

# Christian Apologetics

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# Summary of Week 1 - 4

- We are commanded in scripture to always be ready to give a “defense” of why we believe in Jesus.
- We can know truth through observation and reason.
- God has revealed himself to us in “general” revelation.
  - Creation
  - Design
  - Moral Law

# Summary Week 5: The Bible (part 1)

- The history of the Bible (how we got it)
  - God's inspiration
  - Discovering the Canon
  - From Septuagint to Vulgate to King James to NIV

## Summary Week 6: The Bible (part 2) – New Testament Reliability

- Unless the New Testament is reliable, our faith is worthless since Christianity stands or falls based on a single event in history – the resurrection.
- Tests for reliability
  - Biographical Test
  - Internal Evidence
  - External Evidence

## Summary Week 6: The Bible (part 2) – New Testament Reliability

- Biographical Test – We saw that we have an accurate copy of the originals.
- Internal Evidence Test – We saw we have early, independent, eyewitness testimony that appears to be trustworthy.
- We will now look at the External Tests.

# External Evidence Tests

- Other Historical documents
- Archeology

# Other Historical Documents

- Josephus
  - AD 66 Jews revolt against Rome
  - Josephus surrenders and is taken to Rome to serve as an historian
  - In Rome, he writes the history of the Jews
  - His accounts of Jesus match those in the Gospels.
- Non-Christian Sources
- Conclusion – other documents confirm the NT, but they don't say they believe Jesus rose from the dead. They report that his disciples certainly did.

# Archeology

- Luke – the master historian
- John – also accurate in his descriptions of the times.



# Conclusion @ Reliability of NT

- We have an accurate copy of the early and eyewitness testimony found in the New Testaments documents.
- We have good reason to believe that the NT writers were honest men who meticulously and faithfully recorded what they say as indicated by historical and archaeological facts.
- We can therefore conclude that the New Testament is a reliable set of documents.

## So where are we?

We have a reliable set of books in the NT and the evidence from the NT as well as other non-Christian sources shows :

1. Jesus died by Roman crucifixion
2. He was buried, most likely in a private tomb.
3. Soon afterwards the disciples were discouraged, bereaved, and despondent, having lost hope.
4. Jesus' tomb was found empty very soon after his interment.
5. The disciples had experiences that they believed were actual appearances of the risen Jesus.

## So where are we?

6. Due to these experiences, the disciples' lives were thoroughly transformed. They were even willing to die for their faith.
7. The proclamation of the Resurrection took place very early, from the beginning of Church history.
8. The disciples' public testimony and preaching took place in the city of Jerusalem.
9. The gospel message centered on the preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
10. Sunday was the primary day for gathering and worshipping.

## So where are we?

11. James the brother of Jesus and a skeptic before the resurrection, was converted when he believed he had seen the risen Christ.
12. Soon after the resurrection, Saul of Tarsus (Paul) become a believer, due to an experience that he also believed was an appearance of the risen Christ.

## This leads to the following conclusions:

1. The story of Jesus is not a legend.
2. The story of Jesus is not a lie.
3. The story of Jesus is not an embellishment.

So is it game over? What do skeptics of Jesus have left?

The only thing a skeptic could possibly conclude is that the disciples sincerely believed that Jesus had risen from the dead, but that they were wrong.

# Did Jesus really rise from the dead? Could there be other possibilities?

1. Swoon Theory
2. Stolen Body Theory
3. Substitute Theory
4. Zealot Theory
5. Copy Cat Theory

# Swoon Theory



1. Premise: Jesus only appeared to die on the cross.
2. Arguments against theory:
  - A. Romans thought he was dead
  - B. Jesus friends thought he was dead
  - C. He was prepared for buried after he spent a day hanging from a cross
  - D. Modern medicine concluded that Jesus died.
  - E. There is no credible evidence to the contrary.

# Stolen Body Theory



1. Premise: The disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb and lied about his resurrection.
2. Arguments against theory:
  - A. Contrary to evidence in NT.
  - B. Why steal the body?
  - C. None of the disciples recanted the story, even in death.
  - D. How did they get by the Roman guards?
  - E. Who appeared to Paul, James and others?

# Substitute Theory

1. Premise: A substitute was crucified in Jesus' place and Jesus was taken to heaven like Elijah.
2. Arguments against theory:
  - A. No evidence to support theory.
  - B. Assertion was made 600 years after the lifetime of Jesus and his disciples.
  - C. Contradicts early historical eyewitness accounts.
  - D. Its hard to believe that Jesus' friends and relatives did not know the Jesus was not on the cross.
  - E. Why the tomb of an imposter found empty?
  - F. Are all non-Christian historians also wrong?

# Zealot Theory

1. Premise: NT writers made the whole thing up.
2. Arguments against theory:
  - A. Resurrection story is not something that they would make up.
  - B. No evidence for this theory.
  - C. No way to explain why 200 years after the event, the Jews were still claiming the body was stolen.

# Copy Cat Theory

1. Premise: NT is not historical since it copied pagan myths.
2. Arguments against theory:
  - A. NT is loaded with evidence that suggests it is not a myth and is corroborated by several outside sources.
  - B. Cannot explain the empty tomb or martyrdoms of the eyewitnesses.
  - C. No Greek or Roman myths had a God come incarnate by virgin birth, then death & physical resurrection. The first parallels to this show up 150 years after Christ.

## Conclusion:

1. We have a reasonable belief in a real historical event.
2. When confronted with skeptics, give a reasonable explanation but don't be afraid to ask the skeptic a question or two about his beliefs or theories.
3. The skeptic must answer the same question about their theory as we do about the NT account.



# Big stumbling block to belief

1. Miracles are not possible (naturalistic world view).
2. Are miracles possible?
  - Existence of God
  - Universe created by God
  - God could do miracles
  - Miracles are possible
3. Did they happen?
  - Historical evidence from NT and other historical documents supports it.
4. Resurrection Miracle is possible.

# For next week...



Who was  
Jesus? Was  
he really  
God?