

How We Know That Christianity is True

These are the handout notes for a 3-part study done at Blossom Valley Bible Church in July 2018. For any questions, feel free to contact Greg Enos at genos0104@yahoo.com.

A good case that Christianity is true can be made by walking through the twelve points shown below.¹ Each statement is supported with an argument and evidence, and logically leads to the next step, which is in turn supported. The process starts with no pre-suppositions or biases.

1. Truth about reality is knowable.
2. Opposites cannot both be true.
3. It is true that the theistic God exists.
4. If God exists then miracles are possible.
5. Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God.
6. The New Testament is historically reliable.
7. The New Testament says that Jesus claimed to be God.
8. Jesus' claim to be God was confirmed by a unique set of miracles.
9. Therefore, Jesus is God.
10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) teaches is true.
11. Jesus taught the Bible is the Word of God.
12. Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God (so anything opposed to it is false.)

1. Truth about reality is knowable.

The correspondence view of truth: Truth corresponds to, or matches, reality.

Two challenges to truth:

The total skeptic doubts everything.

The total agnostic says we can't know about ultimate reality.

These kinds of claims are logically self-defeating.

The skeptic doesn't doubt his doubt.

The agnostic claims to know *something* about ultimate reality.

Conclusion about Truth: There *is* truth out there, and we *can* know the truth about some things. In fact, we can know many things, including history.

2. Opposites cannot both be true.

¹ This teaching series is adapted from the book by Norman L. Geisler, *Twelve Points That Show Christianity Is True: A Handbook on Defending the Christian Faith*, (Indian Trail, NC: Norm Geisler International Ministries, 2016).

Pluralism says that all religious views are true and they represent different parts of the one true religion or God. Analogy: six blind men and the elephant.

But the problem is that different religions, at their cores, teach opposite views. And opposites cannot be true.

Law of Non-Contradiction: Opposite ideas can not both be true at the same time and in the same sense.

3. The Theistic God exists.

Cosmological Argument:

1. Everything that had a beginning had a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning.
3. Therefore, the universe had a cause.

Law of Cause and Effect: Every material effect (anything that has a beginning) must have an adequate antecedent or simultaneous cause.

Evidence that the universe had a beginning:

- From Physics: The second law of thermodynamics tells us the universe is winding down. It is not at a steady state. If the universe had always existed since the eternal past, it would have already arrived at a “heat death.”
- From Philosophy: Time must have had a beginning. It is impossible to traverse an infinite number of moments. But we have arrived at the present. So time could not have stretched into the infinite past.

The Cosmological Argument tells us the cause of the universe must be:

- Outside the natural universe. Supernatural.
- Not finite, without limits, infinite.
- Outside of time, eternal, no beginning.
- Not physical or material.
- Highly powerful.

Design argument:

1. Every design had a designer.
2. The universe has highly complex design.
3. Therefore, the universe had a designer.

Design means:

- Planning ahead.

- A highly improbable state of affairs arranged for a purpose.
- Often an assembly of many components which, as a whole, achieves a greater purpose than any of the individual parts.

Evidence for design in the universe:

The Anthropic principle is the principle that many physical factors of the earth, solar system, and the universe are extremely very fine tuned for the existence of life.²

Evidence for design in life:

- DNA. Where did all the information come from? As a book points to an author, the information in DNA points to an author of life.
 - Natural Selection and Mutations do not increase information, but remove it.
- *Irreducible Complexity* is apparent when many complex components must appear “on the scene” at the same time to make a functioning system. An illustration is the mouse trap.

The Design Argument tells us the cause of the universe must be:

- Highly Intelligent.
- Purposeful.
- Thinking, Conscious, Personal.

Moral Argument:

1. Every law has a lawgiver.
2. There is an objective moral law.
3. Therefore, there must be a moral lawgiver.

Do basic moral principles of right and wrong stand objectively on their own, or are they just a matter of individual opinion?³

Four arguments can be offered for the existence of an objective moral law:

² For an excellent discussion of the Anthropic Principle, see the DVD *The Privileged Planet* produced by Illustra Media, or the book by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards *The Privileged Planet* (Washington, D.C.: Regenery Publishing, 2004). In addition, an excellent summary video on the fine tuning of the universe can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE76nwimuT0>. Produced by William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, Accessed 7/10/18.

³ An excellent and entertaining animated video summarizing the Moral Argument can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxiAikEk2vU>. Produced by William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, Accessed 7/10/18.

1. Some moral principles are true despite anyone's opinion.
Example: "It is wrong to torture babies to death for fun."
If even one moral statement is objective in this way, we have objective morality.
2. We can't make moral comparisons without a standard. Who's to say something is wrong and on what grounds? In fact, in a society with no objective moral standard, whose opinion becomes public policy? That of the most powerful? Or with the loudest voice?
3. To deny absolute moral truth is self-defeating. When a person tells us that we shouldn't be judgmental, aren't they judging us? Even when a person claims that there is no objective morality, they are in fact trying to assert a kind of morality of their own.
4. We know the moral law by our *reactions*. I may think it is right to steal bread for my starving family. But if someone stole that bread from *me*, I would claim it is wrong.

The moral law is not defined by us, but discovered.

Christianity says that the Moral Law is a reflection of the very character of God.

The Moral Argument tells us that the cause of the universe must be:

- Absolutely morally pure.
- Perfectly just.
- Perfectly good.

To summarize what the Cosmological, Design (Part 1) and Moral arguments tell us about the cause of the universe, the cause must be:

- Supernatural.
- Infinite, without limit.
- Eternal, no beginning.
- Not physical or material.
- Highly powerful.
- Highly Intelligent.
- Purposeful.
- Personal.
- Absolutely morally pure.
- Perfectly just.
- Perfectly good.

This describes a theistic God: One God infinite, eternal, and intelligent, who created the universe and is presently active in the affairs of his creation.

4. If God exists then miracles are possible.

If God exists, the biggest miracles of all have already occurred:

- Creation of the universe.
- Creation of life.

A God who created the universe can intervene in it.

A God who created life can bring a dead body back to life.

Those who deny the possibility of miracles usually have a pre-commitment to atheism.

But why not allow the evidence of a miracle claim on the table?

In fact, if it is *possible* God exists then miracles are *possible*.

5. Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God. All of the 3 great monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—affirm this. Even atheists will admit this.
6. The New Testament is historically reliable.

How do we know we have an accurate copy? Because we have a huge number of early manuscript copies of the originals—over 5,800 manuscripts in the Greek, and almost 25,000 including other languages. Homer’s Illiad, in comparison, has 1,800.

How do we know the originals told the truth? Here are five reasons:

1. There were numerous witnesses.
 - 4 Gospel writers.
 - Many of the New Testament writers were eye witnesses, including John and Peter.
 - The rest were contemporaries. Luke, for example, interviewed many eyewitnesses.

The New Testament is made up of 27 Books written by about 9 authors within a few decades of events. All the writers were either eye witnesses or were alive at the same time as the eye-witnesses.

2. Writings were too early to contain myth or legend.

Most of the New Testament was written within 30-40 years of the events. According to Sherwin-White and William Lane Craig, “tests show that even two generations is too short to allow legendary tendencies to wipe out the hard core of historical facts.”

3. Writings show evidence of honesty.
 - Testimony was independent. Evidence shows no sign of collusion.
 - Some testimony was embarrassing.
 - They were all willing to die for their story. And some of them did.

4. Archaeological evidence confirms it.

Luke recorded 32 countries, 54 cities, 9 islands, and 12 confirmed ruling figures without a single mistake. In the New Testament overall, over 30 people have been confirmed. Over 60 historical details in the gospel of John are confirmed without error. Over 80 historical details in the book of Acts are confirmed without a mistake.

Archaeological artifacts affirm the historical accounts. For example:

- Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (John 5:2).
- Pontius Pilate inscription.
- Ossuary of Joseph Caiaphas the high priest.
- Crucifixion victim from the first century.
- Ossuary of James, the brother of Jesus.

5. Non-Christian writers affirm the accounts. We have 17 non-Christian writings containing over 50 details concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Conclusion: We have *very high* confidence that the New Testament is an accurate record of historical events—including the miracles.

7. The New Testament says that Jesus claimed to be God.

There are at least seven ways that Jesus claimed to be God:

1. To be the great “I AM” (John 8:58).
2. To share God’s glory (John 17:5).
3. To be equal with God (John 10:30).
4. To be the Messiah-God (John 4:25-26, Mark 14:61-62).
5. To be worthy of honor like God (John 5:23).
6. To be equal in authority with God (Matt. 28:18).
7. To be able to answer prayer in His name (John 14:13).

C.S. Lewis pointed out that since Jesus claimed to be God, it cannot be true that he was only a “good man” or “great moral teacher.” At face value, Jesus would instead be either a liar or insane. And if either a liar or insane, he would *not* be a good man or great moral teacher. The only alternative is that he was telling the truth.

C.S. Lewis’ “Trilemma”: Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. Which one?

8. Jesus’ claim to be God was confirmed in several ways.

1. By fulfilling supernatural predictions (prophecy) about his birth, life, death, and Resurrection.

There are some 100 predictions about Jesus’ first coming in the Old Testament, all of which he fulfilled.

2. By performing supernatural acts and living a sinless life.

We have over 60 supernatural acts (miracles) of Jesus recorded in the New Testament.

Evidence for a sinless life comes from eye-witness testimony of those who knew him best, and even his enemies. They used terms like: *no sin, no deceit, righteous, pure, had no sin, this just person, that just man, righteous man, and truly this was the son of God.*

3. By predicting and accomplishing his Resurrection.

Jesus predicted his Resurrection in, for example, Matt. 17:22-23, and Mark 8:31. See also Matt. 12:40, John 2:19-21, and John 10:10-11.

That Jesus died by crucifixion is considered a fact of “historical bedrock” by all serious historians who have studied the Resurrection.⁴

The empty tomb is also considered historical bedrock. But an empty tomb alone was not enough evidence for the resurrection. An empty tomb will cause suspicion of foul play.

The positive evidence for the Resurrection was his appearances. Jesus appeared on 12 different occasions.⁵

- To all the disciples, Paul, James, and 500 people at one time.
- He taught them for 40 days and did miracles.
- They touched his physical body twice.
- He offered his body to be touched twice more.
- They saw his crucifixion scars twice.
- They ate with him 4 times.

9. Therefore, Jesus is God.

10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) taught is true.

Jesus is God, and a theistic God:

- Is all-knowing and can't make mistakes.
- Is morally perfect and can not deceive.

Therefore, whatever Jesus taught is true.

11. Jesus taught that the Bible is the Word of God.

Jesus considered the Old Testament:

1. Divinely Authoritative. (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).
2. Imperishable (Matt. 5:17-18).

⁴ See Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004).

⁵ An excellent five minute animated video on the minimal facts argument for the Resurrection can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsNc--mQUYA>, accessed 7/12/18.

3. Infallible (John 10:35).
4. Inerrant or without error (Matt. 22:29).
5. Historically reliable (Matt. 12:40, 24:37-38).
6. Scientifically accurate (Matt. 19:4-5).
7. Ultimate, supreme (Matt. 15:3,6).

What Jesus confirmed about the Old Testament, he promised of the coming New Testament. Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and lead them into all truth.

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26)

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” (John 16:13).

Given the spiritual context of this and the fact that Jesus didn't teach all the truth about all the human disciplines, the “all truth” would refer to doctrine and practice. This means that the New Testament books written by his disciples (the apostles) or their associates would contain all the truth necessary for faith and practice. No additional books are needed nor authorized by Jesus.

12. Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God, and anything opposed to it must be false.

This means for example that:

- God's story in the Bible, from the very beginning, is true.
- The worldview that emerges in the Bible is true.
- God's attributes and character as derived from the Bible are all true.
- Mankind's basic problem of corruption by sin is true.
- That Jesus came and died to provide a rescue for us from our problem of sin, is true.
- The way for us to be restored to relationship with God, by trusting Jesus to take away our sin problem so that God can forgive us, is true.
- A life after the death of our bodies, in a new imperishable physical body, in a real physical place (heaven), forever, is available for all who would trust Jesus for a rescue from sin.

Recommended Resources on the Evidence for Christianity

Books:

When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook of Christian Evidences. Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks.
12 Points That Show Christianity Is True. Norman Geisler.
I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek.
The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus. Gary Habermas and Michael Licona.
The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict. Josh McDowell.
77 FAQs About God And The Bible, Your Toughest Questions Answered. Josh and Sean McDowell.
Questioning the Bible: 11 Major challenges o the Bible's Authority. Jonathan Morrow.
The Case for Easter: A Journalist Investigate the Evidence for the Resurrection. Lee Strobel.
The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus. Lee Strobel.
The Case for the Real Jesus: A Journalist Investigates Current Attacks on the Identity of Christ. L. Strobel.
Why Does God Allow Evil? Clay Jones. (New, and available on Amazon August 2017.)
Miracles, The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts. Craig Keener.

DVD Documentaries and Movies:

Documentaries by Lee Strobel: *The Case for a Creator, The Case for Faith, The Case for Christ*
Documentaries on Design: *Unlocking the Mystery of Life, Flight, Metamorphosis, The Privileged Planet.*
Produced by Illustra Media, available on Amazon.com
Problems with Darwinian Evolution exposed: *Evolution's Achilles' Heels*, available at Creation.com
Short animated films: YouTube channel "drcraigvideos" with William Lane Craig.
The movie *The Case For Christ* released 2017.
The movie *Risen*, released 2016.
Movies *God's Not Dead, God's Not Dead 2*

Free Home Study Materials:

Apologetics Press: <https://www.apologeticspress.org/homestudycourses.aspx>
Norman Geisler International Ministries: [NGIM.org](http://www.ngim.org)

Blogs:

Dr. Clay Jones, Professor, Biola University, on why God allows evil (and other topics):
<http://www.clayjones.net>

Web Sites:

Sean McDowell: <http://seanmcdowell.org>
William Lane Craig: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org>
Greg Koukl: <http://www.str.org>
The One Minute Apologist: <http://www.videos.oneminuteapologist.com>
Frank Turek: <http://crossexamined.org>
Apologetics Press: <https://www.apologeticspress.org>
Christian Research Institute: <http://www.equip.org>
Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry: <https://carm.org>
Creation Ministries International: <http://creation.com>
[Answers in Genesis: https://answersingenesis.org](https://answersingenesis.org)
[Got Questions: https://www.gotquestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org)



Question: "What are the seventy sevens in Daniel 9:24-27?"

Answer: Daniel 9:24-27 is a key biblical passage. It is the only Old Testament passage which refers to the Messiah as "Messiah." Elsewhere He is called "Shiloh" (Genesis 49:10), the "Root of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:10), the "Righteous Branch" (Jeremiah 23:5), the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), etc. But the name by which He is known best, "Messiah," appears in only one passage: Daniel 9:24-27. Here is an excerpt from that passage:

"Seventy sevens have been decreed for your people. . . . So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two sevens the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary."

Exactly what is meant by "seventy sevens"? The phrase by itself is ambiguous, but taken in context the meaning is clear. Daniel's prayer in verses 3-19 of the chapter refers to the fulfillment of a specific seventy-year period, the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity (as prophesied by Jeremiah). Daniel received the seventy sevens prophecy in response to his prayer. The prophecy foretold a period of seven times seventy yet to come, or seventy seven-year periods. Seventy seven-year periods equals 490 years.

The prophecy goes on to say that "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven sevens (49) and sixty-two sevens (434). . . . Then after the sixty-two sevens the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing."

Nebuchadnezzar had Jerusalem dismantled around 587 BC after having to put down two rebellions there in less than 10 years. At the time this prophecy was given, Jerusalem still lay in ruins. According to the prophecy, from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem there would be seven seven-year periods and sixty-two more seven-year periods—or 483 years—until the Messiah would show up. After the culmination of the 62 seven-year periods, or after 483rd year, the Messiah would be cut off.

Both the ancient Hebrews to whom Daniel was writing and the ancient Babylonians to whom he was subservient (the Book of Daniel having been written in Babylon during the latter half of the 6th century BC) used a 360-day year.

So, 483 years x 360 days = 173,880 days. This is the equivalent of 476 years and 25 days, using our modern Gregorian calendar's 365-day year.

As for our starting point, the Persian emperor Artaxerxes Longimanus (who ruled from 464-424 BC) issued the edict to rebuild Jerusalem sometime during the Hebrew month of Nisan in the 20th year of his reign, or c. 445 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8). From c. 445 BC, 173,880 days brings us to c. AD 30.

According to this prophecy, the Messiah would show up, present Himself as Messiah to the nation and then be "cut off" some time near AD 30. This was fulfilled as Jesus Christ presented Himself to the nation of Israel on Palm Sunday, was crucified on Preparation Day (the annual day on which the Passover Lamb was slain), and rose from the dead on Sunday.

The prophecy then goes on to say that, subsequent to the Messiah's being killed, "the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary." Within one generation of Christ's

crucifixion, Titus razed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

There is some debate about the exact date of the decree that began the 483 years. There is also debate as to whether the days should be counted on our modern 365-day calendars or the 360-day lunar calendar. Regardless, Daniel's prophecy lays out an amazingly accurate time line. If we knew all the exact dates of Daniel's prophecy and timing, we would find it predicted the very *day* of Christ's death—over 600 years before it occurred.

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