resurrected

11. Disciples were transformed to bold preachers

xix. Overall, several extra-biblical writings record details concerning the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus and the early church all within 150 years of his death.

h. Internally,

i. Paul’s early letters reflect a commonly held belief in the earliest Christians about the historical person of Jesus.

1. Galatians was written only 15 years after his death.

2. Paul met James the half-brother of Jesus – who would have told Paul that there he had no such half-brother.

3. Paul met all the disciples who spent 3 years with him.

4. Paul knew that Jesus ate, slept, was born and died – so Paul didn’t think of
him as a ghost.

5. All of this is independent data written prior to the biographies.

   ii. *Acts* speak of the earliest and most raw account of his follower’s public reaction to his life and resurrection just 50 days later.

   1. What could explain such an account if Jesus wasn’t real?

   2. It is clear from the book of Acts alone that he existed.

iii. The gospel accounts are very reliable and written from an eyewitness perspective.

   1. The gospels detail basic and even some mundane facts about a historical person.


   3. So much of what was written about Jesus was embarrassing, awkward, and blasphemous to the Jews, especially those Jews who became the 1st Christians.

   4. Strange teachings and behavior of Jesus made them uncomfortable:

      a. Sabbath activity.

      b. Feet washing your subordinates.


      d. Shameful execution.

      e. Friendship with prostitutes and tax collectors.
5. We have no reason to conclude that the authors all lied.

6. Why would they make it up if he wasn’t real! No other explanations is satisfactory.

i. So internally and externally we have multiple evidence for the existence of a historical figure.

6. **Other Scholars...**

a. What about the hyper-skeptical scholars like Bart Ehrman who deny so much about Jesus? What does he say?

   i. Bart D. Ehrman, is just one of many famous agnostic or atheist historians and they all affirm Jesus’ existence and crucified death.

   ii. Bart Ehrman was a guest on a layman atheist show (infidel guy – actually the head of the www.infidelguy.org organization) online.\(^\text{12}\)

   iii. The infidel guy actually brought on Ehrman thinking he would agree with the premise that Jesus did not even exist. But, Erhman wound up lighting him up and making him look foolish on his own show.

   iv. Bart Ehrman said “I unfortunately get quoted as someone who thinks that Jesus didn’t exist... I have written an entire book on what Jesus said and did – and for him to say anything he had to exist.” Bart Ehrman confirmed his belief that Jesus’ existed.

   v. Ehrman said he doesn’t even know of any serious historian or scholar (not someone that makes a claim to make a lot of money with a sensational book) that believes Jesus did not exist.

\(^{12}\) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRx0N4GF0AY; www.infidelguy.org
vi. Ehrman even said that if you deny the evidence of Jesus, you deny that the Holocaust happened and that Abraham Lincoln didn’t exist.

vii. He argued that there is a major difference in being skeptical about what Jesus said and being skeptical about his existence.

viii. “We have more evidence for Jesus than we do of anybody from his time period...you have to look at the evidence. There is hard evidence...why would he lie about it...they have off-the-cuff disinterested comments from someone that actually knew him...I am a historian and I am telling you.”

ix. Needless to say, the infidel guy was caught off guard and Ehrman refuted his skepticism.

x. Later on in 2012, Bart Ehrman wrote a book on the existence of Jesus: *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*:

xi. Book synopsis: “Large numbers of atheists, humanists, and conspiracy theorists are raising one of the most pressing questions in the history of religion: "Did Jesus exist at all?" ....The Jesus you discover here may not be the Jesus you had hoped to meet—but he did exist, whether we like it or not.”

b. I only know of 3 scholars who do not think Jesus existed.
i. Scholar: authoritative experienced knowledgeable historian with a professorship somewhere credible – not a nonprofessional blogging online.

ii. Robert Price, Earl Doherty, and Richard Carrier are the only one’s I know of who does not confirm Jesus existed.

1. Dr. Robert Price
   a. Mentioned by every critic.  
   b. Authored: *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man, Deconstructing Jesus*, and *The Case Against the Case for Christ*.
   c. While Price denies or is skeptical about the existence of Jesus, he certainly doesn’t shy away from writing books and making some extra money on Jesus life.

2. Earl Doherty (Canadian)

3. Dr. Richard Carrier

4. Note on Dr. George Albert Wells

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13 On the interview mentioned above, Ehrman said he had not heard of Price but when asked more about it by the host he did remember that Price contacted him once mentioning his doubts about the historical person of Jesus.
b. Now he argues for a more moderate form of a mythical Jesus saying that Paul’s Jesus was not the Jesus of the gospels but was “a heavenly, pre-existent figure who had come to earth at some uncertain point in the past and lived an obscure life, perhaps one or two centuries before his own time.”

c. Come to find out, that these are the same 4 scholars are blasted in Maurice Casey’s opening chapter of *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths*.

   i. Esteemed New Testament scholar (non-Christian) Maurice Casey refuted the new skepticism. He argues that these scholars have a “reliance on work which is out of date, most of which was of questionable quality when it was written, mostly in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This level of incompetence is rare in conventional scholarship.”

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d. They have been referred to as “academic embarrassment” by even the most liberal of Bible scholars John Dominic Crossan.

7. **Response to Challenges**

a. “Christians can’t be objective historians because they have a biased view and want Jesus to exist.”

   i. But this is the genetic fallacy and doesn’t address the argument.

   ii. Christians can be objective historians and many Christian historians are top-

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notch and secular historians regularly agree with them on a variety of topics. Scholarly journal articles and academic society meetings are filled with Christian and non Christians.

iii. This charge is essentially claiming that objective history can’t be known because of one’s religious-cultural predisposition and one can only see events from their skewed perspective.

1. But if this is true, why do all other historians continue to write history books about their own religions and cultures?

2. Do other religious Eastern, Arabic, or Latin American historians find a way out of their skew and predisposition and Christians can’t?

3. Clearly, historians can be objective even in writing about the history of their own religions and cultures.

4. This is obviously what the disciples were capable of doing even to their own embarrassment and demise.

iv. In fact, the disciples were Jewish but they started a new religion entirely out of Judaism (the original religion and culture).

1. So this claim that Christians wrote Christian history doesn’t tell the whole story.

2. Jewish disciples wrote about a Jewish messiah who claimed to be God and was resurrected.

3. Christianity is what resulted.

4. The disciples paid the price.

v. Secular historians also agree that Jesus existed.
1. Historians, both secular and Christian, evaluate the historicity (authenticity of the events and actions) of Socrates, Plato, and other historical figures the same way they evaluate Jesus.

2. The result: over 99% of legit historians acknowledge Jesus’ existence just as they acknowledge the existence of Socrates, Plato, Alexander the Great, and others.

3. To deny Jesus’ existence is denying the existence of all other historical figures.

b. “He did not write anything down or leave any evidence. There is no way to know he existed.”

   i. But this is absurd, one doesn’t have to write something to actually exist.

   ii. Socrates never wrote anything down. But, no philosopher thinks that Socrates did not exist.

1. So philosophers debate on how much of the Dialogues (Plato’s writing of Socrates’ thoughts), is actually Socrates’ thoughts or Plato’s thoughts. But again, no philosopher thinks that Socrates did not exist.

c. “Jesus didn’t exist! No more believing in fairytales.”

   i. Those who claim ‘Jesus existed’ bear the burden of proof; we successfully carried the burden.

   1. We have outstanding positive evidence for Jesus’ existence and it’s practically irrefutable.
2. We have external evidence and internal evidence to back up our claim that he did existed.

   a. Non-Christian Historians and Gnostics

   b. Sharp critics of Christianity

   c. With great marks of authenticity, Paul’s letters and the Gospels confirm Jesus - even when they put themselves in embarrassing light.

3. Also, 99.9% of historical scholars confirm the existence of Jesus.

   a. Appealing to knowledgeable people is not a fallacy. Appealing to the masses would be.

ii. In order for skepticism in the belief in Jesus to be justified, the skeptical person would need to either: (1) discredit our positive evidence or (2) present positive evidence of refutations made by the apostles contemporaries

1. discredit our positive evidence

   a. This is very difficult to do as there are several internal and external documents that describe in detail the life happenings and personality of a historical person!

2. present positive evidence of refutations made by the 1st century citizens/contemporaries

   a. He needs to show evidence of 1st century persons who claimed that Jesus didn’t exist and to not believe the lies spread by the Christians, Roman, and Jewish authors.

   b. So far, no one to my knowledge has uncovered such a manuscript
of 1st century author refuting the claims of the existence of Jesus.

c. Apparently, no 1st century person thought that it would be wise to write down that Jesus didn’t exist…because they all knew he did!

iii. Thought Experiment

1. The claim that Jesus never existed is very difficult to prove.

   a. Almost as difficult as proving a universal negative (which is impossible to prove).

2. Suppose Jesus existed in 1536 in the desert wilderness of Australia as an aborigine. Suppose he was born of a virgin, lived in a rural desert village, did miracles, and was hung in the gallows for claiming to be God, and rose again. But, this time, no one wrote about him. So, he comes and goes leaving no evidence - not even for the next generation.

3. The person that says Jesus never existed is actually saying he has knowledge that in those times and in those places Jesus did not come and go.

4. This is impossible to prove since he would have had to be all over the desert of Australia during that entire time to have that knowledge.

5. This is only knowledge God could have.

6. So saying that Jesus never existed is actually implying that the skeptic is has knowledge like God.

iv. Find more than 0.1% of reputable scholars who do not affirm the Jesus’ existence.

1. Most scholars and historians do not know of the few fringe scholars we brought up here.
2. Their fringe views have been addressed by even the most skeptical of scholars like Bart Ehrman.

3. Many Christian apologetics books do not even contain material on how to respond to a non-existence claim because, other than the very few fringe scholars, no scholars are making the claim.

4. Apologetics books reflect the scholarship.

5. There is no need to write a response, when this is just considered a fact of history and not even under dispute among skeptical scholars.

8. **Conclusion**
   
a. Overall, the best explanation of the facts - with the most explanatory power and scope - is that Jesus was real person that really did exist.

b. No other reasonable or unreasonable theory (e.g., Jesus was a ghost) can explain away all the data that we find about Jesus.

c. The claim that Jesus did not exist is actually completely ridiculous.

d. Albert Einstein: “As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene....No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.”
9. **Next Sessions**

a. The issue that liberal Bible scholars (Christian and non-Christian) debate is not his existence or non-existence, but whether or not the “Jesus of history” is the “Christ of faith.”

   i. “Jesus of history” vs “Christ of faith” juxtaposes allegedly two different descriptions of the same person.

b. So we will investigate the Jesus of history to determine if he is the same as the Christ of faith:

   i. Was Jesus really convinced that He was the Son of God?

   ii. Was Jesus crazy claiming to be the Son of God?

   iii. Did Jesus fulfill the attributes of God?

   iv. Did Jesus - and Jesus alone - match the identity of the prophesied Messiah?

   v. Did Jesus really rise from the grave?
1. **Intro**

   a. A long time ago, in a land far far away, There was once a prophecy that described, a chosen one who would come and bring balance to the force.

2. **Popular Challenges**

   a. “Jesus fulfilled the prophecies by accident.”

   b. “Jesus intentionally fulfilled the prophecies so he would be the Messiah?”

   c. “Christians ripped off passages out of context from the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) to use them to prove that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah.”

3. **Questions to Consider**

   a. Did Jesus - and Jesus alone - match the identity of the prophesied Messiah?

4. **The Messiah Evidence**

   a. INTERVIEW #6: DOES PROPHECY SUPPORT JESUS AS THE MESSIAH?

   b. Messiah – “The Anointed One” (“Christ” in Greek)...the expected one whom they hoped for.

   ![Prophecies of a Kingly Messiah](Prophecies.Kingly.Messiah.jpg)

   ![Prophecies of a Suffering Messiah](Prophecies.Suffering.Messiah.jpg)

   ![Two branches in the stream of Messianic Prophecy](Two.branches.in.stream.jpg)

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1 Watch on www.jesusfactorfiction.com
i. THE Prophet – He was the word of God and voice of change to Israel

ii. THE Priest – He was the perfect priest who ushered in the New Covenant

iii. THE King – He was the great leader of Israel taking them and the gentiles to THE promise land where God rules.

c. Genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1 & Luke 3:23-37) shows he is the one who the Bible points to as the main character.

d. The entire Old Testament is filled with “types” anticipating the coming Messiah.

e. The “types” and shadows are imperfect in the Old Testament but find their perfection in Jesus who was the ultimate “antitype.”


g. Sacrificial “types” in the Old Testament showing the significance of the sacrificial death of Jesus:

   i. Gen. 3:21—The animal or animals slain by God to provide coats of skin for Adam and Eve

   ii. Gen. 8:20-22 cf. Eph. 5:2—The sweet smelling sacrifice offered by Noah


   iv. Ex. 12:1-28 cf. 1 Cor. 5:7 —The Passover lamb first offered in Egypt

      1. Also see Isa. 53:7 (Christ a lamb led to slaughter)

      2. Jn. 1:29 (Christ the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world)

2 From Professor Kevin Lewis Outline, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University.
3. 1 Pet. 1:19 (precious blood of Christ the lamb)

v. Lev. 1-7—The Levitical sacrifices

1. The Levitical sacrifices were instituted by God and not by man.

2. Heb. 9:9; 10:1, 4—These sacrifices of the OT could not bring spiritual cleansing.

3. 1 Cor. 5:7—The sacrifices did point forward to the perfect and efficacious sacrifice of Christ.

4. Gen. 15:6 (“Abraham believed God”) cf. Rom. 3:25-26 (Christ an atoning sacrifice through faith in his blood); Heb. 11:4; 9:15 – These sacrifices needed to be accompanied by genuine faith from the offerer. Then on the basis of Christ’s future work, the believing offerer would be justified.

vi. Lev. 16 (cf. Heb. 9:6-12, esp. vv. 7, 11-12)—The Day of Atonement

h. Commonly referred to fulfilled features of the Messiah in the Old Testament:

i. A descendant of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3, 22:18; Matt. 1:1 & Gal. 3:6)

ii. Of the house of David (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Matt. 1:1)

iii. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1 & Luke 2:4-7)

iv. Taken to Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:14-15)

v. Anointed by the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2; Matt. 3:16-17)

vi. Would perform miracles (Is. 35:5,6; Matt. 9:35)

vii. Would preach good news (Is. 61:1; Luke 4:14-21)

viii. Enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:4-9)
ix. Die a humiliating death (Psalm 22; Is. 53) involving:

1. rejection (Isaiah 53:3; John 1:10-11 & 7:5,48)
2. betrayal by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Luke 22:3-4)
3. beaten (Isaiah 52:14; Matthew 27:26)
4. piercing his hands and feet (Psalm 22:16; Matt. 27:31)
5. being crucified with thieves (Is. 53:12; Matt. 27:38)
6. no broken bones (Psalm 34:20; John 19:32-36)
7. die a humiliating death (Psalm 22; Is. 53)
8. buried in a rich man’s tomb (Is. 53:9; Matt.27:57-60)
9. rise from the dead!! (Psalm 16:10; Mark 16:6 & Acts 2:31)
10. ascend into Heaven (Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9)

i. Messiah passages in Isaiah brief overview:

i. Isaiah 9:6-7

‘For to us a child is born, a
to us a son is given, a
and the government a will be on his shoulders.a
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, b Mighty God, b
Everlasting Father, b Prince of Peace, b
‘Of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end.
He will reign a on David’s throne
and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

ii. Isaiah 11:1-5

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

iii. Isaiah 42:1-4

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.

He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”

iv. Isaiah 53:2-12

“Sing, barren woman,
you who never bore a child;
burst into song, shout for joy,
you who were never in labor;
because more are the children of the desolate woman
than of her who has a husband,”
says the LORD.

“Enlarge the place of your tent;
stretch your tent curtains wide,
do not hold back;
lengthen your cords,
strengthen your stakes.

For you will spread out to the right and to the left;
your descendants will dispossess nations
and settle in their desolate cities.

“Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame.
Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.
You will forget the shame of your youth
and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.

For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.
The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God.
“For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD your Redeemer.

“To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.

Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

“Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.

All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace.

In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you.

If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you.

“See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to wreak havoc;
no weapon forged against you will prevail,\textsuperscript{e}
and you will refute\textsuperscript{f} every tongue that accuses you.
This is the heritage of the servants\textsuperscript{g} of the LORD,
and this is their vindication\textsuperscript{h} from me,”
declares the LORD.

v. Isaiah 61:1-4

The Spirit\textsuperscript{e} of the Sovereign LORD\textsuperscript{f} is on me,
because the LORD has anointed\textsuperscript{g} me
to proclaim good news\textsuperscript{h} to the poor.\textsuperscript{i}
He has sent me to bind up\textsuperscript{h} the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom\textsuperscript{h} for the captives\textsuperscript{j}
and release from darkness for the prisoners,\textsuperscript{k}
to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor\textsuperscript{l}
and the day of vengeance\textsuperscript{m} of our God,
to comfort\textsuperscript{n} all who mourn,\textsuperscript{p}
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown\textsuperscript{q} of beauty
instead of ashes,\textsuperscript{r}
the oil\textsuperscript{s} of joy
instead of mourning,\textsuperscript{t}
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting\textsuperscript{u} of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.\textsuperscript{v}
They will rebuild the ancient ruins\textsuperscript{w}
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.
j. Below is a table of most foreshadows of the Messiah in the Old Testament.³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Messianic Foreshadow (paraphrased)</th>
<th>Where the prophecy appears in the Old Testament (written between 1450 BC &amp; 430BC)</th>
<th>Jesus’ fulfillment of the prophecy in the New Testament (written between 45 and 95 AD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be the offspring (descendant) of the woman (Eve)</td>
<td>Genesis 3:15</td>
<td>Galatians 4:4</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be a descendant of Abraham, through whom everyone on earth will be blessed</td>
<td>Genesis 12:3; 18:18</td>
<td>Acts 3:25,26</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be born of Isaac's seed</td>
<td>Genesis 17:19</td>
<td>Matthew 1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be born of Jacob's seed</td>
<td>Numbers 24:17</td>
<td>Matthew 1:2</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be a descendant of Judah</td>
<td>Genesis 49:10</td>
<td>Matthew 1:2 and Luke 3:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be a prophet like Moses</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 18:15-19</td>
<td>Acts 3:20-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be the Son of God</td>
<td>Psalm 2:7</td>
<td>Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be raised from the dead (resurrected)</td>
<td>Psalm 16:10,11</td>
<td>Matthew 28:5-9; Mark 16:6-7; Luke 24:4-7; John 20:11-16; Acts 1:3 and 2:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah crucifixion experience</td>
<td>Psalm 22 (contains 11 prophecies—not all listed)</td>
<td>Matthew 27:34-50 and John 19:17-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ For 365 listed prophecies fulfilled by Jesus see [http://www.jewsforjesus.org/answers/prophecy/365-messianic-prophecies](http://www.jewsforjesus.org/answers/prophecy/365-messianic-prophecies)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be sneered at and mocked</td>
<td>Psalm 22:7-8</td>
<td>Luke 23:11,35-39</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Messiah’s bones will not be broken (a person’s legs were usually broken after being crucified to speed up their death)</td>
<td>Psalm 22:17 and 34:20</td>
<td>John 19:31-33,36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will accused by false witnesses</td>
<td>Psalm 27:12 &amp; 35:11</td>
<td>Matthew 26:59,60 and Mark 14:56,57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be hated without a cause</td>
<td>Psalm 35:19 and 69:4</td>
<td>John 15:23-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be betrayed by a friend</td>
<td>Psalm 41:9</td>
<td>John 13:18,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be given vinegar and gall to drink</td>
<td>Psalm 69:21</td>
<td>Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:23; John 19:29,30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great kings will pay homage and tribute to the Messiah</td>
<td>Psalm 72:10,11</td>
<td>Matthew 2:1-11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be a priest in the order of Melchizedek</td>
<td>Psalm 110:4</td>
<td>Hebrews 5:5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah is a “stone the builders rejected” who will become the “head cornerstone”</td>
<td>Psalm 118:22,23 and Isaiah 28:16</td>
<td>Matthew 21:42,43; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be a descendant of David</td>
<td>Psalm 132:11 and Jeremiah 23:5,6; 33:15,16</td>
<td>Luke 1:32,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be a born of a virgin</td>
<td>Isaiah 7:14</td>
<td>Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah’s first spiritual work will be in Galilee</td>
<td>Isaiah 9:1-7</td>
<td>Matthew 4:12-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah’s will be heir to the throne of David</td>
<td>Isaiah 9:7</td>
<td>Luke 1:32-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will have the Spirit of the Lord, wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge.</td>
<td>Isaiah 11:2-4 &amp; Psalm 45:7</td>
<td>Luke 2:52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will make the blind see, the deaf hear, etc.</td>
<td>Isaiah 35:5-6</td>
<td>Many places. Also see Matthew 11:3-6 and John 11:47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceded by a forunner</td>
<td>Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1</td>
<td>Luke 7:24,27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be beaten, mocked, and spat upon</td>
<td>Isaiah 50:6</td>
<td>Matthew 26:67 and 27:26-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will hear and not believe the “arm of the LORD” (Messiah)</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:1</td>
<td>John 12:37,38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be rejected</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:3</td>
<td>Matthew 27:20-25; Mark 15:8-14; Luke 23:18-23;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Scripture References</td>
<td>John 1:11 &amp; 19:14,15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be killed</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:5-9</td>
<td>Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37-39; Luke 23:46; John 19:30; Romans 5:6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be silent in front of his accusers</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:7</td>
<td>Matthew 26:62,63 and 27:12-14; Mark 15:4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be buried with the rich</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:9</td>
<td>Matthew 27:59,60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:52,53; John 19:38-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be crucified with criminals</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:12</td>
<td>Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27; Luke 23:32,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah is part of the new and everlasting covenant</td>
<td>Isaiah 55:3-4 and Jeremiah 31:31-34</td>
<td>Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be our intercessor (intervene for us and plead on our behalf)</td>
<td>Isaiah 59:16</td>
<td>Hebrews 9:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah has two missions</td>
<td>Isaiah 61:1-3 (1st mission: “...Heal the broken hearted. . .year of the LORD’s favor”)</td>
<td>First mission: Luke 4:16-21; (2nd mission: fulfilled at the end of the world - Rev 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There will be slaughter of the innocent</td>
<td>Jeremiah 31:15</td>
<td>Matthew 2:16-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will come at a specific time</td>
<td>Daniel 9:25-26</td>
<td>Luke 2:1-2; Galatians 4:4 and Ephesians 1:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight to Egypt</td>
<td>Hosea 11:1</td>
<td>Matthew 2:14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem</td>
<td>Micah 5:2</td>
<td>Matthew 2:1 and Luke 2:4-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messiah will enter Jerusalem riding a donkey</td>
<td>Zechariah 9:9</td>
<td>Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:7, 9, 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Messiah will be sold for 30 pieces of silver for a potters field
Zechariah 11:12-13
Matthew 26:15 with Matthew 27:3-10

The Messiah will forsaken by His disciples
Zechariah 13:7
Matthew 26:31,56

The Messiah will enter the Temple with authority
Malachi 3:1
Matthew 21:12 and Luke 19:45

5. Responses to challenges

a. “Jesus fulfilled the prophecies by accident.”

i. The Jewish-Christian Theologian, Louis Lapides referring to a statistical analysis performed by Peter Stoner in his book *Science Speaks*: “Not a chance, the odds are so astronomical that they rule that out. Someone did the math and figured out that the probability of just eight prophecies being fulfilled is one chance in one hundred million billion. That number is millions of times greater than the total number of people who’ve ever walked the planet!”

ii. 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (one hundred quadrillion): $10^{17}$

iii. This is beyond impossible.

b. “Jesus intentionally fulfilled the prophecies so he would be the Messiah?”

i. He couldn’t have been in control of his birthplace, time of birth in history, parents, ancestry, miracles, and the 30 pieces of silver Judas betrayed him with, method of execution, legs remain unbroken, soldiers gambling for his clothes, and resurrection.

---

5 See Peter Stoner’s *Science Speaks*
ii. Daniel 9:24-26 is a prophecy of the exact time when the Messiah will show up – and Jesus was born about that time.

iii. The following graphic is taken from Robert Morris’ Daniel class notes.

---

**SEVENTY SEVENS (Daniel 9:24-27)**

**Daniel 9:24**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Years (360 Days)</th>
<th>Modern Years (365½ Days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>483 biblical years.</td>
<td>482 BC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the decree…</td>
<td>Decree of Cyrus – 482 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the Anointed One…</td>
<td>(Isa. 44:24-28, 45:1 &amp; 13:11; 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). This decree is normally dated about 538 BC.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there will be…</td>
<td>Verses 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven “sevens”</td>
<td>Birth of Messiah in 6-7 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7 X 7 = 49 years)</td>
<td>6-7 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and 62 “sevens”</td>
<td>30 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7 X 62 = 434 years)</td>
<td>Death of Messiah in 30AD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. After 62 “sevens” Messiah will be cut off
2. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.
3. War and desolations

---

The Tabulation – One biblical “seven”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3½ biblical years</th>
<th>1. Covenant confirmed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3½ biblical years</td>
<td>2. Covenant broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3½ biblical years</td>
<td>3. Messiah returns (the end that is decreed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**c. “Christians rip off passages out of context from the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) to use them to prove that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah.”**

---

*See Robert Morris, Hadavar Messianic Ministries"
i. See for yourself. Read the Old Testament and ask, “What person matches this profile?” “Has a person like this come already or is he yet to come?”

6. **Conclusion:**

   a. The evidence leads us to demand a verdict in the case for Christ.

      i. Jesus alone matched the identity of the Messiah.

      ii. Jesus proved he was the Messiah by fulfilling prophecies.

      iii. Its Jesus or no one. If Jesus is not the messiah, then no one will be.
1. **Popular Challenges**

a. “Jesus never claimed to be God, this was mistakenly declared by his followers. They attributed him with divinity after he died. He even said that the Father only knows certain things that he doesn’t.”

   i. Recently, a New Testament scholar and theologian Don Cupitt (Cambridge professor, who also happened to participate in the Jesus Seminar) said that Jesus was one of the greatest radical secular humanists and influential moral philosophers of the world.

   ii. But, according to Cupitt, Jesus did not state that he was God and any such statement was corrupted teachings attributed to him later on in textual alterations.

   iii. Cupitt told how the Jesus Seminar took 1300 sayings of Jesus and threw out almost all but figured out through votes that 29 sayings were authentically historical.

   iv. So, he argues that Jesus never said the things he said.

b. “Jesus wasn’t even convinced that He was the Son of God, that’s why he called himself the Son of Man.”

c. Bart Ehrman holds another view, that Jesus believed he was the Messiah but not God nor the Son of Man; Jesus believed the Son of Man (again someone other than Jesus) is coming in the future and is bringing the future kingdom of God and will be coming at that apocalyptic moment.

2. **Questions to Consider**

a. Did he claim to be the Son of God or did the disciples make this up?

---

1 Philosopher Don Cupitt
b. Did Jesus really believe that He was the Son of God?

c. If Jesus didn’t even think he was God, why should we think he is God?

3. **The Identity Evidence**

   a. What is it that sets Jesus apart from the founders of other religions?

      1. Jesus is the only teacher/sage/founder

         a. who was predicted by prophecy & then fulfilled the prophecy

         b. who claimed to be God

         c. who conquered death

      2. Other people who claim to be God are not sage’s in our culture or any culture.

b. From the data in the gospels, Jesus clearly believed and (at least implicitly) claimed that he was God or the Son of God.

   1. He made reference to being the Son of God.

      a. “Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?” (John 10:36)

      b. “When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” (John 11:4)

      c. “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father.” (John 5:23)
2. He did not correct others when they referred to him as the Son of God.
   a. Occurs over a dozen unique times in conversations with Jesus in the gospels.
   b. Nathanael, Martha, and Peter all called him “Son of God”
   c. The devil and demons called him “Son of God”

3. What does he mean when he says “Son of God?”
   a. Philosopher Peter Kreeft: “The son of an ape is an ape. The son of a shark is a shark…the son of God is God.”
   b. Homousias: Of the same substance or essence or nature.
   c. Hypostasis: individual instance of an ousia.
      (i) Its 1 occurrence or instantiation of a substance.
   d. Peter, James and John are one ousia (humanity) but 3 hypostasis (persons).

4. The way he related to others showed that he thought he was exclusive and different.

5. The phrases that he used to refer to himself showed uniqueness and authority:
   a. “Amen I say to you”
      (i) On my own authority these words are true.
   b. “It was said...But I say to you” (Matthew 5) & “A new commandment

---

I give to you (John 13:34)

(i) Putting his words on equal status as God’s word

c. “All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18-19)

d. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

(i) Come to God only through him.

e. “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do.” (John 14:13-14)

(i) Pray in his name.

f. “If you abide in me and my words abide in you…”

g. “Abba” (Mark 14:36)

(i) Term to God of intimate endearment – Father dearest.

(ii) Only an intimate relationship could this be done.

(iii) The Jews didn’t even come close to saying YWH because of fear of mispronunciation.

h. “Son of Man”

(i) Hebrew: בַּר אֱנָשׁ (pronounced: Bar enash) means son of ‘humanity’ or son of ‘a man.’

(ii) This is a title Jesus very frequently used to refer to himself.
(iii) At first glance it appears Jesus is identifying himself with humanity.

(iv) Here is a quick example of Jesus is referring to himself as the Son of Man.

Mark 2:8-12: 8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? 10 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, 11 “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

(v) Many other sayings of Jesus record him referring to himself as the son of man: Matthew 8:20; Matthew 9:6; Matthew 11:19; Matthew 16:13; Matthew 20:28; Matthew 24:27; Matthew 26:64; Mark 2:8-12; Mark 8:38; Mark 14:62; Luke 18:8; Luke 22:69; John 1:51; John 5:27; John 6:53; John 12:23; John 13:31.3

(vi) These passages reflect very clear self-references. So its puzzling how Bart Ehrman thinks Jesus is referring to someone else.

(vii) But why does he use this obscure term so much?

(viii) Another dramatic example may help. Mark 14:61-64:

“Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the

3 Bold underline passages represent Jesus’ declaration under trial that the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven.
Son of the Blessed One?” 62“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the **Son of Man** sitting at the **right hand of the Mighty One** and **coming on the clouds of heaven.**” 63The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. 64“You have heard the blasphemy.

(ix) Here it is clear that Jesus is identifying himself with the enthroned heavenly figure from the Old Testament prophet Daniel. Daniels vision of the heavenly figure is in Daniel 7:13-14.

Daniel 7:13-14: “13"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a **son of man**, **coming with the clouds of heaven**. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

(x) Also, see the connection with Psalm 80:17: “Let your hand rest on the man at your **right hand**, the **son of man** you have raised up for yourself.”

(xi) So Jesus is claiming he is that prophesied heavenly figure who looks like a man.

(xii) Who is this heavenly figure of Daniel’s apocalypse?

(a) Daniel has a vision of 4 beasts. After describing each of the 4 beasts who are interpreted as rulers on earth, the son of man is described – implying that he is the next ruler after the beasts.

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4 See also Psalm 8.
Acts 7:54-58: 54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” 57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.”

(b) Jesus uses the “Son of Man” as a title to distinguish himself as the divine supreme ruler who takes on the flesh of man.

(c) This title carries the significance of Daniel’s vision of “a human figure with royal and transcendent qualities who is enthroned beside God, and is even worshipped alongside God.”

(d) The Son of Man is all about the reign of God.

(e) It reflects the sharing of God’s authority on earth and reigning with the glory of an enthroned King.

(f) Note that the Son of Man isn’t used outside of the gospels much. This adds evidence to the authentic nature of the gospels as the apostles didn’t seem comfortable with it. But since the gospel writers weren’t shy of including it, the gospels bear the marks of authenticity.

(g) “Jesus’ claim is not that he’s going to sit on his own little thrown next to God; rather he will sit at God’s right hand on God’s throne…claiming a place within the divine

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regency of God Almighty.”

(h) Therefore, when Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man he is claiming to be the exalted reigning king of heaven that looks like a man.

(i) This intense passage from John’s apocalyptic vision describes the Son of Man in his heavenly state.

Revelation 1:13: “I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

6. He claims to be equal with God.

   a. Jews knew monotheism only.

   b. “I AM” (Jn.8:57-59) = YHWH (tetragrammaton)

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c. “I and the father are one” (John 10:30)

d. “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9)

e. “I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11) = “[YHWH] is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1, Isaiah 40:11, & Ezekiel 34:7-16)

(i) Isaiah 40:11 “Like a shepherd He will attend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs.”

(ii) In Ezekiel 34:7-16: YHWH stands against the false shepherds himself is coming to be the shepherd and regather his people.8

(iii) But the one actually doing the shepherding is YHWH servant “David.”

(iv) But who could this “David” be since David has already been dead for a few hundred years by the time Ezekiel gave his prophecy.

(v) So it is God himself doing the shepherding and the David figure doing the shepherding as 1 person.

(vi) Theology Professor Michael F. Bird: “God was at last

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7 I am (γενέσθαι, ἐγώ εἰμι). “It is important to observe the distinction between the two verbs. Abraham’s life was under the conditions of time, and therefore had a temporal beginning. Hence, Abraham came into being, or was born (γενέσθαι). Jesus’ life was from and to eternity. Hence the formula for absolute, timeless existence, I am (ἐγώ εἰμι).” From Vincent, M. R. (2002). Word studies in the New Testament (Jn 8:58). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.; The Septuagint uses the same in Exodus 3:14:

becoming King...Jesus believed that in his ministry and even in his person, YHWH was finally returning to Zion.”

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. ‘As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. …

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22 I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. 23 I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. 24 I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken.

(vii) So God himself is coming in some form of a united but separate Davidic figure.

(viii) The new David would start the process of building a whole new temple just as David started the process of building a whole new temple. Jesus laid the foundation for the Holy Spirit to reign in the new temples just as David’s temple was to house the Shekinah presence of God.

(ix) So the idea here with the new shepherd is that the presence of God is dwelling amongst man – AGAIN!

(x) Isaiah 52:8-10

When the LORD returns to Zion,
you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

9 Burst into songs of joy together,
in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth will see
the salvation of our God.
(xi) Theology Professor Michael F. Bird: “The Isaianic announcement of YHWH’s kingship means YHWH is going to bring the exile to an end in a new exodus, where YHWH will return to Zion and judge Israel’s enemies, and then he will dwell with his people.”

(xii) On the way into Jerusalem: “Jesus’ arrival is uncannily like…could possibly be…strangely resembles…YHWH’s return to Zion…Jesus returns to Jerusalem intending to enact, symbolize, and personify the climatic hope of YHWH returning to Zion.”

(a) On the way, Jesus is befriending the outcast and marginalized “lost sheep” of Israel such as Zacchaeus. This shepherding of the lost is what Ezekiel prophesied.

(b) Jesus is riding in on a donkey for God’s visitation and dramatic triumphal arrival of YHWH.

f. He said he will come at the end of time to judge the world sitting on a throne in heavenly glory (Matt 25:31-33 & John 5:27) = “I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations” (God speaking to the prophet Joel in Joel 3:12)

g. “Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will

live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.” (John 5:25-29) = God was the giver of life in the O.T. and the one to raise the dead. (1 Sam. 2:6 & Deut. 32:39)

h. Jesus spoke of himself as the “bridegroom” (Matthew 25:1) = YHWH identifies himself this way (Isaiah 62:5 and Hosea 2:16)

i. “I am the light of the world” = “[YHWH] is my light” (Psalm 27:1)

j. His selecting of the 12 apostles (Mark 3:13-16) showed that the restoration of Israel was beginning as the 12 tribes of Israel were superseded. This was to be the beginning of the replacing of the Jewish religion with a different plan of God. Since God set up the original covenant with Israel, only God could override it. So the act of establishing 12 apostles was also a claim to divinity.

7. **INTERVIEW #3: DID JESUS CLAIM TO BE THE SON OF GOD?**

8. **INTERVIEW #4: DID JESUS CLAIM TO BE GOD?**

c. Based on his statements and how he refers to himself, it is very clear that he believes he is the Son of God and in some sense equivalent in nature with God.

1. Dr. Peter Kreeft discusses how he was a very believable person although his teachings were hard to accept. His claim about his divinity was almost unbelievable. “They had to either believe his almost unbelievable claim or disbelieve his very believable person.”

2. This is still our dilemma today. Jesus clearly claims to be God, what do we

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do with this information: believe what seems unbelievable or reject it even though Jesus is so compelling of a teacher?

4. Other Available Options to Understand Jesus

a. Who was this guy?

1. Popular thought:
   
a. Wise Sage
   
b. Moral Philosopher
   
c. Trusted Teacher
   
d. Prophet

2. From this list, we all (secular humanist, conservative, Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) can easily affirm each of these. We all agree. But, was Jesus more than this?

b. C.S. Lewis – “I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I am 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 a level with 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 is madman or something worse.”

   1. C.S. Lewis says that someone can’t say he was a great moral teacher only.

   2. C.S. Lewis gives us 3 options: Liar, Lunatic, or Lord.

      a. Option 1 - Liar: If Jesus was not God and knew he was not, he was
lying deliberately.

b. Option 2 - Lunatic: If Jesus was not God but did not realize that he was not, he was a lunatic.

c. Option 3 - Lord.

3. Are there any other options to get out of this dilemma?

a. Yes but they do not end in a satisfying result. Dr. Peter Kreeft helps us understand options 4 & 5.\(^{16}\)

b. Option 4 – “a god”: Jesus claimed to be God but what he meant is “a god” just as we are all gods. This option is clearly unsatisfactory due to:

   (i) 1\(^{\text{st}}\) Its reliance on pantheistic (or even new age or Hindu) data that is simply not found in the gospels.

      (a) Nothing Jesus said or his followers understood even closely resembles the “a god of many gods” scenario as they lived in a monotheistic culture and Jesus clearly claimed the monotheistic Jewish God role when he claimed “I AM.”

   (ii) 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) If Jesus was “a god” he was a terribly bad teacher because no one, friends or enemies, actually understood what he meant.

      (a) Only the clever people 2000 years later actually understood that he meant “a god of many gods.”

      (b) But this is obviously culturally arrogant of these very

clever people.

(c) They are claiming they knew what Jesus meant and the Jews of Jesus time did not.

(d) This is ridiculous as Jesus was also a Jew, lived amongst Jews, and the main teaching of Judaism is the Shema.17

(e) Contradicting the Shema is blasphemous and results capital punishment.

(f) Jesus’ life was threatened and there were plots to kill Jesus when he made the claims because they knew exactly who he was claiming to be.

(iii) So Option 4 fails

c. Option 5 – deny the data: claim that the historical Jesus never actually said he was God. This option is clearly unsatisfactory due to:

(i) The data in the gospels is clear, concise, and compelling (see above).

(ii) Besides the far left fringe wing of the Jesus Seminar who discredits the historical Jesus, no scholars deny the data of Jesus’ claims.

(iii) This ultimately entails that the disciples all fabricated the data that Jesus said he was God.

(iv) That is, the real Jesus never claimed to be God but the disciples lied and said he did.

(v) But why would the disciples lie? For a selfish motive like

17 "Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is one," Deuteronomy 6:4
fame or financial gain?

(vi) We know that all the disciples were tortured and killed for their belief (except John who was exiled) and they did not retract anything they claimed.

(vii) So, if they were lying they never confessed they were lying even in the midst of torture and death.

(viii) So Option 5 fails

d. Thus, we are back in the Liar, Lunatic, Lord trilemma.

c. Was Jesus a liar? Could he have been deliberately lying?

1. If he was lying, he would be the biggest hypocrite, because he taught his disciples to be moral & honest,

2. If he was lying, he would be a fool, because they crucified him for his self-proclamation and he spent his whole life living a lie.
   a. He knew his calling was to be “a ransom in the place of many” (Mark 10:45).
   b. He was clearly on that divine mission.
   c. If he originally set out to be on this course of death based on something he knew was a lie, he would be a fool for choosing such a life and death.

3. If he was lying, he would have been a demon, because he told others to trust him for their eternal destiny.

4. So in summary, if he was lying, he would be a hypocrite, fool, and demonic. But this result is completely contrary to the data we have about Jesus.
5. **Conclusion**

   a. No, Jesus was not a liar. Someone who taught, lived, and died like Jesus did would never be thought to be a liar.

   b. Historian Phillip Schaff – “A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect, so human and yet so high above all human greatness, can neither be fraud nor a fiction...How could an imposter – that is, a deceitful, selfish, depraved man – have invented, and consistently maintained from the beginning to end, the purest and noblest character known in history with the most perfect air of truth and reality?...It would take more than a Jesus to invent a Jesus.”

   c. So, we conclude Jesus firmly believed that he was the Son of God and could not have been deliberately lying.
1. **Popular Challenges**
   
   a. “Jesus, like every other crazy who claims to be God, is delusional and needs psychiatric drugs!”
   
   b. “What about the Jews that said he was μαίνεται (mainetai: raving mad) in John 10:20 or his family who said he was ἐξέστη (exeste: out of his mind) in Mark 3:21?”
   
   c. “Jesus was a hypnotist.”

2. **Questions to Consider**
   
   a. Was Jesus suffering from a mental illness?
   
   b. Was Jesus crazy claiming to be the Son of God?

3. **The Psychological Evidence**
   
   a. From a current diagnosis of a clinical psychologist, there are no signs of mental illness.\(^1\)
      
      1. He demonstrated appropriate emotions: healthy anger and sadness.
      
      2. He was in contact with reality and showed no signs of paranoia, no difficulty with logic, no irrationality, no misperceptions.
      
      3. He related socially to others and did not dress weird.
      
      4. He had deep and continuous relationships with a variety of people.
      
      5. He loved and responded to people where they were at but didn’t let

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compassion immobilize him.

6. He did not ramble, but his speeches were brilliant, eloquent, motivating, and powerful – not to mention filled with tremendous insight into the human condition.

7. He didn’t have a bloated ego but handled the fame and the crowds well - all while maintaining personal balance despite the demands of the ministry.

ii. Dr. Gary Collins: “All in all, I just don’t see signs that Jesus was suffering from any known mental illness…He was much healthier than anyone else I know – including me.”

4. Responses to Challenges

a. “Jesus, like every other crazy who claims to be God, is delusional and needs psychiatric drugs!”

   1. Clearly, Jesus is not like others who make that claim.

b. “What about the Jews that said he was μαίνεται (mainetai: raving mad) in John 10:20 or his family who said he was ἐξέστη (exeste: out of his mind) in Mark 3:21?”

   1. “Raving mad” in this context is not a comprehensive or professional psychological analysis but is the reaction of some in the crowd who were shocked at his teaching about the good shepherd and wanted to say something negative (e.g., “oh you’re crazy”).

   2. They said this, because Jesus’ teaching and his assertions were almost

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unbelievable. To the Jews listening, Jesus spoke blasphemous expressions about being God and gave alternative ideas of God’s kingdom beyond their understanding.

3. He portrayed a very different messiah than they expected and some were just not ready for his teaching.

4. The next verse (John 10:21) includes the response of the others who had just heard Jesus speak of himself as the good shepherd:

   a. At these words the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?” But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

5. So here we see that there was more to the opposition’s reaction and it is clear that they wanted to attack his character.

6. He backed up his profound teaching by performing miracles and living a sinless life. The other people in the crowd recognized the value and verifying natures of a miracle which is why they spoke up to refute the naysayers.

7. “Out of his mind” is better translated “lost his senses” or “beside himself.” This implies a temporary but major state stress rather than a permanent psychological mental illness. They came to “take charge of him” or “seize him” as they were most likely embarrassed and afraid of the Pharisees who had just learned of Jesus healing large numbers of people.

8. Bible Scholar Albert Barnes adds, “The reason why this report (that Jesus has lost his senses) gained any belief was, probably, that he had lived among them as a carpenter; that he was poor and unknown; and that now, at 30 years of age, he broke off from his occupations, abandoned his
common employment, spent much time in the deserts, denied himself the common comforts of life, and set up his claims to be the Messiah who was expected by all the people to come with great pomp and splendor.”

9. So his closest family or friends were a little freaked out at this behavior and new attention and the best they could come up with at the time was to try to control Jesus who was just breaking out into a massive public ministry.

ii. Thus, based on the data above, others who seemed to claim Jesus was mad, may not have even believed he was psychologically disordered but rather temporarily “beside himself” or were just angry at what he taught.

iii. If they did think that he was mad, they truly misjudged him (which is also clear from the demon-possessed remark). They did not even point to a sign of any mental illness.

c. “Jesus was a hypnotist.”

1. Problem here is that hypnosis (if efficacious) only is for 1 person. Hypnosis is not for groups of people. E.g., he fed the 5000 people at once, healed people in front of others, raised Lazarus from the dead, etc.

2. Problem here is that hypnosis can’t explain these as well as many other miracles.

3. So this view is rejected.

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3Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the Bible*, 14 Volumes (London: Blackie & Sons, 1884)
5. **Conclusion**

   a. Overall, Jesus’ sound teachings on morality, truth, and O.T. law are so profound and powerful, they are incredibly regarded as the best philosophical understanding of ethics any wise man or scholar ever delivered.

   b. Jesus is considered by much of the world as one of the greatest teachers to ever live.

   c. So, Jesus was probably the most opposite of crazy you could get, and is much smarter and healthier than we are.

   d. Therefore, he was not a lunatic.
1. **Popular Challenges**

   a. “Jesus denied having divine attributes.”

   b. “A ‘God-Man’ is a self-contradiction and is unintelligible.”

   c. “The disciples of Jesus merely copied from the life of Apollonius of Tyana to create the story of Jesus.”

   d. “The legend of Jesus is simply a retelling of similar stories from ancient mystery religions such as Mithraism.”

2. **Questions to Consider**

   a. What evidence does Jesus provide that supports his claim of Deity?

   b. Do the alternative stories discredit the accounts we have of Jesus?

3. **The Divinity Evidence**

   a. We have 10 different evidences from Jesus that show the divinity of Jesus:

      i. He performed many miracles and he used miracles to prove his deity to people (Matthew 11:4-5 & John 3:2).

         1. Healed people.

         2. Raised dead people to life.

         3. Cast demons out of people.

         4. Modified water and multiplied food.
5. Walked on water.

6. Controlled the weather.

7. If he does the miracle successfully, his words and claim to divine authority is true and credible.

ii. He was without sin (John 8:46). Only God was thought to be sinless.

1. The disciples, Pilate, the soldier at the cross, the thief on the cross all confirmed he has done nothing wrong.

2. “A Lamb without blemish of defect.” (1 Peter 1:19)

3. “Him who knew no sin…” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

4. This is known in theology as the “Impeccability” of Christ.

5. Ponder: Could Jesus have sinned?

iii. He forgave sins. The most striking feature of Jesus’ life that points to his divinity is his forgiving of sin. Only God and the other person(s) could be wronged in sin. The scribes correctly respond: “Who can forgive sins but God alone.” (Mark 2:1-12)

1. “Son, your sins are forgiven.” (Mark 2:1-7)

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some
teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, **“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”**

2. They asked: “Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

3. Jesus said, I have this authority.

4. Theology Professor Michael F. Bird: “Clearly Jesus’s declaration of forgiveness in such a context was tantamount to assuming the authority to forgive on God’s behalf…Jesus claims for himself unmediated divine authority…”¹

iv. He accepted worship - which the OT forbids anyone from doing other than God. Angels and disciples rejected worship in the N.T (Acts 14:15 and Rev 22:8-9) because they knew the significance of it. People who worshipped Jesus:

1. The healed leper (Matthew 8:2)

2. The disciples in the boat after Jesus walked on water & resurrected (Matthew 14:33 & 28:17)

3. The Caananite woman (Matthew 15:25)

4. The Mother of James and John (Matthew 20:20)

5. The demon possessed man (Mark 5:6)

6. The blind man (John 9:38)

v. He accepted the title of “my Lord and my God” by Thomas (Luke 5:8, John 20:28).

vi. He changed people’s names – something only God does as the Hebrew names refer to their identity and divine destiny that God designed. (John 1:42)

vii. He spoke with power and authority that others recognized:

1. The mob of soldiers fell down when he spoke: “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.” (John 18:6)

2. “No one ever spoke the way this man does,’ the guards declared.” (John 7:46)

3. “The people were astonished, for he taught them as one with authority” (Matthew 7:28-29)

viii. His divinity was confirmed by voices from heaven at his baptism and trans-configuration. (Matthew 3:17 & 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-13)

ix. He prophesied his own death and resurrection and fulfilled it. (Matthew 12:39-40, Mark 8:31, John 2:19 & 10:18)

x. He ascended into heaven. (Luke 24:51)

b. Another line of evidence we have is that his followers were fully convinced he was God incarnate. The Scriptural data for this is obvious in the Apostles writings.

c. The evidence adds up to a full case showing that Jesus is God.

4. **Responses to Challenges**

   a. “Jesus denied having divine attributes.”

      i. Critics and Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons say that Jesus was born of God and

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was not co-eternal with the Father as they reference “begotten” in John 3:16 and “firstborn” in Colossians 1:15 and “good” in Mark 10:18. (the J.W.’s also re-interpret John 1:1-3 to say what they want)

ii. Response: “Begotten” and “firstborn” have an alternative meaning.

1. Begotten means unique and beloved.

2. Firstborn means supreme heir to the Father’s inheritance.

3. Original ancient Hebrew literal meaning (primogeniture) was modified over time and by the time of Jesus day, it carried the connotation of ‘succeeding in rights’ and ‘possess in fullness.’

4. In Colossians 2:9, Paul clarifies the nature of Jesus, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”

   a. In the same text as Colossians 1:15, Paul is actually being completely straightforward on the divine nature of Jesus.

   b. Thus, ‘firstborn’ in Colossians 1:15 must mean something other than ‘Jesus is born.’

5. “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.” Mark 10:18; Jesus only was helping the rich man to confirm what he was exclaiming.

   a. Jesus was not denying it, but merely asking, “do you know what that means when you say that about me? God alone is good, so do you realize that your calling me God?”

   b. Again this is not Jesus denying his divine attributes.
b. “A God-Man is a contradiction and is unintelligible.”

i. Christology – the doctrine of the nature(s) of Jesus.

ii. According to John 1:1-3, Jesus existed from the beginning. From the beginning, Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God.

1. Here, the Bible establishes the inseparable nature (one-ness) of Jesus and the God of the Universe.

iii. He was not a person in which God just inspired, like Elijah or Moses.

iv. He was not a schizophrenic with 2 separate minds; but was someone who had 1 personality with 2 distinct but inseparable natures.

v. Human’s = 1 body & 1 soul;

vi. Jesus the logos = 2nd person of the trinity = 1 body and 2 natures both revealed (the divine was revealed at moments of his baptism and transfiguration).

vii. Jesus was 100% God and 100% man at the same time. 1 person with 2 natures.

viii. So, this is not a contradiction. The early church Fathers labored to produce a theological formulation that would make sense and do justice to the Biblical accounts without being self-contradictory.

ix. Creed of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.: “…Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead…acknowledged in two natures, inconfusely, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being
preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.”

a. Homousias: Consubstantial or Coessential or of the same substance or essence or nature.

b. Hypostasis: Subsistence or individual instance of an ousia.

c. “The disciples of Jesus merely copied from the life of Apollonius of Tyana to create the story of Jesus.”

i. This is not a new challenge. In the 3rd century, parallels were drawn by Sossianus Hierocles, Proconsul of Bithynia under the Roman Emperor Diocletian where “the attempt seems to have been made to show that the marvels attributed to Apollonius were better authenticated than those attributed to Christ.”

1. Hierocles argued against Christianity using Apollonius of Tyana, “You proclaim Jesus a god on account of a few prodigies recorded by your evangelists. We have writers of more education than yours and with more care for truth, who relate similar wonders of Apollonius; and yet we, showing more solid judgment, do not make him a god on account of them, but only regard him as a man found pleasing to the gods.”

ii. He contends that the miracles of Apollonius of Tyana are better attested and more carefully documented, but no one makes Apollonius of Tyana into a god because people are more rational than that.

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4 Hierocles, Philalethes.
iii. He wanted to “show that pagans had not accepted Apollonius as more than a 'divine man', despite his wondrous deeds.”

iv. Like Hierocles, some Roman Emperors who opposed Christianity tended to use Apollonius as propaganda, claiming that Apollonius was greater than Jesus but is not to be worshipped as a god, so why worship Jesus as a god?

1. They were using this reasoning to deter Christians away from Christianity.

v. This challenge resurfaced in the 1800’s and is now again a very popular challenge.

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\[
\text{APOLLONIUS OF TYANA.} \\
\text{A contorniate, and unquestionably authentic.}^{\text{9}}
\]

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vi. Response:

1. Apollonius of Tyana (3 BCE to 97 CE) allegedly was a wise teacher, had followers, had supernatural powers, traveled around, appeared after he died, and (implied by his biographer) ascended to heaven.

   a. Apollonius the religious teacher, taught on moral and religious topics.

      (i) He embraced the “Pythagorean rule of life” and traveled to India, Ethiopia, and Rome. He was concerned with purifying the cults he encountered and concentrated on temple worship. He believed in astrology and divination. He prophesied, and performed miracles including healings and casting out demons.\(^7\)

   b. Apollonius the philosopher was heavily influenced by Neo-Platonic Greek philosophy.

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T. Whittaker: “The teaching of Apollonius himself, so far as we can judge, though not without Stoic elements, laid stress rather on the transcendence of the supreme divinity…the Platonic or Pythagorean doctrine of immortality is asserted.”

2. Sources of Information on Apollonius of Tyana

a. Most of what we know is gained from the sophist Flavius Philostratus the Elder (c.170–247 CE) who wrote *Vita Apollonii Tyanensis* [*The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*; scholars refer to it as “VA”].

   (i) This is a huge biography and it’s reported to be the largest biography of any 1 person in classical literature.

   (ii) Allegedly, Philostratus gathered his information from a companion of Apollonius named Damis.

   (iii) Damis wrote a diary about their travels together.

   (iv) These diary tablets are lost.

b. Philostratus’ biography *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* was written in 220 A.D.

   (i) This date is over 125 years after Apollonius died.

   (ii) Christopher P. Jones, “The Life of Apollonius has a terminus post of 217, the year of Julia Domna's death, and it is earlier than the Lives of the Sophists, which was probably written in the 230’s.”

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c. Actually there are 4 other texts available prior to Philostratus’ account that mention features about his life.\textsuperscript{12}

(i) We can gather this summary of his life from these documents: “appears to have been a wandering ascetic/philosopher/wonderworker of a type common to the eastern part of the early empire.”\textsuperscript{13}

(ii) They do not talk about him being god, thinking of himself as god, or showing people he is god.

(iii) Moeragenes, another biographer, emphasized Apollonius’ magical powers.

(iv) D. H. Raynor: “Moeragenes evidently presented Apollonius as an impressive \textit{μάγος} as well as a \textit{φιλόσοφος}.”\textsuperscript{14}

d. Philostratus urges readers to not read the other biography of Apollonius by Moiragenes.

(i) Philostratus claims to have more information about Apollonius and describes Moiragenes as ignorant.

(ii) D. H. Raynor: “Moeragenes gave weight to both the magical and the philosophical sides of his presentation; Philostratus, by contrast, as we have seen from his introductory remarks, is rather embarrassed by the magical side, and wishes to

\textsuperscript{12} A reference in the Roman historian Lucian’s book, a book by Maximus of Aegeae concerning Apollonius’ actions in Aegeae, another biography of Moiragenes, and a testimony of Apollonius.


emphasise the philosophical aspect.”

(iii) D. H. Raynor: “It is notable that the overriding characteristics of Apollonius' miraculous works as presented by Philostratus are perception and knowledge, rather than spells or sorcery after the usual Hellenistic fashion…all of which demonstrate the sage's superhuman powers of perception and knowledge, and are thus consequent upon his achievement of the Pythagorean spiritual ideal. The same powers of perception are demonstrated by Apollonius' skill at foretelling the future, often mentioned by Philostratus, and discussed explicitly at 5.11, where it is credited not to wizardry but to divine grace.”

(iv) Philostratus wanted to rehabilitate the reputation of Apollonius away from the mystical and magical elements he was known by because he knew Apollonius would be left open to charges of sorcery and being a charlatan.

(v) Philostratus did this by showing that the magic described by Moeragenes can really be attributed to his keen intellect.

(vi) D. H. Raynor: “Philostratus is accordingly concerned that his subject should be recognised to be no common thaumaturge, but an ascetic Pythagorean philosopher; he stresses that all the wonders with which the sage is associated derive from his peculiar wisdom and the high spiritual state which he


attained.”\textsuperscript{17}

(vii) Overall, Philostratus continues to propagate the stories with Apollonius’ wonder-working powers.

e. Apollonius allegedly wrote some letters which Philostratus included. These letters are now available along with the entire biography of Apollonius.\textsuperscript{18}

   (i) It’s possible that Philostratus forged these letters and claimed Apollonius wrote them, but this is pure speculation.

3. Comparing Philostratus’ biography \textit{Life of Apollonius of Tyana} with the NT accounts of Jesus

   a. Reliability Issues

   (i) The N.T. is filled with writings reflecting the common beliefs of the early church people who had these beliefs immediately after Jesus’ life & resurrection.

   (ii) There are several books (27 N.T. books and 17 extra-biblical books) all referencing Jesus and his life, ministry, followers, etc.

   (iii) It turns out that the N.T. is very reliable and enjoys independent attestation, multiplicity of manuscripts, and wide scholarly acceptance as such.

   (iv) However, the same is not enjoyed by the biography of Apollonius.


\textsuperscript{18} Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press: www.loebclassics.com
(v) If the N.T. documents are considered unreliable for any reason (such as dating, miracles, etc.) how much more so would the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* be unreliable.

(vi) Based on the lack of corroborating evidence and the late date of the writing, scholars consider the biography of Apollonius to be less reliable than any N.T. document.

b. Time-gap Issues

(i) The 3 synoptic accounts of Jesus were written within 30 years of Jesus’ life.

(ii) Also, we have vast data available from Paul about Jesus written within 20 years of Jesus’ life.

(iii) Compared to the NT gospels, there is much more time (around 125 years at least) for legendary development to creep in to the story.

c. Source of Information Issues

(i) The biographies of Jesus were written by eyewitnesses, whereas, Philostratus is consulting other sources which we do not have for his information.

(ii) Philostratus even reports timidly, e.g., “it is reported that…” or “some say….others say…”

(iii) This is not like the strong eyewitness report that we have with the biographers of Jesus.

4. In the story telling of Apollonius, legendary embellishments most likely set in.
a. To coincide with the establishing of the new temple in Apollonius’ honor, Empress Julia Domna commissioned Philostratus to write his biography.¹⁹

b. The Roman empress Julia Domna gave Damis’ tablets to Philostratus to compose a book based on them. This is how he got the material to write the biography.

c. Her son had a strong affection for Apollonius and she may have asked Philostratus to add in legendary development.²⁰

d. If she didn’t ask him to embellish the story, he could have anyway – as he was being paid to write a biography of someone for the Empress who already had an affinity for Apollonius.

e. This claim of fabrication is based on uncertainty, but fabrication may be the source any embellishments, legend, or the supernatural elements in the biography.

f. Interestingly, at the beginning of the book, Philostratus gives a hint that his account is partial-fiction/partial truth when he opens about how Apollonius came to be considered a divine man.²¹

g. James A. Francis: “a number of various well-developed traditions about Apollonius clearly existed before VA [The Life of Apollonius of Tyana], and that scholars of all opinions have always agreed that Philostratus reworked these source materials. Thus VA is a work of

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²⁰ http://carm.org/apollonius-tyana-also-did-miracles-and-rose-what-about-him
fictional revisionism...”\textsuperscript{22}

h. James A. Francis: “...it is clear that elements of invention and reality are not only juxtaposed in \textit{Vita Apollonii} [\textit{The Life of Apollonius of Tyana}] but shaded one into the other so as to blur the distinctions between them.”\textsuperscript{23}

i. Michael F. Bird: “…it seems clear to me that Philostratus’ biography has been written as a polemical parody of the Gospels, a type of refutation by imitation.”\textsuperscript{24}

j. Keep in mind that the N.T. writers had nothing to gain and everything to lose in writing about Jesus.

5. Unlike Hierocles, some non-Christian authors of late antiquity, such as Eunapius. Ammianus Marcellinus, and Sidonius Apollinaris, “all picture him as a godlike philosopher.”\textsuperscript{25}

a. The godlike description did creep in to the thinking about Apollonius – despite Hierocles claims.

b. Did people think of him as god-like? Hierocles says no, but these 3 authors appear to do just that.

c. Another way to understand this claim: these 3 did respond to Christians on the matter and so their ascribing him with partial deity could be also taken to be a sarcastic false belief held up to cast shame


on the Christian belief of the divinity of Jesus.

d. So we have a similar trilemma with this god-like claim by those sympathetic to Apollonius: legend of god-likeness, actual god-like, or sarcasm?

e. This godlike description was given 200 years or more after he died.

f. This is not similar with the accounts we have of Jesus as his immediate followers thought he was God.

g. Also, Jesus thought he was God, claimed to be God, and showed he was God – as evidenced in the preceding outline.

h. Apollonius did not think he was God, made no such claim, and showed no such miracle to justify his claim.

i. So legend most likely developed over time with Apollonius or this is just sarcasm. We can reject the alternative that he was god-like.

j. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, and Lactantius provided Christian responses to these claims back then.26

k. G.H.R. Horsley, “For Eusebius (5.1, 33.4, 48.2), Apollonius was a great philosopher, but not a ‘holy man’...”27

l. Eusebius wrote Adversus Hieroclem (Against Hierocles), where he pointed out inconsistencies in the Philostratus biography.

m. Eusebius sought to show that he was not divine despite Philostratus’

account of ascension.\textsuperscript{28}

n. Eusebius rejected the miracle stories as unhistorical fiction of Philostratus and charged Apollonius with being a magician who dabbled to close to sorcery.

o. Lactantius [260 - 330 A.D.]: “Why therefore, O senseless one, does no one worship Apollonius in the place of God?... I do not say this, he [Philostratus] says, that Apollonius was not accounted a god, because he did not wish it; but that it may be evident that we, who did not at once connect a belief in his divinity with wonderful deeds, are wiser than you, who on account of slight wonders believed that he was a god.”\textsuperscript{29}

p. So, for Apollonius actual god-likeness isn’t an appropriate description.

6. What we know about Apollonius is drastically different in nature and content than Jesus.

a. Apollonius did not claim to:

(i) be God

(ii) the son of God

(iii) the Jewish Messiah

(iv) receive acknowledgment as deity

(v) receive worship by his followers

(vi) forgive sins


\textsuperscript{29} Lactantius, \textit{The Divine Institutes}, Book 5 “Of Justice”, Chapter 3.
b. He did not use miracles to validate his claims.
   
   (i) Also, according to 19th century historian T Whittaker: “no one appealed to his wonder-working as evidence of the truth of the doctrines attributed to him.”

7. If Apollonius actually was a miracle worker that ascended to heaven, this does not discredit the accounts of Jesus.

   a. Both theoretically could have performed miracles and ascended.
   
   b. Both would lend themselves to the idea that God exists and so does heaven – which corresponds to Christianity.
   
   c. Whereas another worldview can’t account for this.
   
   d. If one discredits the evidence for Apollonius, this does not mean the evidence for Jesus is discredited – separate arguments must be made.
   
   e. Interestingly, there was an epigraph about Apollonius’ tomb found inscribed on a stone. This is what it says:

   (i) “This man, named after Apollo, and shining forth from Tyana, extinguished the faults of men. The tomb in Tyana (received) his body, but in truth heaven received him so that he might drive out the pains of men (or: drive pains from among men).”

f. So clearly, Apollonius died, was buried, and did not ascend to heaven.

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8. Did the gospel writers copy from the stories of Apollonius?

a. If any copying was done, it is clear that Philostratus would have copied from the 1st century documents about Jesus since he wrote about Apollonius in the 3rd century.

   (i) Philostratus wrote over 150 years after most of the New Testament was written.

   (ii) It would be impossible for the disciples to copy from Philostratus.

   (iii) Most likely Philostratus copied the N.T. writings that the early church had already been circulating for 150 years.

   (iv) Overall, we can see that the parallels that the skeptic makes comparing information about Jesus to Apollonius is highly problematic.33

9. Did the gospel writers write “Truthful Fiction?”34

a. Here, the critic could exemplify Philostratus’ account of Apollonius to show that the Evangelists leveraged a common literature style of the time, partial-history and partial-fiction, to spread the good news about Jesus.

b. This type of investigation into genres is sometimes referred to as “Form Criticism.”

c. Response:

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33 For further reading, check out Mark Foreman's chapter in his and Paul Copan's *Come, Let Us Reason*. Also Mike Licona's article in Lee Strobel's *Case for the Real Jesus*

(i) Yes this type of partial-fiction/partial truth was seen in the region.

(ii) Even Christian-Gnostics of the 1st few centuries wrote in this type of genre where they took historical figures like Jesus and the Apostles and created a fictitious story.

(iii) However, for the Biblical authors there are genuine marks of authenticity that show it is not a partial-fiction/partial truth.

(iv) Overall, it can be easily demonstrated that the gospel writers did not write in the common genre of “Truthful Fiction.”

10. Did the gospel writers write a similar god-man profile that was common to Hellenistic human “god-man” heroes?

   a. Some\textsuperscript{35} have contended that the gospel authors had to establish concept of a profound god-man in order to win converts amongst Hellenistic world where god-man heroes are typical.

   b. This is often referred to as the θεῖος ἀνήρ divine-man hypothesis.

   c. Response:

   (i) Erkki Koskenniemi: “Apollonius of Tyana was not a representative of a typical Hellenistic θεῖος ἀνήρ [god-man], nor indeed does his role lend any support to θεῖος ἀνήρ having been the paradigm upon which the first Christians constructed their image of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{36}

   (ii) In fact, there really isn’t much of a Hellenistic divine-man pattern at all because “when the Christian texts and the late

\textsuperscript{35} Rudolf Bultmann, Richard Reitzenstein, Gillis Wetter, Otto Weinreich, Hans Windisch, and Ludwig Bieler.

work of Philostratus are removed from the pattern, the whole θεῖος ἀνήρ [god-man] pattern collapses.”

(iii) This is because there is no human prior to the gospels who actually does profile a god-man.

(iv) Erkki Koskenniemi concurs: “From within the period of greatest interest, ca. 300 BCE to ca. 150 CE, there has not been a single important Gentile miracle worker identified in the literature.”

1. Except possibly the Syrian slave Eunus was a miracle worker, who led a revolt of slaves in Sicily ca. 136/135-132 BCE.

(v) Would any Jewish miracle worker match the profile of a god-man?

2. Samaritan miracle workers such as Simon and Dositheo.

3. Jewish miracle workers such as Honi the circle drawer, and Hanina ben Dosa.


5. Jewish exorcists: sons of Skeuas and Eleazar of

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Qumran.


7. But each of these figures do not match the profile of a god-man.

(vi) Many miracle workers appear on the scene after 150 CE: Alexander of Abontheichos, Peregrinus Proteus, Arnuphis, Julianos, Apsethos, and Neryllinos. This is 100 years after the synoptic gospels were penned.

(vii) Moreover, other ancient Greek mythological demigod heroes are very different from Jesus. Jesus’ context is Judaism and the Jewish biographers of Jesus carry the uniquely Jewish context through their account.

(viii) Overall, we can say that these other miracle workers do not profile a god-man and do not influence the gospel authors.

(ix) Furthermore, we can conclude that the gospel writers did not create a similar god-man profile that was common to Hellenistic human “god-man” heroes.

11. Therefore, we can conclude that the disciples of Jesus could not have copied from the life of Apollonius of Tyana to create the story of Jesus.

d. “The legend of Jesus is simply a retelling of similar stories from ancient mystery religions such as Mithraism.”

i. Critics contend that the rising-dying savior-God theme of Christianity so closely resembles the accounts found in other religions of the Mediterranean and Ancient-
Near East, that borrowing is highly probable.

1. To further establish the charge of borrowing, some critics point to the similarities between Christian practices, such as baptism and the Lord’s Supper, with the rituals of the mystery cults.

2. They conclude that the gospel accounts must be mythological due to their similarities and cannot be trusted as factual history.

ii. This challenge was brought up in the 2nd century by Celsus, a sharp critic of Christianity.

iii. A group of influential German Bible scholars from over 100 years ago further developed this criticism.

1. The Religionsgeschichtliche Schule ("History of Religion School") in Germany was influential between 1880 and 1920.

2. This group of liberal theologians and Bible scholars were interested in comparative religions and showing the influences of neighboring religions.


39 Celsus, a sharp critic of Christianity.
3. They began to compare other ancient religions to Christianity to look for parallels and influences.

a. Oxford Reference: “At first they tried only to trace historical developments within Judaism and Christianity, but soon they came to search for parallels in Egyptian, Babylonian, and Hellenistic religious systems.”

b. One of their more prominent scholars wrote to American theologians explaining their views: “Moreover, the same must be said concerning the exceedingly difficult task of explaining the origin of Christianity, which already in the preaching of Jesus presupposes the peculiarly complicated religious history of late Judaism.”

4. This group brought academic credibility to the skeptical views concerning the uniqueness of Jesus.

5. Some even argued that Christianity began as another mystery religion.

iv. This criticism is now popularized in the film *Zeitgeist*.

v. Mithraism – most significant mystery religion and shares the most similarities with Christianity

1. Mithraism began in Medea (the land of the Medes; modern day Iran).

   a. Not much is known about it during that time most likely due to the fact that there was no system of a written historical record in Medea.

2. Mithra had a “virgin birth” as he was born out of a rock.

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41 Ernst Troeltsch, The Dogmatics of the "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule" The American Journal of Theology; Vol. 17, No. 1 (Jan., 1913), pp. 1-21
3. Mithra killed a bull and this became the ground in which humanity was born.

   a. They thought that the star constellations gave rise to this image. They were a star oriented culture as the stars were thought to be living gods.

   b. This slaying of the bull is reflection of astrological awareness rather than Persian myths. Mithraism belongs to a set of astral star cults of the Ancient Near East.\(^43\)

   c. The cosmic constellations provided the background for Mithraic theology to emerge.

   d. They believed that Mithras had supreme power over the cosmos and all astrological forces that affect life on earth.

   e. Since he could stars that affect human life he was worthy of worship.

4. Mithra the mediator and savior was to rescue the human souls and take them to their final destination.

   a. helping humans fight against evil and demons.

   b. judging humans according to their good and evil.

   c. leading human souls through planets to their final destination.

5. Mithraism’s themes sound familiar to Christian themes:

   a. Light vs. Dark

   b. Good vs. Evil

c. Purity and brotherhood

d. Sacred meals

e. Rebirth (this was a later addition to Mithraism)

6. Mithraism was a man’s only religion. Women were not allowed.

7. Taurobolium was the baptism by blood initiation rite.
   a. They would get under the wooden alter and drink the raw blood that would come through.
   b. This would purify their souls.

8. Mithraea were the Mithraic cave-like sanctuaries with ceilings resembling a cosmic background enlivening the story-telling.\(^{44}\)
   a. The Mithraea and the systems of symbols within the sanctuary designated celestial geography and enabled idiomatic ‘star-talk.’\(^{45}\)
   b. The statue of Mithra slaying the bull was the cult icon in every sanctuary.

9. The Romans seemed to know Mithra as \textit{Sol Invictus}.
   a. Some have figured that Roman soldiers encountered Mithraism while stationed in the east. They would have converted there and brought Mithraism back to the west with them.

10. Marvin Meyer: Early Christianity resembles Mithraism “enough to make Christian apologists scramble to invent creative theological explanations

\(^{44}\) Roger Beck, \textit{The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun} (Oxford University Press).
\(^{45}\) Roger Beck, \textit{The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun} (Oxford University Press).
to account for the similarities.”

11. Here are some alleged Mithraic concepts that are similar to Christianity:

1. Mithra’s birthday was celebrated on December 25th, the time of the Winter solstice.
2. Mithra, as the sun-God, was born of a virgin (who was given the name “Mother of God”) in a cave (grotto, Tarkowski, 1996).
3. Mithra’s miraculous birth was witnessed by shepherds (Jones, 1908, 1927).
4. Mithras was a member of a Holy Trinity (Tarkowski, 1996),
5. Mithras was celibate throughout his life (Tarkowski, 1996).
7. The dualism of good and evil was taught with good triumphant over evil (Peronne, 1984).
8. Mithra was the leader of the forces of righteousness against the dark forces of the god of evil.
9. Mithra died and was resurrected and had a Last Supper before returning to heaven. How Mithra died is not known, but a cross that belongs to a Mithraic cult bearing a crucified effigy has been unearthed in

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vi. Response:

1. Sometimes this topic is referred to as “Parallelomania.”

2. We need to understand the similarities and differences between each individual mystery religion and Christianity.
   a. We need to investigate with precise comparisons to determine how similar the alleged similarities are.
   b. The presenters of this challenge to Christianity often do not reveal the differences between each individual mystery religion and Ireland. Mithra’s resurrection was celebrated during Easter, the time of the Spring solstice (Tarkowski, 1996).
10. Mithra was considered to be a mediator between mankind and Ahura-Mazda (the main god).
11. A ritualistic baptism was practiced (Tarkowski, 1996).
12. There was a sacramental communion utilizing bread and wine and a Eucharistic meal. The faithful drank wine and ate bread to symbolize the body and the blood of Mithras. The worshipers believed that at the Eucharist supper they would partake of their god in the form of bread and wine. Related to this is the following inscription: “He who will not eat of my body, nor drink of my blood so that he may be one with me and I with him, shall not be saved” (Tarkowski, 1996).
13. Mithraism practitioners observed a confirmation (Tarkowski, 1996).
14. Mithra was a hero/savior.
15. Mithra was worshiped on Sunday the day of the sun god. During the services, bells were sounded, and praises were offered to Mithras (Tarkowski, 1996).
16. It was considered that blood washes away sins. Mithraism practitioners believed that they were saved by the blood of the bull slaughtered by Mithra in order to give life to Earth.
17. The soul was immortal.
18. There would be a final judgment day and a resurrection of the dead. In the final conflict, the existing order of things would be destroyed in order to bring about the triumph of light over darkness (Tarkowski, 1996).
19. Salvation is spiritual.
20. Worshipers of Mithras believed in a celestial heaven and an infernal hell (Tarkowski, 1996).
21. The head of the temple was called Pater (Mithraism, 1995).
22. The Mithraic Holy father wore a red cap and garment and a ring. He also carried a shepherd’s staff (Tarkowski, 1996).
23. Prior to the birth of Jesus, the Iranians, believed in and waited for the imminent advent of a divine child who would save the world (Duchesne-Guillemin, 1967).
Christianity.

c. By leaving out important information in their descriptions, one would be guilty of building a “straw-man” against Christianity and caricature of Christianity.

d. Mary Jo Sharp offers the following advice to avoid this: “1. Get the whole story. 2. Take the parallels head to head. 3. Set everything in context.”

e. Regarding similarities, John N. Oswalt reminds us that “An elephant is not a table because it has four legs.”

3. Mystery Religion Basics

a. Mystery Religions around the Mediterranean were regional.

b. They can also be categorized as national or personal.

   (i) Greece: Eleusinian (ancient); Demeter and Dionysus; and Orphic

   (ii) Asia Minor: Cybele and Attis

   (iii) Egypt: Isis and Osiris (and later Serapis)

   (iv) Syria and Palestine: Adonis

   (v) Persia: Iran

c. Common themes in mystery religions that are also thought to be in common with Christianity:


(i) secret ceremonies and higher knowledge

(ii) sacred meals

(iii) deity returning to life after death or triumphing over enemies.

(iv) annual vegetation cycle

(v) correct theology or dogma concerning mysteries was rarely important

(vi) initiation into mystical union with the deity was important

1. through salvation

2. results in immortality

4. Myth Author’s Intent vs. Gospel Author’s Intent

   a. In mythological literature, we observe that the authors do not provide verifiable facts such as year, place, details of the setting, etc.

      (i) One can infer that the myth author’s story is not meant to be empirically evidenced in the context of human history.

      (ii) Understandably, their audience would not be compelled to seek out confirmation of the accounts of the mythological figures.

   b. However, the NT authors clearly demonstrate a willingness and desire to present verifiable information about a historical figure of Jesus.

      (i) Details of known places, governing rulers, other prominent authorities, cultural events, etc. are provided throughout the gospel accounts.
(ii) Emphasis is made on significant events that Jesus was involved with such as Passover feasts, throwing out the temple merchants, public speaking, public miracles, etc.

(iii) Luke and Peter both emphasize the importance of their eyewitness evidence.

(iv) All of the NT authors contextualized Jesus in actual human history – not a mythical realm.

5. Correlation does not necessarily equal causation.

   a. Similarities do not necessarily equate to one influencing another.

   b. Throughout human history, people groups across vast geographical spreads left evidence of their god stories.

   c. In many cases, the cultures and religions that have resulted from these god stories reveal common salvation and after-life themes.

   d. Perhaps this exemplifies a more basic individualized need for answers and encounters with some realm or being existing beyond the natural earth.

   (i) Solomon discusses such a longing in his book Ecclesiastes where he describes the “eternity written” on the human heart.

   (ii) The eminent early church theologian and philosopher Augustine of Hippo eloquently prayed: “You hast made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in you.”

   (iii) C.S. Lewis considered this longing and formulated a philosophical argument that seeks to prove the existence of
God. This is referred to as “The Argument from Desire.”

e. If such a desire is truly reflective of the human condition, it is not surprising to find the same god story themes appearing in religious sources throughout human history.

f. Additionally, across geographical barriers, human interpretations of similar natural occurrences were often expressed as the act of the gods.

   (i) Eclipses
   (ii) Earthquakes
   (iii) Floods
   (iv) Volcanoes
   (v) Rain

g. So, continuous multi-cultural world-wide appeals to a divine supernatural sources for human situations is not prima facie evidence of religions borrowing from each other.

h. In sum, correlation does not necessarily equal causation.

6. Differences with Christianity

   a. Monotheism vs. Polytheism

      (i) YHWH/Jesus is the only God, there are no other gods.

      (ii) Mystery religions are pantheistic.

   b. Transcendence vs. Continuity
(i) YHWH/Jesus is wholly independent and separate from creation.

(ii) Mystery religion gods are inseparable and continuous with the world.

c. Linear vs. Cyclical

(i) YHWH/Jesus interacts with an unrepeatable linear human history that has progress, purpose, an ultimate goal, and final end.

(ii) Mystery religions depend on the annual vegetation cycle for understanding history.

(iii) Mithraism was an exception as it had a linear view of history.

d. Order vs. Chaos

e. Symbols/Types vs. Idols/Images

f. Morality Perfection vs. Ambiguous Morality

(i) Jesus demonstrates a sinless life and the highest ethical principles ever conceived in ethics.

(ii) Mystery religions reveal gods with immature moral behaviors and do not provide any teaching reflecting a high ethical acumen.

g. Savior-God-Man vs. Savior-God

(i) Jesus’ death had important unparalleled features.\(^{50}\)

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1. Jesus died for someone else

2. Jesus died for sin

3. Jesus died once and for all

4. Jesus died in human history

5. Jesus died for voluntarily

6. Jesus died as a triumph

(ii) Born-Again Salvation

1. Mystery religion notions of rebirth appears much later than the beginning of Christianity.

2. Sometimes people accidentally read this later notion back into the earlier pre-Christian forms of the mystery religion.

3. However, the earlier pre-Christian mystery religions had no such notion.

4. Thus, the NT authors couldn’t have borrowed this notion from mystery religions.

5. Mystery religion notion of rebirth is vague and centers around initiation rites.

6. It seems to mean something very different from being born-again in Christianity.

7. Ronald Nash: “One frequently encounters scholars who first use Christian terminology to describe pagan beliefs and practices and then marvel at the awesome parallels
that they think they have discovered. One can go a long way toward “proving” early Christian syncretism by describing some mystery belief or practice in Christian terminology.”

h. Resurrection vs. Dying-Rising Cycle

(i) Resurrection is a term that finds connection in the ancient mystery religions but doesn’t describe their belief very well.

1. Prior to the Christian usage, pagan and mystery religion resurrection was concept found in the annually repeated death and rebirth of various deities.

2. By engaging in cult rituals and theatrical re-enactments, adherents would hope to gain the sympathy of the dying and rising god.

3. If fertility and initiation rites were performed properly and they found favor with the gods, then fertile crops and possibly offspring would follow.

4. This activity was celebrated by millions of people across the ancient world (from Egypt to the Orient to Norway) and gave meaning to their lives.

5. Note that in all the cases the dying and rising was:

   a. Continual

   b. Occurred in another spiritual realm of the gods

   c. Happened only to gods

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6. If ‘resurrection’ is a term that we could assume they were familiar with, all of the above would have come to mind upon hearing it.

7. Moreover, they thought of this dying-rising concept as a “metaphor whose concrete referent was the cycle of seed-time and harvest, of human reproduction and fertility.”

8. Nobody expected humans to actually rise.

9. N.T. Wright discusses the pagan concept: “A great many things supposedly happened to the dead, but resurrection did not. The pagan world assumed it was impossible…”

(ii) Christians redefined ‘resurrection.’

1. Resurrection in the NT is:

   d. Once

   e. Occurred in this earthly realm of humans

   f. Happened to a man

2. Christians were exclaiming a radically different meaning when they told of Jesus’ resurrection.

   a. It just happened to a man we knew and lived among us.

   b. The empty tomb and the resurrection

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appearances were a 1 time event that occurred in real history not some ethereal past.

3. The pagan hearers of the gospel would have been confused to hear of the resurrection of Jesus.

4. We see evidence of this when Paul preaches to the Athenian philosophers in Acts.

(iii) Christians wielded testimonial evidence and an empty tomb when they declared the resurrection.

1. The story tellers of the mystery religions could only point to the agricultural phenomena as evidence of the dying and rising gods.

7. Western Expansion and Contraction of Mithraism

a. Mithraism was very likely not in any part of the Roman Empire in the 1st century.

(i) Because of this, it is highly unlikely that the Jewish disciples from Galilee had heard of Mithraism.

(ii) Additionally, many of the alleged similarities that are presented from those who offer this challenge to Christianity are found in Roman Mithraism.

b. Mithraism blossomed in the Roman Empire after the NT was already finished (90 AD).

(i) Scholars have estimated between 700 to 2,000 Mithraic
sanctuaries existed in Rome.\textsuperscript{54}

c. There is ample information about mystery religions from 200 AD and onwards.

(i) However, these 3\textsuperscript{rd} century versions of mystery religions are different expressions from their earlier forms.

(ii) Nash cautions the reader to not read 3\textsuperscript{rd} century versions into the earlier forms of the mystery religion.\textsuperscript{55}

d. Some have considered Mithraism to the main rival to Christianity in Roman Empire during the first few centuries. However, this rivalry may be overstated.

e. After 300 AD, the mystery religions movements began to reduce.

f. When Christianity persevered and Mithraism was largely abandoned at the end of the 4\textsuperscript{th} century, it is claimed that there is archeological evidence that zealous Christians desecrated or repurposed old Mithraic sanctuaries.\textsuperscript{56}

g. It may be argued that Christianity was the anti-mystery religion that succeeded in revealing the availability of Jesus to all.

8. Available Options

a. Christianity borrowed from Mithraism

b. Mithraism borrowed from Christianity

c. No borrowing occurred and similarities are coincidental


9. Conclusions

a. Best option is that if any borrowing occurred, Mithraism borrowed from Christianity.

(i) This is supported by the development of Mithraism in the Roman Empire after the 1st century.

(ii) The New Testament authors were already finished with the writings before Mithraism could have influenced them.

(iii) Strong claims of similarities are a tough sale and only serve to show that Mithraism borrowed more from Christianity than the challenger would want to admit.

b. Furthermore, the alleged and actual similarities are, at best, inconsequential.

(i) Any similarities pale in comparison to all the differences.

(ii) Too much emphasis on source criticism and form criticism to find causes for similarities may result in blind scholarship – as scholars could be neglecting the importance of internal cultural context.

(iii) Michael F. Bird, “It’s kind of like saying, ‘Butternut squash and butterscotch pudding, they are all made of butter aren’t they?’…A whole scale reliance on parallelizing our sources to try to understand them is actually paralyzing for good historical investigation of texts.”57

(iv) Ronald Nash contends that liberal scholars in and after

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Religionsgeschichtliche Schule ("History of Religion School") in Germany exaggerate similarities, ignore differences, and make sweeping generalizations.\textsuperscript{58}

(v) Their work had been refuted long ago and is "now regarded as out of date" as they "are known a good century later to have been mistaken."\textsuperscript{59}

(vi) The responses to this liberal group came from Carl Clemen, Adolf von Harnack, Samuel Cheetham, H.A.A. Kennedy, J. Gresham Machen, and A.D. Nock.

(vii) Ronald Nash: "Younger scholars now returning from doctoral studies in Germany report that, over there at least, the question of a mystery influence on the New Testament is a dead issue. Once again we find that news like this has been slow to reach American scholars in fields other than Biblical studies."\textsuperscript{60}

c. Overall, we can see that Mithraism and other mystery religions are very different than Christianity and develop later than the birth of Christianity.

d. Thus, the claim that the NT authors simply mythologized Jesus of Nazareth as a mystery religion story is flawed on multiple levels.

\textsuperscript{59} Maurice Casey, Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths? (London: UK, Bloomsbury, 2014).
5. **Conclusion**

   a. A divine Jesus is not contradictory and the evidence clearly points to Jesus being God.

   b. Alternative “copying” views represent very different stories and do not discredit the accounts we have of Jesus.
“But of the Resurrection of the body to immortality thereupon accomplished by Christ, the common Savior and true Life of all, the demonstration by facts is clearer than arguments to those whose mental vision is sound.”

I. **Overall Outline:**

A. **The Importance of this Topic**

B. **The evidence provides a compelling case for a historical resurrection event – which is the theory with most explanatory power and scope.**

C. **The charges against the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection are easily rejected.**

D. **The alternative theories explaining away Jesus’ resurrection have challenges that cannot be overcome.**

E. **Conclusions & Implications of the Resurrection**

II. **The Importance of this Topic**

1. Among those who rarely or never attend church, 46% believe Jesus rose from the dead.²

2. Recently, popular and scholarly criticisms³ have erupted in books, radio, and online:

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² Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey, 04 Apr 2010, www.rasmussenreports.com
³ Some of these charges are brought up in Lee Strobel’s *The Case for the Real Jesus.*
i. “Don’t you get it? Crucified people were left to hang there on the cross till the birds pecked away most of their face. The corpse would have been thrown into a mass grave only to be consumed by wild dogs. They weren’t buried in tombs. Joseph of Arimethia is made up.”

ii. “There are contradictions and inconsistencies in the empty tomb accounts and they can’t be trusted… different women; guards vs. no guards; rock vs. no rock; 1 angel vs. no angel vs. 2 angels; before sunrise vs. after sunrise…”

iii. “So maybe the tomb was empty, so what! No one actually saw him rise!”

iv. “Honestly, anybody can break into a tomb and steal a body! We do it all the time!” or *“The disciples stole the body while the guards were sleeping.”*  

v. “Because Mark’s gospel cuts off leaving the reader with questions, the disciples later reported that the Jesus rose from the grave.”

vi. “The resurrection was made up to continue the story of their dead mentor.”

vii. “The disciples preached and died for fame, power, and position in an emerging institution.”

viii. *“Jesus’ resurrection was only spiritual in nature and not physical. The body remained dead.”*  

ix. “Jesus was a hypnotist and hypnotized them to believe in his miracles and Resurrection.”

x. “They were hallucinating! Just like when we are smoking weed! We have visions of dead folks all the time, especially when we’re on drugs!!”

xi. “They conjured up these dreams in the midst of their emotional despair like many do when loved ones pass.”

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4 Ancient criticisms that early Christians responded to during that time.
5 Ancient criticisms that early Christians responded to during that time.
xii. “They were so emotionally involved with the expectation of the risen messiah that their minds projected hallucinations of Jesus.”

xiii. “If the tomb was empty why doesn’t Paul mention it in his creedal form in 1 Cor 15 and why didn’t Peter mention it in his Acts sermon on Pentecost.”

xiv. “The disciples just borrowed their story of a resurrected Messiah from the ancient pagan mystery religions dying and rising gods.”

3. Without the resurrection of Jesus the following is true:

   i. Jesus is not God.

   ii. Jesus is not the Messiah.

   iii. We are still dead in our sins and there is no way to God or heaven.

   iv. Our faith is in vain – it’s a waste of time, energy, money, etc.

   v. Christianity is based on a lie and not facts of history.

   vi. The doctrines of Christianity ought to be rejected.

   vii. No one ought to be a Christian.

4. Thus, Christianity lives or dies on the hill of the resurrection.

III. The evidence provides a compelling case for a historical resurrection event – which is the theory with most explanatory power and scope.
A. 14 Historical Evidences for the Resurrection of Jesus\textsuperscript{6}

1. This approach examines the evidence available and determined what theory best fits the evidence.

i. This is an ‘Inference to the Best Explanation’ Argument.

   a. Inference to the best explanation is used all of the time in life, academia, and especially science. This is no new concept for educational spheres.

   b. Note that this type of reasoning is used by auto mechanics, judges, bible interpreters, scientists, historians, etc.

ii. This inference is known as “Abductive” reasoning or “Abduction” in philosophy.\textsuperscript{7}

   a. This is “a type of inference that assigns special status (truth and best) to explanatory considerations.”\textsuperscript{8}

   b. Given evidence $E$ and candidate explanations $H_1,\ldots, H_n$ of $E$, infer the truth of that $H_i$ which best explains $E$.\textsuperscript{9}

   c. In other words, generate $H$’s to explain the body of evidence $E$.

      1) $H_1$

      2) $H_2$

      3) $H_3$

      4) $H_4$

      5) $H_5$

\textsuperscript{6} This list corresponds to the Table below from Dr. Craig Hazen at Biola University

\textsuperscript{7} Term was coined by the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce.

\textsuperscript{8} http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abduction/

\textsuperscript{9} http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abduction/
6) \( H_6 \)

7) \( H_a \)

d. Infer the explanation \( H_3 \) (for instance) as the best explanation.

e. Abductive reasoning is the same as inductive except that it goes beyond induction by making “an implicit or explicit appeal to explanatory considerations.”

   1) It can be understood this way as developed by Charles Sanders Peirce:

   2) The surprising fact, \( C \), is observed.

   3) But if \( A \) were true, \( C \) would be expected.

   4) Hence, there is reason to suspect that \( A \) is true.

f. In other words, \( A \) is inferred as the best explanation of certain evidence \( C \).

g. This is reasoning by abduction.

h. Pierce thought that all of science and trial law is abductive reasoning rather than just inductive.

iii. Alister McGrath: “Science begins by assembling a series of observations, then goes on to ask what framework of interpretation makes most sense of what is observed…How good is the fit between theory and observation?”\(^{10}\)

iv. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (non-Christian highly respected academic resource) states that “Most philosophers agree that this type of inference is frequently employed, in some form or other, both in everyday and in scientific reasoning.”\(^{11}\)


\(^{11}\) http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abduction/
v. Dictionary of Philosophy “Type of inference yielding an explanatory hypothesis.”\textsuperscript{12}

vi. It does not depend on us trying to explain the conclusion, but we can just say that the conclusion is the best explanation of the facts.

vii. When compared to the other theories that attempt to explain the data, the design inference is preferred as it satisfies the criteria for making good inferences to the best explanation:\textsuperscript{13}

a. it implies further statements describing present observable data.

b. it has the most explanatory power of all the competing theories.

c. it has the most explanatory scope of all the competing theories.

d. it is more plausible than the competing theories.

e. it is less ad hoc than the competing theories.

f. it is disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs than the competing theories.

g. it significantly exceeds its rival theories in fulfilling conditions 1-7

h. some would also add that it is the simplest explanation (here Occam’s razor may be employed as a tool that states that the simplest explanation is most likely the most accurate one - where one doesn’t need to multiply entities unnecessarily).

i. Moreover, other theories may also be rejected on their own accord (for instance, self-refuting, manufactured false data, etc.)

2. A similar approach is used in law.

i. Professor of Law, Lawyer, and Apologist, John Warwick Montgomery was one of the


\textsuperscript{13} McCullagh’s criteria for 1-7, see McCullagh, C., Justifying Historical Descriptions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
pioneers of this case-making approach to the resurrection.

ii. John Warwick Montgomery: “…legal reasoning operates on probabilities…Can we base ultimates (Jesus’ deity, our commitment to him for time and eternity) on mere probabilities?...All matters of fact are limited to probabilistic confirmation, but this does not immobilize us in daily life. We still put our lives in jeopardy every day on the basis of probability judgments (crossing the street, consuming packaged foods and drugs, flying in airplanes, etc.). And the law in every land redistributes property and takes away liberty (if not life) by verdicts and judgments rooted in the examination of evidence and probabilistic standards of proof…But the issue here is a miracle: a resurrection. How much evidence ought a reasonable man to require in order to establish such a fact?”

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B. Evidence #1: Jesus died by crucifixion

C. Evidence #2: He was buried

D. Evidence #3: Jesus death caused the disciples to despair and mourn.

E. Evidence #4: The tomb was discovered to be empty a few days later.

   i. Separate gospels report this

   ii. The tomb was in Jerusalem and became empty only 7 weeks prior to the proclamation

   iii. No evidence of veneration of the early tomb

   iv. Mutual acceptance of the empty tomb

   v. Jews agreed in their counter-argument for why it is empty.

vi. The early Pre-Markan passion narrative is reliable

a. The reference to Joseph of Arimathea

b. The accounts of an empty tomb with the presence of women

c. The absence of late theological reflection

d. The absence of the ‘3 day motif’

e. The different perspectives in the accounts

f. The presence of semitisms

vii. No other Burial Story exists

F. Evidence #5: The disciples had experiences which they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus.

1. The disciples’ experiences of the appearance of Jesus is not in dispute. What is contested is the meaning of the experiences of the appearances.

2. It seems that the experiences can only be explained with a relatively few reasonable options (see alternative theories below).

3. Regardless of those options, at this point, we can at least agree that several different people who think they see their mentor are in a good position to know, better than anyone else, whether it’s him or not.

4. But how could they know he resurrected?

5. John Warwick Montgomery argues that one of the basic abilities of a human being is to know when another human being in front of us is alive. We know when
people are alive and if later on they die, we eventually know when they are dead.\textsuperscript{15}

i. Our evidential approach is simple when we conclude: life then death.

6. John Warwick Montgomery: “In Jesus’ case, the sequential order is reversed [death then life], but that has no epistemological bearing on the weight of the evidence required to establish death or life. And if Jesus was dead at point A, and alive again at point B, then resurrection has occurred: \textit{res ipsa loquitur} ["the thing speaks for itself."]\textsuperscript{16}

i. If someone is dying and then dies, we place him in the category of dead persons.

ii. If someone is eating fish for breakfast on the beach in the morning talking to Peter, we place him in the category of alive persons.

iii. Just because the order is reversed [death then life - rather than typical life then death] doesn’t mean our evidential criteria for making such claims need to be altered.

7. So yes, the disciples were capable, as we all are, of making basic human judgments on his aliveness.

8. Therefore, their experiences of the appearance of Jesus can be understood as valid experiences of the appearance of the actual Jesus.

\textbf{G. Evidence \#6: The disciples were transformed as mourners to doubters to bold proclaimers of a resurrection.}

1. In light of the above experiential evidences, the disciples began to believe and proclaim the resurrection.


2. Early church theologian Gregory of Nyssa: “…the preaching of the resurrection contains nothing beyond those facts which are known to us experimentally.”\(^\text{17}\)

H. Evidence #7: The resurrection message was the central message of the first century preaching.

i. A modified doctrine of “resurrection” developed rapidly.

ii. The Jewish conception of the resurrection was held to be eschatological and non-individual and physical in nature.
   
a. Jewish belief always concerned an eschatological resurrection, not a resurrection within history.

b. Jewish belief always concerned a general resurrection of the people, not the resurrection of an isolated individual.

   c. Different schools of thought were present in Jesus day about the resurrection, but all of them agreed that it was physical in nature.\(^\text{18}\)

iii. The multiple resurrection passages of the New Testament obviously reveal the radically modified theology of the primitive early church. The disciples believed they saw a resurrection bodily Jesus despite holding every predisposition, theologically speaking, to the contrary.

iv. Prior to the resurrection, for them, Jesus was dead; and Jews had no anticipation of a dying much less rising Messiah. According to Jewish law, Jesus’ execution as a criminal showed him out to be a heretic, a man literally under the curse of God. The disciples were crushed and their Messiah was fallen. A resurrected Messiah did not fit in their theological framework.

v. Moreover, Jewish belief about the afterlife precluded anyone’s rising from the dead

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\(^{17}\) Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic Treatises*, NPNF2-04, Edited by Phillip Schaff (Public Domain).

\(^{18}\) Pinchas Lapide cited in *Scaling the Secular City*.
before the general eschatological resurrection of the dead.\textsuperscript{19} Also, in the Jewish worldview, resuscitation or translation would have been an available theologically grounded term to use to describe the event. Resuscitation or translation concepts were not used, despite that being a recognizable option.

vi. Hallucinations based on wish fulfillment is untenable because “they would have interpreted them to mean that Jesus had been translated, not resurrected, and they would not have come up with the picture of Jesus’ body which is presented in the appearance narratives.”\textsuperscript{20}

vii. Moreover, a common belief of the early church (also of post-enlightenment thought of today) was that \textit{dead people don’t rise}. This helps define the new belief the disciples had.

a. N.T. Wright: “The fact that dead people do not…rise is itself part of the early Christian belief, no an objection to it. The early Christians insisted that what had happened to Jesus was precisely something new; was, indeed, the start of a whole new mode of existence, a new creation. The fact that Jesus’ resurrection was, and remains, without analogy is not an objection to the early Christian claim. It is part of the claim itself.”\textsuperscript{21}

viii. N.T. Wright clarifies that with the meaning of resurrection in the theology of 2\textsuperscript{nd}-Temple-Judaism, it would be impossible for such a reshaped resurrection belief to emerge without a \textit{dead person} coming back to life.

ix. “There must have been something about these first encounters (visionary or otherwise) which pushed them to what was an extraordinary conclusion in the context of that time…A unique explanation for a unique event.”\textsuperscript{22}

x. The modified resurrection doctrine included the nature of the body was a continuation

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} J.P. Moreland, \textit{Scaling the Secular City}
\textsuperscript{21} N.T. Wright, \textit{The Resurrection of the Son of God} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003)
\textsuperscript{22} Dunn in \textit{The Evidence for Jesus}, page 72 quoted in \textit{Scaling the Secular City}
of the body prior to the crucifixion but with transphysical properties. This is the body type which we will later inherit. It will be suitable for a heavenly existence.

xi. It was implied that the promise of paradise actually can be attained. That’s why Neill states, “The purpose of God…called into being through faith in Jesus Christ, the chief characteristic of which was to be its willingness to die and to rise again with him…All this, of course, was not immediately evident to the little group of Jews who gradually became convinced of the truth of the resurrection.”

xii. What soon developed was the notion of shared victory and glory in dying for the cause of Christ and the Christian should consider it pure joy and honor to be persecuted in the name of Jesus.

xiii. The theological tides eventually turned from just accepting the modified doctrine of the resurrection to a theology of the afterlife and dying for the reason why one accepts it.

xiv. Thus, the disciple’s belief cannot be explained in terms of antecedent Jewish resurrection theology.

I. Evidence #8: 50 days after the death and resurrection the message was preached in Jerusalem where he was buried.

i. All scholars attest to the fact that the resurrection message was spread. It was THE POINT (not just a point) of preaching in the early church AND proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and was buried shortly before.

ii. This is important: If anyone questioned their testimony, they were around to back it up and check the facts with the other eyewitnesses.

24 “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (NIV, Philippians 3:10)
25 The modified theology was applied to a personal experience, when Paul wrote, “He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence.” (NIV, 2 Corinthians 4:14)
iii. Additionally, the 1st speech in Acts is in the very city of Jerusalem where Jesus just was killed. So there were eye-witnesses nearby who would know of what just took place.

iv. Likewise, if the tomb wasn’t empty, no movement could have been founded because the body would have been pointed to. The preaching would not have occurred. But there was no body in the tomb, which explains the movement arising.

v. If their report of what took place was a lie, then Christianity would not have succeeded in Jerusalem. But it did.

J. Evidence #9: **Due to the preaching of this message, the church was birthed and grew.**

i. Scholars take note of the strong and sudden emergence of the underground church.

ii. The despair of the disciples after the crucifixion would have amounted to the dissolution of the twelve and other followers – in spite of the unprecedented and powerful teaching of their slain leader. It seems then, that Jesus’ followers must have had experienced something unique.

iii. The emergence and continual advance of the Christian church suggests an origin point that ceaselessly fueled their flame for the entire lives.

iv. Church endured persecution for not participating in rituals to Caesar or claiming Caesar is god. Yet it grew due to this core message. In light of the brutal circumstances its followers faced, the successful expansion of Christianity is remarkable and uncanny. It appeals to any historian as a significant persevering movement, which had to be founded on a life-changing monumental event.

v. In light of this major shift, there is no other alternative hypothesis or explanation that is plausible, contains any explanatory power and scope, or appropriately fits the available data of post A.D. 30 than the fact that the bodily resurrected Jesus of Nazareth appeared to the disciples.
vi. The geographical advance of the church developed quickly due to the powerful modified theology taught by the early theologians (apostles, bishops, and apologists of the early church); it was spread through a vast body of their written works to the extents of the empire.

vii. Roman Empire was radically changed by the conversion of Emperor Constantine.

viii. Western civilization was shaped in large part by Christian teachings.

ix. The strong emergence of the Church and the advance of Christianity can primarily be attributed to the belief of Jesus’ followers in the miraculous victory over death by Jesus of Nazareth.

K. Evidence #10: Jewish converts turned to new practices and embracing social changes.

i. Jews were all about traditions & laws & old religion. But we see a social earthquake where 10,000 Jews abandoned centuries of practice within 5 weeks of Jesus death. (What was the epicenter of this quake?!?!)

ii. Sunday became the primary day of worship.

iii. Taking of the Eucharist – a celebrated his continued presence.

iv. Baptism’s new meaning – death to self & raised to new life.

v. Sharing belongings.

vi. Rise of a triune God theology within the background of strict monotheism.

vii. Use of the new liturgical book Didache for conducting services.

viii. Jews adopting the new social changes of Christianity, ran the risk of being rejected by their families and eternal damnation if they were wrong. They needed to be firmly convinced that Christianity was based on solid foundation before converting. The
resurrection is the only valid explanation.

L. **Evidence #11: James, who had been a skeptic, was converted when he had an experience of the resurrected Jesus.**

   i. James, the brother of Jesus who had been a skeptic, was converted to the faith when he also believed he saw the resurrected Jesus.

M. **Evidence #12: Paul, who had persecuted Christians, was converted by an appearance of the resurrected Jesus.**

   i. Paul, who had persecuted Christians, was converted by an appearance of the resurrected Jesus.

N. **Evidence #13: The tomb where Jesus was laid was not venerated.**

   i. During that time period in Palestine, it was customary for the Jews to venerate the tombs of the holy men who had come and gone.

   ii. Since Jesus was definitely a respected holy man, his tomb veneration would be expected. If they knew where the body of Jesus was laid, wouldn’t they have gone to venerate the tomb?

   iii. We have no evidence that the tomb was adorned with religious objects or made a shrine.

   iv. We have no evidence of pilgrimages there.

   v. This lack of evidence suggests that either they didn’t know where the tomb was or the body wasn’t in the tomb anymore – otherwise it would have been an appropriate site for veneration.

   vi. “What about the church in Jerusalem built on the tomb of the holy sepulcher?”

      a. This could be the same tomb as the one where Jesus was laid.
b. But we still don’t have any evidence for there being veneration of the early church.

vii. The non-veneration evidence is more an argument from silence. This is a capstone point and needs the other points to add to the argument.

O. Evidence #14: The disciples died for their beliefs.

i. The eyewitnesses of the resurrection Jesus went to their deaths not in virtue of their unwillingness, but inability to deny the bodily resurrection. How could they deny what they knew to be true?

ii. The actual seeing the bodily resurrected Jesus caused the belief; the Jesus they ate with at the last supper was the same Jesus they ate with on the beach after he rose from the grave.

iii. The disciples were transformed from doubters to bold proclaimers of his death and resurrection.

iv. After a couple disciples died, they realized the hardships, persecutions, and executions were coming if they didn’t deny the resurrection.

v. They were ridiculed, beaten, imprisoned, tortured, eaten alive, burned to death, beheaded, crucified, stoned, etc…

vi. People will die for their religious beliefs if they sincerely believe they’re true, but people won’t die for their religious beliefs if they know their beliefs are false.

a. They would not have died for this knowing that they raided the tomb and stole the body.

b. They would not have died knowing that they lied to make sense of Jesus’ life.

c. They would not have died knowing that the beaten and bruised Jesus just was resuscitated.
vii. J.P. Moreland: “The disciples were able to see with their own eyes, touch with their own hands, they were in a unique position not to just believe Jesus rose from the dead but to know for sure… They had nothing to gain and everything to lose!”\textsuperscript{26}

viii. J.P. Moreland: “Almost no New Testament scholar today denies that Jesus appeared to his followers after death….It is almost impossible to dispute that at the historical roots of Christianity, lie some visionary experiences of the first Christians, who understood them as appearances of Jesus, raised by God from the dead.”\textsuperscript{27}

ix. Gary Habermas: “Virtually no critical scholar questions that the disciples’ convictions regarding the risen Jesus caused their radical transformation, even being willing to die for their beliefs. Their change does not evidence the resurrection appearances per se, but it is a clear indication that the disciples at least \textit{thought} that they had experienced the risen Jesus. Alternatives must account for this belief.”\textsuperscript{28}

x. Based on this central proclamation of the Church, Neill adds “[there was] an unfailing sense of urgency…for each man any and every moment may prove to be the crucial time of decision.”\textsuperscript{29}

xi. For the disciples, an obvious transformation had taken place, not just of their will, but of their entire reality. They became recklessly abandoned to a cause, a cause that their deaths eventually exemplified. The new theology they held would be preached louder and further when they became like their teacher Jesus, attaining life for death.

xii. Philosopher and theologian Daniel Kendall says, “Nevertheless, the testimony of the authoritative bearers of the tradition (us) is at least rooted in the once-and-for-all

\textsuperscript{26} J.P. Moreland interview in Lee Strobel’s \textit{The Case for Christ}.
\textsuperscript{27} J.P. Moreland, \textit{Scaling the Secular City}
\textsuperscript{29} Stephen Neill, \textit{A History of Christian Missions}, (New York: NY: Penguin Books, 1964); One could in fact discount the martyrdom of the non-eyewitnesses early Christians in light of the paralleled accounts of other religious zealots (Mormons, Muslims, etc.) throughout history. But the testimony of the disciples is what other early Christians held to just as Christians of today hold to, who are called to dependently believe on their witness. The good news is, the message is credible, verifiable, and understandable.
experience of the original disciples who encountered Jesus historically.”

xiii. Kendall is right. The martyrdom of the eyewitnesses serves as compelling evidence that what was testified in the New Testament and what was preached by them throughout the Roman Empire during the first century actually occurred in history.

xiv. Just the martyrdom of the disciples is then all we need to establish a connection between the belief in the resurrection and its truth.

2. Thus, we see that the evidence provides a compelling case for a historical resurrection event – which is the theory with most explanatory power and scope.

P. The ‘minimal facts’ approach by Gary Habermas

1. These minimal facts are facts that even skeptical scholars agree upon. The empty tomb enjoys 75% of scholars attestation, whereas the 1st 4 facts enjoy higher percentages.

2. From this minimal case alone we can infer the resurrection is the most plausible theory with the most explanatory power and scope.

3. Fact #1: Jesus was killed by crucifixion.

4. Fact #2: Jesus’ disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them.

5. Fact #3: Conversion of the persecutor Paul.

6. Fact #4: Conversion of the skeptic James.

7. Fact #5: Jesus’ tomb was empty.

8. Skeptical scholars do not like this argument because these are facts that they agree with but it leads to the conclusion that Jesus resurrected.

Q. The 3 facts approach by William Lane Craig and N.T. Wright.

1. N.T. Wright and William Lane Craig have used only 3 facts in their approach. Actually, Wright uses 1 but it depends on the other 2.

   i. Fact #1: The tomb was found empty.

   ii. Fact #2: Experiences of postmortem appearances of an alive Jesus.

   iii. Fact #3: The origin of the Christian faith

2. Each of these are factual in the same way other facts of history are established, through multiple independent evidence.

3. One asks, “What was the cause of the belief?” or “How does one explain the origination of the belief that they experienced an appearance of Jesus?”

4. The existence of the disciple’s belief in the supernatural bodily resurrection of Jesus is a basically uncontested fact among historians and scholars.

5. Scholar and theologian N.T. Wright concludes that “we are left with the conclusion that the combination of the empty tomb and appearances of the living Jesus forms a set of circumstances which is itself both necessary and sufficient for
the rise of early Christian belief.”

He puts it this way:

i. Neither the empty tomb, nor the appearances by themselves could have generated the resurrection belief.

ii. But together, they provide a necessary and sufficient condition for the rise of belief.

iii. By denying the empty tomb and appearances, the reader inquirer can easily see the conditions for the disciple’s belief are unfounded removed.

iv. But the empty tomb and appearances are highly plausible if not certain events of history.

v. Thus, based on these circumstances, the best explanation is the resurrection caused the rise of belief.

6. Philosopher and theologian William Lane Craig notes that “whatever they may think of the historical resurrection, even the most skeptical scholars admit that at least the belief that Jesus rose from the dead lay at the very heart of the earliest Christian faith.”

7. When taking Wright’s and Craig’s arguments and massaging them for clarity and brevity, we get the following:

i. Primary premise: The disciples believed Jesus was bodily raised from the dead.

ii. Secondary premise A: The belief could have been caused by seeing visions of the raised Jesus or seeing the actual resurrected Jesus in bodily form.

iii. Secondary premise B: The belief could not have been caused by seeing visions of the raised Jesus.

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iv. **Conclusion:** Thus, they saw the actual resurrected Jesus in bodily form.\(^{35}\)

8. Regarding (2), Wright and Craig, provide convincing evidence for the empty tomb and the appearance accounts showing them to be credible and historically plausible.

9. Regarding (3), Craig argues that any hallucination they would have had would be within the theological framework of a ‘death-exaltation model’ of a dead messiah that was “translated” (exalted) to heaven.

   i. “Given first century Judaism’s belief concerning immortality, they would have projected him in glory, in Paradise or Abraham’s bosom.”\(^{36}\)

   ii. So because of their theological predispositions, any hallucinations would have not led to the inference of a Resurrection, but a “translation.”

   iii. Moreover, Wright examines the plausibility of the alternative explanations to the empty tomb and appearances, Wright makes it difficult for an intelligent person to have belief in anything other than the resurrection. He examines the “cognitive dissonance” theory and “the new experience of grace” theory. In each, Wright carefully shows the opposing view to be faulty due to the lack of explanatory power of their arguments.

10. Thus, the disciples did not in fact claim an exaltation vision but a bodily resurrection appearance - showing the truth of premise (3).

11. Craig and Wright conclude that the disciples’ belief in the Resurrection can only be caused (or is best explained) by the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and they experienced his transphysical resurrected body.

\(^{35}\) This argumentation form is known as a “Disjunctive Syllogism.”

IV. **The charges against the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection are easily rejected.**

A. **Evidence #1: “Don’t you get it? Crucified people were left to hang there on the cross till the birds pecked away most of their face. The corpse would have been thrown into a mass grave only to be consumed by wild dogs. They weren’t buried in tombs. Joseph of Arimathea would not have ruled on his death and then taken the body.”**

1. It’s true, common burial graves were typical for most crucified criminals but not for all criminals.

2. In this case, Joseph of Arimathea took the body and laid him in a tomb that he owned nearby.

   i. Joseph of Arimathea was a rich member of the Sanhedrin Council. This council participated in planning to condemn Jesus in the trial. However, Luke 23: 51 tells us that he did not consent to their decision and action against Jesus.

   ii. Also, we read that he was an upright man, became a secret follower of Jesus, and was waiting for the kingdom of God. (See also Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:43-47, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-42)

3. We have no other accounts of Jesus’ burial. If Jesus’ body was actually placed elsewhere, the Jews would most likely have written about it. But, not surprisingly, no other burial accounts can be found. This implies that the only account we have is the right account and others knew that it was accurate.

4. It’s highly improbable that the early Christians would have invented a member of
the ruling council to give Jesus a proper burial, when all the disciples deserted him! They should have followed through with the burial but instead they credited another, especially one who was on the enemy council. Why didn’t they later give credit to themselves? Because they wanted to tell the truth.

5. Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in all 4 gospels. The Sanhedrin could have denied his existence but they didn’t...he was real.

6. Additionally, Jews knew who were the members the Sanhedrin as they were public figures and were a distinguished group. If the disciples wanted to make up a figure, they would have created an obscure random person from a far off region. They would not have invented a person and placed him in a small group of recognizable men.

7. People who read the gospels could have looked up Joseph for themselves to question him. We don’t have an alternative report of Joseph denying doing this.
   i. This is not an argument from silence but just an indication that there aren’t alternative reports to compare to – which is worth mentioning.

8. In fact, we have the report that the Pharisees themselves went to the tomb to seal it with guards ordered by Pilate to protect the tomb. So even the ruling council who sentenced Jesus were intimately aware of the tomb Joseph placed him in.
   i. This counts against the charge that he was buried in a mass grave (and against the charge that the grave was unknown).
   ii. The enemies of Jesus provide evidence to this point. Enemy attestation adds significant weight to the veracity of the claim that Jesus was buried in a known tomb not a mass grave.
   iii. The awareness of the grave site is very important because everyone admits this we are
left with only 2 options: he is in there still or he is not.

9. Archeology supports the notion that rich families had tombs and these tombs were commonly found in garden areas. This corresponds to the incidental details given in the gospel accounts (that Joseph was rich and the tomb was in a garden near the crucifixion site). Thus, the account is corroborated externally. (Additional archeological finds include the tombs of prominent Jewish high priests near the area outside Jerusalem’s garden gate. So it is likely that Jesus’ body was in a tomb near theirs in a garden outside of the garden gate.)

10. So the evidence points to a burial of Jesus’ body in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

B. Evidence #4: “So maybe the tomb was empty, so what! No one actually saw him rise!”

1. True, the New Testament doesn’t describe the actual act of rising.

2. But, it is not necessary for someone to see it for it to be true or false. The actual act of rising does not require an eyewitnesses for it to happen.

3. The New Testament does describe the conditions causing the disciples belief: an empty tomb and bodily appearances of Jesus.

C. Evidence #4: If the tomb was empty why doesn’t Paul mention it in his creedal form in 1 Cor 15 and why didn’t Peter mention it in his Acts sermon on Pentecost.”

i. Charge Elaborated:

a. James G. Crossley: “…this passage does not have any mention of the empty tomb and therefore this is a view that does not necessarily assume a bodily or physical
b. James G. Crossley: “Showing that the empty tomb story was fictitious is a common feature of those scholarly explanations that do not believe that anything supernatural happened.”38

ii. Response:

a. The empty tomb is implied in this Paul’s creed as the flow of events is chronologically presented.

b. It was implied in the Acts 2 sermon. Peter said “Brothers, I can speak confidently to you about our forefather David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.”39

c. Peter refers to David’s tomb, implying that his body remained in the tomb and by contrast Jesus body didn’t remain in the tomb. This is an indirect reference to an empty tomb nearby which can be easily verified. The point of contrast to Jesus and David would not be made if Jesus was also in his tomb - there would be nothing to compare.40

d. “The fact of the empty tomb was common ground between believers and unbelievers. There was no reason to mention it.”41

e. It was not in dispute and it was a non-issue so there was no need to bring it up in apologetical sermons.

D. Evidence #14: “The disciples preached and died for fame, power, and position in an emerging institution.

39 Acts 2:29
1. Charge Elaborated:

   i. They could have confessed about their fictitious resurrection story if they wanted to, but they had ulterior motives so they chose to hold on to it.

   ii. They wanted power during their life and they knew that if they died for it, they would go down in history as famous heroes and co-founders of a huge religion.”

   iii. This charge has been seen in literary critic Dr. Lucy Grig argues in her article *Torture and Truth in Late Antique Martyrology*, that Christian authors wrote “fictions of power,” that is they wrote fictions for shaping their “paradigmatic Christian identity in the early church.”\(^42\)

2. Response: An appeal to status and fame for the martyrs seems ad hoc and conjured.

   i. Fame and power are useless upon death.

   ii. Dying for a lie is foolishness and absurd.

   iii. They were tortured prior to death.

   iv. In the same article Grig actually sites Domitius Ulpianus (-228 A.D.), Anglicized as Ulpian, a Roman law expert, who informs, “By Quaestio we mean the infliction of bodily torment and pain for the drawing out of the truth.”\(^43\)

   v. Additionally, even if the authors wrote fiction, the fact remains, the disciples and others did maintain their belief. Is it not implausible to conclude that the martyrs were telling the truth?

   vi. In 112, Pliny the younger, historian to Emperor Trajan, was dismayed by the rapid spread of Christianity. Writing of the extent and variety of the Christians, he says they


are “many in every period of life, on every level of society, of both sexes… in towns and villages and scattered throughout the countryside.”

vii. Taking a cross-section of society, they found that Christians were already in every fabric of society.

viii. It is clear that the church had blossomed in the hostile Roman Empire. “Whatever happened in Rome – famine, disease, earthquake, wars, bad weather – was blamed on the Christians who defied the Roman gods.” They were beaten, imprisoned, tortured, hung, eaten alive, burned to death, beheaded, crucified, stoned, disemboweled, whipped, torn apart, strangled, tossed onto horn of bulls, had plates of hot iron pressed on them, and their dead bodies were to be thrown into mass graves to rot.

ix. John Foxe, author of *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*: “Nevertheless, the Church continued to grow, deeply rooted in the doctrine of the apostles and watered with the blood of the saints.”

x. It is absurd to claim that people from all different walks of life and social classes would consent to this torture and martyrdom for fame and power.

xi. For the skeptic and scholar alike, martyrdom is extremely difficult to explain away. Even if say it is possible that one disciple lied and died for fame, it is an unfounded stretch to say that other 10 died, lying about something they all claimed was empirically experienced.

xii. Additionally, the disciples were Jews, raised and taught to be a good Jew. To lead such a new movement that, for a Jew, contained lies against God and distortions of his revelation, risks one’s soul being condemned to hell.

xiii. Finally, if the disciples made up a lie, it would be expected that at least 1 would

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46 John Foxe, author of *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*.
confess when the hardships and persecutions increased. Surely, after many years had passed and they were in separate regions, the 12 would become weary of the lie and come clean. Those who lie together for personal gain, would also seem likely to confess for personal gain. Why don’t we have reports of a disciples breaking unity and exposing the fraud when tortured and executed? The only plausible answer is that they weren’t lying.

E. Evidence #14: “They didn’t die because what they saw was real, but because they wanted to rebel against the Roman rule and overcome the oppressors.”

1. Charge Elaborated: This charge can also be seen in Grig as she argues that the authors modified the stories to fiction, where the martyrs chose the pain in honor and dignity in the face of their tormentors. The martyrs were not special deliverers of a resurrection truth to the world with their “testimony,” but merely rebellious to the Roman authorities who refused to obey the law of the land for their own personal or religious end. So, for the early Christians in persecution, Grig declares, “The triumph of the church was won through the martyrs.”\(^{47}\) That is, the church overcame Rome by passive resistance/non-obedience and eventually the church won, changing the empire.

2. Response: Same response as above.

   i. Additionally, this would go against the very teaching of Jesus and his kingdom of truth, peace, and sacrifice. Jesus clearly exemplified this teaching at the hands of Roman soldiers. He spoke clearly about the kingdoms of this world when he taught that we are to pay taxes to Caesar and give to God what is God’s.

F. Evidence #14: “The martyrdom of the early church doesn’t contribute evidential fact to the resurrection just as the martyrdom of other religious radicals throughout history doesn’t reveal any truth about their cause.

i. Charge elaborated:

   a. Radical Muslims today frequently perform suicide bombings in the Middle East to defend the cause of Allah against the infidels with hopes of attaining a prosperous afterlife, filled with riches and women.

   b. Moreover, followers of Jim Jones and David Koresh went to their deaths believing a certain bad theology.

   c. Overall, one must conclude that every fanatical zealot’s cause, theology, or historical claim is not to be believed or accepted just because the zealot dies for it.”

ii. Response: The contribution to the evidence of the resurrection is valid due to the unique situation of the disciples & other eyewitnesses. The disciples believed with all their being that Jesus died and rose again, just like religious radicals today believe with all their being, but what sets them apart is their eyewitness encounters.

iii. In the case of Muslims dying for their belief that Allah revealed himself to Muhammad, this was not done in a publicly observable way. Muslims who put their faith in it – to the point of death - could in fact be wrong because they were not there and thus cannot know it with a high degree of certainty.

iv. The same is true for Mormons as Joseph Smith allegedly received the Book of Mormon from an angel while he was alone in a forest.

v. Granted that this is similar to the situation of the early church members who had to believe upon the word of the disciples. But for the original disciples and other
eyewitnesses, it wasn’t the same as they could empirically satisfy the criteria of knowing (knowledge can be simply defined as that which is justified true belief). The belief in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is justified by the truth of “I saw the bodily resurrected Jesus” which is empirically grounded in the disciples’ and other eyewitnesses’ act of seeing.

vi. J.P. Moreland: “The disciples were able to see with their own eyes, touch with their own hands, they were in a unique position not to just believe Jesus rose from the dead but to know for sure… They had nothing to gain and everything to lose!”

G. General Charge #1: “There are contradictions and inconsistencies in the empty tomb accounts and they can’t be trusted… different women; guards vs. no guards; rock vs. no rock; 1 angel vs. no angel vs. 2 angels; before sunrise vs. after sunrise…”

1. Even if there were contradicting features, let’s not throw out the baby with the bathwater - The core of the story is the same:
   
i. Joseph of Arimathea takes the body and puts it in the tomb
   
ii. the tomb is visited by a small group of women followers early on Sunday morning following the crucifixion
   
iii. they find that the tomb is empty, with visions of angels saying that Jesus is risen

2. What appear to be contradictions is actually complementary evidence.

3. At the end of the day all of the alleged contradictions can be either harmonized or accounted for with appropriate hermeneutics.

4. If the stories were all the same, it would be harder for us to believe - as they could

have gotten together and decided what the appropriate Public Relations report would need to be. They could be guilty of collusion and conspiracy.

5. Outside of the gospel accounts we still have an empty tomb (see below).

6. Gary Habermas, distinguished professor and expert on the Resurrection, has researched whether or not scholars attest to the empty tomb. In scholarly publications in English, French, and German reviewed since 1975 to present, he found that for the scholars that address the topic of the empty tomb, “75% favor one or more of these arguments for the empty tomb, while approximately 25% think that one or more arguments oppose it.”

7. Historian Michael Grant “True, the discovery of the empty tomb is differently described by the various gospels, but if we apply the same sort of criteria that we would apply to any other ancient literary sources, then the evidence is firm and plausible enough to necessitate the conclusion that the tomb was, indeed, found empty.”

8. Historian Sir Norman Anderson “The empty tomb, then, forms a veritable rock on which all rationalistic theories of the resurrection dash themselves in vain.”

9. **Interview #11: Is there any historical data on the empty tomb?**

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H. General Charge #2: “The disciples just borrowed their story of a resurrected Messiah from the ancient pagan mystery religions dying and rising gods.”

1. See also the Outline of on the Divinity Evidence

2. Many mystery religions and tribal religions of the ancient world would pray and sacrifice to their gods for the blessing of agricultural fertility. When that year’s crops yielded harvest, the gods would be attributed with generosity. Isis and Osiris are gods have the reputation of dying and coming back to life each year at the harvest.

3. Other gods with reputations of dying and rising include:
   
i. Mithras of Persia/Rome (mystery religion known as Mithraism)

   ii. Adonis of Syria

   iii. Aphrodite

   iv. Dionysus

   v. Eleusinian cult of Demeter

   vi. Cybele

   vii. Attis of Asia minor

   viii. Tammuz of Mesopotamia

   ix. Innana

   x. (Also, see the other outline for information on Apollonius of Tyana who was not a god but a person.)
4. The difference between the accounts of the disciples and the dying and rising gods show that the disciples did not borrow from these religions.\textsuperscript{53,54}

5. The difference between the stories of these gods and Jesus are broad, deep, and far outweigh the similarities.
   
i. There is no context of morality.

   ii. They seem to imply resuscitation rather than resurrection.

   iii. The dying and rising accounts were annual in nature and referred to only gods. Christianity is about a real person.

   iv. Many of these date after the gospels, so borrowing from them would have been impossible.

   v. Mystery religions tended to be syncretistic (combined other religious traditions).

6. Additionally, the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances were a 1 time event that occurred in real history not some ethereal past.

7. This fails to make sense of any of the events that unfolded in the Bible and several other historical facts (see additional points below).

8. Thus, this charge fails to accurately assess the nature of the disciples message of the resurrection and the nature of it.

\textbf{I. Thus, we have seen that charges against the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection are easily rejected.}

\textsuperscript{53} Edwin M. Yamauchi’s contribution to \textit{The Case for the Real Jesus} by Lee Strobal.
\textsuperscript{54} JP Moreland, \textit{Scaling the Secular City}
V. The alternative theories explaining away Jesus’ resurrection have challenges that cannot be overcome.\(^{55}\)

1. What is a fact?

2. How do we get facts?

3. When comparing alternative explanations, the best explanation satisfies the following criteria for making good inferences to the best explanation:\(^{56}\)
   
   i. it implies further statements describing present observable data.

   ii. it has the most explanatory power of all the competing theories.

   iii. it has the most explanatory scope of all the competing theories.

   iv. it is more plausible than the competing theories.

   v. it is less *ad hoc* than the competing theories.

   vi. it is disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs than the competing theories.

   vii. it significantly exceeds its rival theories in fulfilling conditions 1-7

   viii. some would also add that it is the simplest explanation (here Occam’s razor may be employed as a tool that states that the simplest explanation is most likely the most accurate one - where one doesn’t need to multiply entities unnecessarily).


WHICH THEORY BEST FITS THE DATA ABOUT THE RESURRECTION CLAIMS?

THE TOMB OF JESUS

was either

- Occupied
  - Unknown Tomb
  - Wrong Tomb
  - Legend
  - Twin
  - Hallucination
  - Existential Resurrection

- Empty
  - Natural
  - Supernatural
    - Disciples Stole Body
    - Authorities Hid Body
    - Swoon
    - Passover Plot
    - Jesus was an Alien
    - Bodily Resurrection

Not enough data to make a judgement? Then throw out most of what we know about classical antiquity.

Numbers correspond to the known historical facts that DO NOT fit the theory.

Page 35 of 58
B. Occupied Tomb Theories (Jesus dead body is still in the tomb).

1. Unknown Tomb

i. Explanation:

   a. See the “mass grave” charge above, “Wrong tomb” theory and “Disciples stole the body” theory below.

ii. Challenges:

   a. See respective responses to each.

2. Wrong Tomb

i. Explanation:

   a. There are a hundred tombs around Jerusalem, it’s very easy to mix them up.

ii. Challenges:

   a. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus were just there a couple days ago to wrap him. So they knew exactly where to go and which tomb it was. Plus, the tomb would have been easily identified with the seal placed on it by the authorities.

   b. The women weren’t considered reliable witnesses and Jewish culture did not allow women to testify in court.

   c. Mary Magdalene was possessed by a demon before Jesus delivered her. So her veracity could easily be questioned.
d. So, Mark mentioning them is the last thing he wanted to do to have people believe him. But this is the truth and describing the women implied that he forced himself to write the truth. Thus, the mention of women adds to the reliability of the empty tomb account.

e. Additional challenges to this alternative theory are also provided in the challenges for “Disciples stole the body” below.

3. Legend

i. Explanation:

a. “Because Mark’s gospel cuts off leaving the reader with questions, the disciples later reported that the Jesus rose from the grave.”

b. “The resurrection was made up to continue the story of their dead mentor. The church was struggling and as time passed the legendary embellishments continued, producing a resurrected Jesus.”

ii. Challenges:

a. Interview #12: How early are the Resurrection references?

b. Each resurrection report was written so early that not enough time had passed for legend to creep in (attested by most scholars).

c. Early reports are important as witnesses were still around for people to question and scrutinize.

   1) The presence of living eyewitnesses would disrupt accrual of legend.

   2) The eyewitnesses of the resurrection were there to maintain the story and not allow the story to develop any legendary embellishments that weren’t
true.

d. We have 3 distinct, credible types of accounts that show the eyewitness reports of the appearances are valid.

e. 3rd account: the gospel accounts are detailed, simple, and credible.

1) The gospels exhibit a specific interest in reporting historical facts, not mythology as they made it clear to mention that they are reporting from an eye-witness perspective.

2) The mention of the women and Joseph of Arimathea adds credibility to an authentic account.

3) The expected reactions add credibility.

   (i) Mark’s gospel describe the raw reaction: shock and fear. Later appearances are given the other gospels which describe joy when the disciples were later fully convinced.

   (ii) “The disciples were slow to believe. This casts the leaders of the early church in negative, unbelieving light, and thus the picture of them in these narratives would be counterproductive to their authority and ministries. The accounts of their unbelief are most likely accurate.”

4) The same main string of events although the differing reports emphasize certain features from that certain perspective. Harmonization is possible upon appropriate investigation and hermeneutics.

5) Mark may have used a Pre-Markan narrative (Q?)

6) Mark got his account from a previous passion account (most likely from

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57 J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*
Peter and ‘Q’) and is the earliest of the gospel accounts.

7) It could be argued that Mark’s style is raw and direct which matches the features Peter’s personality and Peter’s sermon in Acts.

8) ‘Q’ is a source tradition that Matthew, Mark, and Luke used to help develop their gospel accounts. ‘Q’ is earlier than Mark and reveals an ongoing oral transmission of the testimonies of Jesus’ disciples. Thus, because Matthew, Mark, and Luke would have traced the Q story, their accounts have a common and very early source.

9) Despite the similarities, the emphasis, aim, and style all bear the marks of authenticity and is reliable.
   
   (i) Story is simple, so no legendary developments are present.

   (ii) The women discovering the empty tomb was an embarrassing for the authors to admit as women were of a lower status then men.

   (iii) So Mark and Q can be thought to be very helpful in finding an authentic claim.

10) Mark’s gospel is the earliest and does not contain any theological reflection.

   (i) No OT fulfillment of prophecy

   (ii) No Jesus descent into hell

   (iii) No Christological titles applied to Jesus

   (iv) No reflection on his bodily nature or how he rose.

   (v) No discussion of a new kingdom or age

11) Mark’s gospel does not contain a “third day” motif.
(i) “The third day” is used elsewhere but Mark uses *mia ton sabbaton*: “the first day of the week.”

(ii) This phrase reflects the actual describing of events as they unfolded to the observer and initial hearers of the report.

12) Mark’s gospel contains Semitisms.

   (i) Reflects Jewish considerations by Jews.

   (ii) There are no influences of Hellenisms or mystery religions.

13) When compared to the later apocryphal gospels, the 4 cannonical gospels are very reserved in their reporting. This reflects a startling raw simplicity and authenticity.

f. 2nd account: The ‘Kerygma Creed’ of ‘1 Corinthians 15:3-8’, which has been confirmed as evidence by most scholars, predates the gospel writing.

   1) “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:

      (i) that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

      (ii) that he was buried,

      (iii) that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and

      (iv) that he appeared to Cephas,

      (v) and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”
2) This account has certain literary features that designate it as a saying of some sort:

(i) Parallelism & Style

(a) 4 “that” clauses

(ii) “Received” & “passed”

(iii) Aramaic use of Peter (Cephas) and other words

3) Paul got it when he went to Jerusalem after his conversion. Paul uses the word “historeo” referring to his “fact-finding” time there with James & Peter.

4) In those times, Jewish authors were careful to preserve traditional material through verbal instruction.

5) The empty tomb is implied in this account as the flow of events is chronologically presented.

g. 1st account: Acts 1 to 2:41 – takes place only 50 days after the resurrection.

1) Prior to the gospels, prior to Paul’s letters, the earliest evidence we have of reports of Jesus is in Acts.

2) Evangelistic speeches by the disciples starting just 7 weeks (50 days) after Jesus’ crucifixion exhibit features of raw authenticity.

3) This is Christianity as a newborn baby. Jesus had just ascended into heaven and the apostles are awaiting the Holy Spirit. What is the first we hear from them? What is the first thing that comes out of their mouth? What is their raw, uncut, unfiltered reaction 50 days after the crucifixion and 10 days after the ascension? (Acts 2:22-41)
(i) Jesus was the Messiah

(ii) Jesus died on the cross.

(iii) Jesus resurrected and conquered death.

4) These are authentic for the following reasons:

(i) Translate well into Aramaic (the raw dialect of the time)

(ii) Speeches have unique vocabulary, tone, style, and theology when compared to the rest of Acts.

(iii) Theology is primitive and not worded with more refined descriptive words but refer to basic concepts such as the redemption of Israel from his messiahship.

(iv) Corresponds well with Peter’s style – who is the speaker.

(v) There is no other reason to doubt the events took place at another time than that indicated.

5) Luke’s writing on other occurrences confirm his historical accuracy.

(i) He cites 32 countries, 54 cities, 9 islands, and several rulers without mistake.

h. Thus, we see that these 3 accounts are reliable and provide separate confirming evidence of the appearances.

i. **Interview #13: Can the accounts of Jesus’ risen appearances be trusted?**

j. “Christianity was likewise based on certain historical claims that God uniquely entered into space and time in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, so the very ideology that Christians were trying to promote required as careful historical work as possible.” - Dr. Craig Blomberg
4. Twin

   i. Explanation:

      a. Jesus had a twin brother who appeared to the disciples after he died on the cross. The disciples believed the twin brother was actually a resurrected Jesus.

   ii. Challenges

      a. There is absolutely zero evidence for a twin brother.

5. Hallucination\(^{58}\)

   i. Explanations:

      a. James G. Crossley: “Various Scholars have pointed to bereavement visions people have when relatives die as a suitable context for understanding why the earliest Christians had resurrection appearances.”\(^{59}\)

         1) They conjured up these dreams in the midst of their emotional despair like many do when loved ones pass.

         b. “They were so emotionally involved with the expectation of the risen messiah that their minds projected hallucinations of Jesus.”

         c. “They were hallucinating! Just like when we are smoking weed! We have visions of dead folks all the time, especially when we’re on drugs!!”

   ii. Challenges:

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\(^{58}\) A view held by German Historian Gerd Ludemann

a. Hallucinations have certain features\(^{60}\)

1) They happen to people who are stressed, nervous, and imaginative are more likely to have them.

2) They are linked to a person’s subconscious past beliefs and expectations.

3) They do not occur to more than 1 person.

4) They occur and reoccur at particular places of nostalgia creating a reminiscing mood.

b. It is clear that these features do not fit the report of the appearances.

c. The disciples weren’t expecting the Resurrection as they were depressed, shocked, scared, and misled. They considered his death as final.

d. They knew the difference between visions and appearances.

1) Greek = *Ophthe*: seeing something outside the mind.

e. Mere visions would not have led to a whole new Christian doctrine of the resurrection from a Jewish doctrine. The older Jewish doctrine of resurrection could have made sense of a new doctrine we may call translation. But the new doctrine of the resurrection, is entirely different from the old doctrine.

f. Hallucinations aren’t seen by groups. Simultaneous illusions are extremely unlikely. But there were more than 1 person gathered in many of the appearance accounts.

g. Out of the 500 he appeared to, most would have had different levels of understanding of Jesus’ teaching, different levels of personal commitment and connection to Jesus, and different presuppositions. It is unthinkable that they all would have hallucinated the same way.

h. James (the brother of Jesus) and Paul were not believers but were convinced after the appearance. It is highly unlikely that the skeptic and persecuting unbelievers would have had a hallucination of the one they don’t believe in.

i. Jesus had a transphysical body that they experienced on different occasions.
   1) They watch Jesus eat food.
   2) Jesus challenged Thomas to experience his reality with his presuppositions, faulty epistemology, & worldview. (John 20:26-31)

j. The alleged hallucinations did not continue in later years. Hallucinations typically reoccur. But Jesus’ appearances were for a brief window time (within 50 days, except Paul’s unique appearance – which also did not reoccur). These brief appearances within 50 days do not reflect hallucinations but actual appearances.

k. After hardships came and years passed, it is clear that the disciples would have reflected on what took place. They would have repeatedly thought of the event to confirm its accuracy. It’s hard to believe that hallucinations would sustain the passion for long periods of time.61

l. Interview #14: What facts support Jesus’ Resurrection?

6. Existential Resurrection

i. Explanation:
   a. “Jesus Christ has been raised in our hearts. A historical resurrection is unnecessary.”
   b. Recently existentialist Christian theologians have reinterpreted the Bible:

61 J.P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City.
1) the *soma* (body) = the self

2) the body is resurrected = the resurrection of the self

3) the resurrection of the self = restoration of the self

c. This view was held by the 20th century theologian Rudolf Bultmann.

ii. Challenges:

a. This would contradict the entire historical nature of the New Testament accounts when they referred to an actual tomb (which was visited by the women and disciples) and an actual body (which was shown to the disciples on multiple occasions).

b. The faith of the early church was based on a historical person that many had seen before and after his death. It was not a blind faith based on feelings of the heart.

c. The theology of the existentialist theologians such as Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich has other fundamental problems, such as the exaggeration of Scripture.

7. Spiritual Resurrection

i. Explanation

a. *“Jesus’ resurrection was only spiritual in nature and not physical. The body remained dead.”*

b. This view is currently held by the Jehovah Witnesses.

c. In the past it was held by some Gnostics and Neo-Platonic philosophers.

d. In the 1st few centuries, many neo-Platonic Greeks thought that the soul continues to live eternally in the divine One after purification is completed through a series
of reincarnations.

e. Plato & other NeoPlatonists thought that the soul is an immaterial substance, part of the world of forms, separate from the body which continues to exist after physical death. Souls pre-exist the bodies that house them and exist after they die - as the Platonic soul is eternal. The soul is considered the animating part of the human. This is like an animal soul, but man also has a rational soul with rational faculties.

f. “Plato said that souls could not exist eternally without bodies.”\(^{62}\) In *Meno*, Plato teaches that the soul always retains the ability to recollect what it once grasped of the forms, when it was disembodied. Additionally, in *Republic*, Plato elaborates that the lives that we lead are to some extent a punishment or reward for choices we made in a previous existence. The body was the prison house of the soul, evil, and dragged the soul down. The goal was to be released from the body so the soul could go to be with the divine.

g. The father of Neo-Platonism Plotinus, thought that the good soul returns to the ‘Monad’ or ‘the One’, where “the One is the absolutely simple first principle of all. It is both ‘self-caused’ and the cause of being for everything else in the universe.”\(^{63}\)

h. The neo-Platonic philosopher Porphyry explicitly denied a bodily resurrection as the soul continues to live eternally in the Father. Souls are reincarnated after death and that the purified soul returns and remains with the Father so that it is not in contact with evil any longer and “shall never return to the miseries of a corruptible body.”\(^{64}\) Porphyry knew that there was a way that the soul could be delivered from the cycle but no such way has been discovered in any system of philosophy. For him, Christianity didn’t have an answer since all the Christians

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64 Aurelius Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 22, Chapter 27.
were being killed off for their views.

i. So, the academic criticism of the time by the Greek neo-Platonic philosophers was that only a spiritual resurrection would have been possible, not bodily.

ii. Challenges

a. In the 3rd century, Christian philosopher Augustine compared these views and presented Christianity as the solution when he says that Christianity “is the religion which possesses the universal way for delivering the soul; for, except by this way, none can be delivered.” Augustine challenges their view that the most blessed souls would be eternally bodiless despite their belief that gods, whose souls are most blessed, are eternally united to their immortal bodies because of the will of the Supreme. This view is illogical for Augustine, as the Greek notion that the blessedness of a human soul merging into the divine is contradictory with a blessed bodied Greek god.

b. Whereas, Christianity, is similar but more reasonable when considering Adam and the Christian. If Adam didn’t sin he would have inhabited his body for eternity as a reward for his obedience, likewise, the Christians earthly body would need to be resurrected, changed, and inhabited for eternity.

c. Augustine also said that if Plato and Porphyry were to have collaborated their views together it would resemble the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the saints when he states, “Let Porphyry then say with Plato, they shall return to the body; let Plato say with Porphyry, they shall not return to their old misery: and they will agree that they return to bodies in which they shall suffer no more.” Augustine continues, “For this, I presume, both of them would readily concede, that if the souls of the saints are to be reunited to bodies, it shall be to their own

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65 Aurelius Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 10, Chapter 32.
66 Demigods were half-human half-gods.
bodies, in which they have endured the miseries of this life.”⁶⁸ To this end, Augustine says that Plato and Porphyry, “might possibly have became Christians.”⁶⁹

d. Augustine compared the platonic and Neoplatonic views and shows that Christianity has the only view offering the soul’s deliverance. This was made possible through the resurrection of Jesus.

e. In chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, Paul contrasts their Corinthian Greek misconceptions and disdain concerning the afterlife. Paul deals with this apparent misunderstanding of the resurrection of the dead by delivering one of the most insightful theological passages in the Bible concerning the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the bodily resurrected body of believers.

f. On that note, a spiritual only resurrection would deny the Jewish understanding of what a resurrection was. The Jews understood the resurrection to occur in the end times as bodily in nature and not merely spiritual. The Jewish disciples were communicating a bodily resurrection when they wrote and spoke. This is what their audience would understand.

g. This suggests that they anticipated the spiritual resurrection challenge that would be offered.

h. Additionally, Jesus ate food and was touched by others. These physical experiences rule out a spiritual resurrection.

i. Finally, a spiritual resurrection would imply that God exists and certain elements of the Christian faith are then easily adoptable.

C. Empty Tomb Theories

1. Disciples stole the body

   i. Explanation:

      a. “Honestly, anybody can break into a tomb and steal a body! We do it all the time!”

         1) There likely were tomb thieves around that time as rich people were sometimes buried with treasured belongings.

      b. *“The disciples stole the body while the guards were sleeping.”*

         1) This view was propagated by the Jewish authorities of the time.

   ii. Challenges

      a. A large stone was rolled in front making it difficult to move.

      b. A seal was placed on it deterring any persons to tamper with the body or face punishment by the authorities.

      c. There were guards. (Matthew 27:62-66)

         1) It would have been improbable that the Jewish disciples overtook Roman guards to raid the tomb.

         2) Severe penalties would have been imposed on the guards for sleeping on duty. This would have deterred the guards from sleeping.

         3) If some of the highly disciplined guards were sleeping, the others most likely would have been on watch.

         4) The Jewish authorities were thinking that the disciples were going to steal the body.

         5) Even they knew Jesus’ predictions about rising again 3 days after his
death. They did not want another deception to occur as “his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.” Matthew 27:62-64

6) So the Pharisees went to ask Pilate to make the tomb secure. Pilate agreed and ordered the Pharisees to go and make the tomb secure with a guard. They knew where the tomb was and made it secure and sealed it. The Pharisees and the Roman guards knew exactly where it was. Matthew 27:65-66

7) Matthew 28:11-15: “While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.”

8) Possible Conversation:

(i) Christian: “Jesus is alive”

(ii) Jew: “No, the disciples stole his body”

(iii) Christian: “The guard at the tomb would have prevented any such theft”

(iv) Jew: “The guards were asleep”

(v) Christian: “The chief priests bribed the guard to say this and the guards fainted when the angel came.”
9) So the debate about the disciples stealing the body while the guards were asleep is not a modern one, but took place as early as the morning of the resurrection.

d. The most interesting and obvious fact is revealed by this very debate and controversy: that **the tomb is empty**!

e. **Both the Pharisees, guards, and Christians all confirm an empty and known **tomb.**

f. The Pharisees and guards do so - but lie as to why it was empty.

g. So the question was always “What happened to the body?” not “Was the tomb empty?”

h. The skeptic who says that the disciples stole the body is still affirming the fact that the tomb is empty.

2. Authorities hid the body

   i. Explanation:

      a. The Jewish authorities hid Jesus’ corpse to keep the disciples from stealing it.

   ii. Challenges:

      a. This wouldn’t make sense in light of the fact that producing the body would dissolve all resurrection preaching.

3. Swoon

   i. Explanation
a. Swoon = Faint

b. Jesus didn’t actually die, but merely fainted and went into a light coma. Right before the coma, he was given some liquid on a sponge to help him survive.

c. The cooling temperatures and ointments in the wrapping provided favorable conditions for a quick recovery. Thus, Jesus merely was resuscitated from the coma he was in.

d. This view was held Muslims as it is written by Mohammed in the Quran (Surah IV:157).

e. It is also held by some 18th century Rationalist philosophers. Karl Venturini (19th century) made it famous.

f. Other views include:

1) Pilate was bribed to take him off the cross early. Jesus was taken down from the cross within 6 hours. The centurions didn’t break his ankles.

2) He didn’t die on the cross but died elsewhere. There is a shrine in India that marks his burial.

3) James Cameron recently directed a documentary on the ossuary containing the bones of Jesus being found in Jerusalem in the same tomb as Mary Magdalene. Implying that he died later on and is still dead.

ii. Challenges

a. Pilate also doubted his death and needed confirmation. “Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.” (Mark 15:44-45) Pilate (a non-Jew and non-Christian) was satisfied that Jesus died after receiving confirmation.
b. M.D.’s and Ph.D.’s all around the world have studied the Roman crucifixions. Some have been sample crucifixion experiments. Even a doctor tried it! One doctor even wrote Jesus Christ’s death certificate.

c. Cause of death is commonly known as asphyxiation. He also was speared through the right lung into the heart when the ‘water’ flowed out.

d. Medical science has shown that Jesus count not have survived the scourging and crucifixion.  

e. “The scourging produced deep stripelike lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock, as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar (patibulum) to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion, his wrists were nailed to the patibulum and, after the patibulum was lifted onto the upright post (stipes), his feet were nailed to the stipes. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus’ death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross.”

f. A new word was made called “excruciating” means “out of the cross.” So surviving the cross after extreme beating is highly unlikely.

g. Was it possible in any way for Jesus to have survived? “Absolutely not…it’s impossible…Again, there’s just no way he could have survived the cross.”

h. If Jesus didn’t die, he would have looked horribly beat up from the torturing, crown of thorns, spear hole in the side, etc. This half-dead Jesus, showing himself

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beaten and bruised, would have prompted the disciples to help him get rest and take medicine. The disciple’s belief that he resurrected would never have occurred because he would have been a mess.

i. But they did in fact believe that he resurrected and they preached it with enthusiasm. There is no way they would have pronounced the resurrected messiah Savior of the world who conquered death and had a renewed body, if he didn’t really die.

j. Keep in mind that the disciples were utterly disappointed and in grieving before the news came from the women at the tomb. But, we see a radical vibrant and excited group 50 days after the crucifixion. Such excitement would not have come from a half dead Jesus.

k. Additionally, Jesus was most likely wrapped in “75lb of spices and bandages…Even if he had woken up in the tomb, he could not have unwrapped himself, roll the stone back up the side of the carved out track, overcome the guards, and escape unnoticed.”

4. Passover Plot (Conspiracy)

i. Explanation:

a. Jesus went to fake his death by crucifixion, but the plan was thwarted when the soldier speared his side. A young man and Joseph of Arimethia were also part of the conspiracy. The young man was the risen Lord.

b. This view is held by Hugh Schonfield.

ii. Challenges:

a. See ‘Twin’ theory challenges above.

5. Jesus was an alien


ii. Challenges: non-required.

D. **All alternative theories fail in explanatory power & scope.**

E. **Thus, we have seen that the alternative theories explaining away Jesus’ resurrection have challenges that cannot be overcome.**

VI. **Conclusions & Implications of the Resurrection**

A. **We can be confident and have certainty that:**

1. Jesus lived.

2. Jesus died.

3. Jesus resurrected.

B. **Proof?**

1. Is the Resurrection a water-tight deductive proof? No. But it is a powerfully compelling inductive argument.

2. Wright points out that the Resurrection is similar to examples of big legal or historical cases where the evidence obviously points to a blindingly obvious
solution.

3. Correct inductive research methodology demands a systematic investigation of all relevant data before a decision is made. The concept of inductive inference refers to the most reasonable explanation of the aggregate of evidence.

4. The resurrection is the blindingly obvious explanation to account for the data. “I say univocally that the evidence is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.” – Lionel Luckhoo (described as the world’s most successful attorney)

5. A non-objecting common belief of the early church is that of post-enlightenment thought of today: that dead people don’t rise. The true historical challenge of one’s worldview is how it handles the relationship between death & life and God’s existence.

6. Craig discusses the presuppositions of modern historians and there method and that the story is **historically verifiable and falsifiable**. This is a striking point for the reader and skeptic, and Craig does it with a credible authority. Where the denial of the resurrection isn’t due to a lack of evidential data or satisfaction of criteria, but a personal *a priori* “rational” choice.

7. The laws of nature do not disallow any events, but are simply descriptions of how things usually occur. Miracles are possible!

8. The supernatural explanation is the most rational!

### C. Implications

1. The resurrection is a self-involving issue and matters globally. The resurrection powerfully matters and affects one’s worldview; it is not a thing of minimal personal involvement but is self-involving.
2. Moreover, not only personal thought, but global thought, the Resurrection has deep epistemological implications on culture, society, and philosophy. The resurrection is the key to powerfully unraveling modern epistemological skepticism.

3. The early church explained the aggregate of evidence better than modern sophisticated skepticism. We must confront post-Enlightenment skepticism by turning the historical argument against the skeptics. The historical challenge must be faced and people must face the implications. What remains after further inquiry of the alternatives is that no other rival theory adequately compares to the explanatory power of the Resurrection theory.

4. In a moving passage, Jesus’ invited the skeptical Thomas to prove for himself the reality of his transformed body. Thomas’ had a narrow epistemology that gave him the name ‘Doubting Thomas.’ That is, he wouldn’t believe unless he obtained sight and touch data. But once Jesus appeared to him and he received the sight data, he was fully convinced. He didn’t need the touch data. Jesus met his entire epistemological need, leaving no doubt. Thomas was completely convinced. He easily proclaimed “My Lord and My God.” (John 20:28).

5. This calls us to experience his reality, even with our faulty epistemology and worldview. Even in spite of ourselves and our failures, Jesus still brings down our walls. Fortunately, Jesus’ resurrection is the best historical explanation of the evidence and the best solution for our deficient selves.