

I. Who are we? (as Christians?)

A. We are believers in Jesus Christ.

1. Does that mean we're better than everyone else?
  - a) No.
  - b) We were **weak**, but Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).
  - c) We were **sinner**s when Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).
  - d) We were God's **enemies** when He reconciled us through the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10).
2. What does it mean to be a "believer" in Jesus Christ?
  - a) It means we don't work to be right with God (Rom. 4:5).
  - b) It means we believe in a God who declares righteous "ungodly" people—that's us (Rom. 4:5).
  - c) It means we believe God will declare us righteous if we believe in Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:5; Acts 13:38-39).
3. What do we believe about Jesus Christ?
  - a) We believe He is Lord of All (Acts 10:36).
  - b) We believe He was sent by God (Acts 10:36).
  - c) We believe that He died on the cross for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3).
  - d) We believe that He was buried.
  - e) We believe He rose again on the third day (1 Cor. 15:4).
4. Are Christians the first to think we are righteous and forgiven by faith apart from works?
  - a) NO. Many before us believed and were righteous with God.
  - b) Abraham was righteous by believing God's promise (Gen. 15:6).
  - c) David was forgiven and God did not count his perversity to him (Ps. 32:1-2).
  - d) Isaiah prophesied that by "knowledge of Him, My Servant will justify many" (Isa. 53:11).

B. We hold teachings of the Bible that define us and all true Christians.

1. We believe in one God (Dt. 6:4).
2. We believe that the one God is three persons (Mt. 28:19-20).
3. We believe Jesus Christ (the Son) is God (Jh. 1:1).
4. We believe Jesus Christ (the Son) become man (Jh. 1:14).
5. We believe the Bible is God's Word and it alone tells us how to live (2 Tim. 3:16).
6. We believe Jesus Christ is returning for us one day (Jh. 14:2-3).
7. We believe Jesus Christ will judge the world one day (Acts 17:31).
  - a) There is a difference between those who believe and those who do not believe in God/ Jesus.
  - b) Jesus judges those who do not believe (Jh. 5:27-29).
  - c) Jesus does not judge those who have believed in Him (Jh. 5:24).

C. We hold some Biblical teachings with which not all true believers agree.

1. We believe that once we have believed the gospel, God guarantees we are always secure in God's love and cannot lose this salvation (Rom. 8:38-39).
2. We believe that the Bible and not the Church or a church is the arbiter of truth.
3. We believe that God has planned for us to live by His grace (Rom. 6:14).
4. We believe that the Church is made up of all believers in Jesus Christ, even believers who do not regularly share in a local church (Eph. 1:22-23).
5. We believe that we can live the Christian life by the work of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18ff).

Study Questions

Are Christians better than everyone else?

How does the Bible describe us when God provided salvation for us?

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What does believing for salvation involve?

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What do we believe about Jesus?

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Give examples of others who knew we were “saved” by faith.

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II. Why do we meet?

- A. The very first New Testament believers lived under law and likely observed the sabbath, but we are not under law, so the New Testament nowhere requires us to do so (Gal. 5:18).
- B. The very first believers met for four reasons, expressed by the verb “devoting; or “holding fast” (Acts 2:42).
1. They devoted themselves to the practical teaching of the Apostles. This was teaching on how to live as God has planned for us.
  2. They devoted themselves to the fellowship.
    - a) Fellowship means we share together.
    - b) Fellowship may involve sharing food.
    - c) Fellowship may involve sharing our possessions.
    - d) Fellowship may involve sharing the same experience, such as both using eternal life.
  3. They devoted themselves to the breaking of bread.
    - a) This probably refers to communion (fellowship).
      - (1) Communion or the Lord's table is a fellowship in the body of Christ.
      - (2) Communion is a fellowship in the cup/new covenant.
    - b) This often was practiced at a meal (breaking of bread), therefore it may simply mean that they shared meals.
  4. They devoted themselves to prayers or worship, verbally acknowledging who God is and what He does.
- C. The very first believers shared their material possessions to provide for those who were needy (Acts 4:34-35). Later, as Paul explained living by grace, how we give changed.
1. We give as a matter of grace (2 Cor. 8:4).
  2. We give with eagerness based on what we have, not on what we don't have (2 Cor. 8:12).

3. We give as we each decide, not out of necessity (no tithe) (2 Cor. 9:7).
- D. Christians meet to serve each other with their God-given gifts (Eph. 4:11-12).
1. God gave some gifts to help equip others to serve (4:11).
  2. God gave every believer the ability to serve (ministry) in some capacity (4:12).
- E. Christians meet to prod each other to love and good works (Heb. 10:24).
- F. We should be serving from faith and love (1 Thess. 1:3).
- G. Christians serving each other in love is the greatest testimony we have to the world. It trumps every apologetic argument we might develop.
- III. Why don't we meet with everyone?
- A. Everyone does not believe in Jesus Christ and so they leave.
1. Some deny He is Christ (1 Jh. 2:18, 22-23).
  2. Some deny that Christ has come in flesh (1 Jh. 4:1-6).
- B. Everyone does not believe in the Jesus Christ of the Bible, but in a Jesus who fits what they want (2 Cor. 10:4).
- C. Everyone does not believe that Jesus Christ did everything necessary for our salvation, but think that we must also work.
- D. Some believe in Jesus Christ, but may hold different views on some doctrines which affect the way we think and live. Most of the New Testament letters emphasize problems which caused divisions among believers.
1. They divided over the matter of living by law or grace.
  2. They divided over the relationship of Jewish and Gentile believers.
  3. They divided over the certainty of our salvation.
  4. They divided over the matter of the resurrection.

Study Questions

What are some reasons we do not get together for “church” with everyone?

Describe the earliest Christians’ relationship to law.

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How did this affect their relationship to the Sabbath?

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Identify the four main reasons or activities for which the earliest Christians met?

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What was the motivation for how the early believers gave?

How did Paul modify this about twenty years later?

Identify other reasons that believers get together.

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IV. Isn't Christianity just a humanly invented religion? Some assert it is comparable to all other religions. They teach that we by our works earn some form of a future, some form of "salvation." I will examine five major religious systems: Hinduism, Buddhism, Modern Spirituality, Islam, Christianity.

A. NOTE: I am not an apologist or an expert on comparative religions. I have examined some of the writings of these religions and what their own adherents/teachers say on the following subjects. This is not intended to be an in-depth study on various religions but a brief survey of how some may compare or be different, with emphasis on Christianity. I am biased!

1. No one is saved by our proving their religion to be wrong.
2. No one is saved by a debate (1 Cor. 1:17-21).

B. What do religions teach about "God"?

1. Not all religions believe in God in the Christian sense of God.
2. Hinduism believes in many gods, thousands of gods who demand appeasement and worship. Their many sacred texts often tell the stories of their gods.
3. Buddhism does not believe in god but in continuing life-cycles of birth-death-rebirth.
4. Modern Spirituality does not believe in god, but that we all advance to a oneness with all other living things.
5. Islam believes in one single eternal god who has no partner, no son and no daughter.
6. Christianity believes in one single eternal god who even in the Old Testament presents Himself in a plurality and makes this clear in the New Testament. This plurality is three persons.
  - a) God is one (Deut. 6:4).
  - b) God is a plural (us, our) (Gen. 1:26).
  - c) God addresses another who is God as God (Ps. 45:6-7).

d) God is presented as three: "Me" (The Son), Lord Jehovah, His Spirit (Isa. 48:12, 16).

e) God does not change (Mal. 3:6).

C. What do religions teach about "salvation"?

1. If religions teach "salvation," they do not all use that same terminology.
  2. If religions teach "salvation," they do not all mean the same thing.
  3. Hinduism teaches that we make our lives better by serving and worshipping these gods, who help us along our way. If we do well we are reincarnated in a higher caste until eventually we reach "heaven."
  4. Buddhism teaches that we are born, reborn, and reborn to suffering and are to work to be better, so that our suffering will be less in the next life (karma). Ultimately we hope to advance to a state free of suffering free of what we understand as consciousness.
  5. Modern Spirituality is similar to Buddhism but thinks that we maintain some form of consciousness and ability in a future non-corporeal state, like a god or a force. We achieve this by how we live now (like karma).
  6. Islam teaches that man is born sinless and innocent but when we sin we need to seek Allah's forgiveness, repent and work to be better and do good so we can be saved from the fire. Allah requires devotion only to him. Allah does not require a sacrifice or death for sin, except as punishment for one's personal sins. Islam teaches that salvation is by works not faith.
- D. Christianity teaches that man is born sinful, and willingly sins in life. God requires death as a consequence of sin but sent His Son to bear that punishment so we can be forgiven. Christianity teaches that salvation is by faith not by works.
1. All sinned (Rom. 3:23).
  2. All sin (1 Ki. 8:46).

3. Death is the consequence of sin (Rom. 5:12). This verse is about the sin nature and spiritual death, but physical death follows spiritual.
  4. God showed love for us by the death of His Son (Rom. 5).
    - a) He died for us while we were weak, not doing our best but defiant to God (ungodly) (5:6).
    - b) He died for us while we were unrepentant sinners (5:8).
    - c) He died for us while we were God's enemies, not seeking His forgiveness or trying to be better (5:10).
  5. God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4:24-25).
  6. God saves us through faith on our part (Rom. 4:5).
    - a) He declared Abraham righteous by faith (4:3).
    - b) He declared David righteous apart from works (4:6-8).
    - c) He declares us righteous by faith in His raising Jesus our Lord from the dead and that He was delivered (died) for our trespasses (4:22-25).
    - d) He declares us righteous, so it can rest on grace (4:16).
- E. Christianity, and Biblical Judaism before it, rest on One God who has provided the means for us to be saved and offers us salvation by His grace through our believing in Christ. Both stand out from "religion" which rests on our works.
- F. One reason that Christianity is often thought to be very similar to other religions is that we misrepresent it as a religious system with works required to be acceptable before God.
- G. Is Christianity a religion?
1. In our English Bibles, the word "religion" occurs five times.
  2. The English word "religion" derives from the Latin and French.
    - a) The Latin "religare" meant "to bind."
    - b) The French "religio" meant "obligation, bond, reverence."
    - c) Originally in English it was used of living under vows.
    - d) It came into English as duties one observes as a "Christian," and defines Christianity as responsibilities towards God.
3. The Greek word *thrēskia* meant "holy service, religious service or observance. It is from *thrēskos* which meant "fear of the gods."
    - a) The fear of the gods drove people to act to appease the gods or maintain favor.
    - b) The people feared what an unappeased god might do.
  4. The Greek words for *thrēskia* and *thrēskos* occur six times in the New Testament.
    - a) The Pharisees were a strict sect of the Jewish religion (Acts 26:5).
      - (1) Judaism involved fear of God (Deut. 6:1-3).
      - (2) Judaism had many rules.
    - b) Pure and undefiled religion involves duty (Jas. 1:26-27).
    - c) Some people impose religion upon themselves (Col. 2:18).
    - d) Strict rules appear wise as they reflect a religion produced by one's desire (Col 2:23).
  5. Christianity rests on God, His work and His grace.
    - a) We are under grace (Rom. 6:14).
    - b) We are guaranteed nothing can separate us from God's love (Rom. 8:38-39).
    - c) We are called to live worthy of God's call to us in Christ not to earn it (Eph. 4:1).
    - d) We do not earn our future (1 Thess. 5:9-10).

V. How can you believe in God?

A. Men argue against God's existence.

1. "I can't see God..."
2. "Why is there so much suffering?"
3. "Why doesn't God stop all this evil?"

B. The Bible never argues for the existence of God, but assumes God exists.

C. The Bible presents God as creator.

1. The physical universe testifies to God's existence.
  - a) The heavens communicate God's glory (Ps. 19:1). It is as though they say, "Look at how amazing this is. This God must be awesome."
  - b) The sky proclaims His handiwork (Ps. 19:1). It tells us that God not only has power but creates like a craftsman.
  - c) Both gush out speech like a spring of water (Ps. 19:2). It does not dribble a little speech, but gushes an abundance.
  - d) Both reveal knowledge (Ps. 19:2).
  - e) Regardless of human language or dialect, creation communicates with a voice which transcends verbal communication (Ps. 19:3).
  - f) Regardless of where in the earth one lives, the voice of the heavens communicates God's existence and power.
2. The physical universe demands God's existence (Rom. 1:20).
  - a) God cannot be seen.
  - b) God's nature cannot be seen.
  - c) God's attributes cannot be seen.
  - d) God's invisible character can be recognized by what it does or produces.
  - e) God's eternal power can be recognized by physical creation. This creation demands immense power that has existed longer than the creation itself (i.e. everlasting).

f) Godhood is the nature of being God, and means that creation does not result from raw power, but by power exercised intelligently, therefore, godhood.

D. Rejection of Darwinism is not adoption of God's existence. Yale Computer Science Professor David Gelernter has reluctantly rejected Darwinism.

1. He feels bad about this. "It means one less beautiful idea in our world."
2. He rejects Darwinism due to the missing transitional fossils, while major animal groups have an explosion of fossils.
3. "Most species enter the evolutionary order fully formed and then depart unchanged."
4. Darwinism cannot answer how hard it is to randomly make new functional proteins. "Immense is so big, and tiny is so small, that neo-Darwinian evolution is — so far — a dead loss. Try to mutate your way from 150 links of gibberish to a working, useful protein and you are guaranteed to fail. Try it with ten mutations, a thousand, a million — you fail. The odds bury you. It can't be done." "The mutations are fatal, and the organism dies before it can reproduce. There are no examples of mutations that are not fatal." He recognizes that mathematically the possibility of all the millions of necessary mutations which survive is contrary to fact. Additionally, one must take into account not the mutations for one species but nearly 9 million species on the earth.
5. His problem with God is why would a creator have created so many doomed organisms prone to disease and heartbreak?

E. Those who reject God such as Darwinists often state that the problems of suffering and death argue against God's existence.

1. Fools claim God does not exist (Ps. 14:1).
2. Fools act corruptly. “Corruptly” means “that which brings destruction or destroys.” Many problems exist by our own choice.
3. Fools do abominable works.
4. Fools do not do good (14:1, 3), yet they blame a lack of good on God.
5. Fools do not seek God (14:2). The only One in the universe who can help them, they avoid.
6. Fools turn aside (14:3).
  - a) They turn aside from God.
  - b) They turn aside from His instruction.
7. Fools eat up other people but do not call on the Lord (14:4). They try to solve their problems by taking advantage of others (shame the plans of the poor; 14:6) rather than going to God.
8. When Adam sinned, he hid from God (Gen. 3:8). God did not separate Himself from man, but man separates Himself from God.
9. The fool blames God for the consequences of his own actions.
10. The fool demands that God allow him to act as a free agent (note what a popular theme is free will in literature and cinema) but then holds God responsible when “free agents” destroy each other and bring misery on themselves.
11. God has put up with vessels who have prepared themselves (Greek middle voice) for ruination (Rom. 9:22). God has allowed men to do what they most want to do and it is always anti-God and self-destructive (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).



VI. How can we still believe the Bible in the face of hard questions? Skeptics often cite that the Bible is very old, very corrupt in its thousands of copies, and was written by the winners of a religious conflict who suppressed another version of Christianity. They also point out the many contradictions which exist in God's word and point out that the Bible promotes genocide, is anti-intellectual (turn your mind off at the door and just feel), is sexist, racist and homophobic.

VII. Can we trust a book written thousands of years ago?

A. THIS IS IMPORTANT!!! We do not believe the Bible is God's Word because we feel it.

B. It claims to be God's Word.

1. Jehovah spoke to Israel through all His prophets who wrote then spoke (2 Ki. 17:13). The Old Testament often claims to be God's Word.
2. It claims to be spoken by God (2 Tim. 3:16).

C. Skeptics point out that most religious books claim some divine authority.

1. I will respond with three examples of each area of evidence. Much more evidence exists.
2. The Bible authenticates itself by reliable history. (Three examples)
  - a) The kings have been identified comparing Hebrew names to leaders from Elam, Babylon, Assyria and the Hittites (Gen. 14:1). Critics once claimed no one made journeys like that described here, but a Babylonian tablet states that a rented wagon was not to be driven to the Mediterranean coast. So, yes people traveled.
  - b) Straw was used in brick making (Ex. 5:12-18).
    - (1) It was used about half the time.
    - (2) An Egyptian officer expressed frustration in having no straw.

(3) Chemically, moistened straw made the clay easier to work.

c) Jericho fell and was burned about the time of Joshua 6:24.

(1) Burned ruins were uncovered in the 1950's.

(2) Pottery remains date it to c. 1550 BC.

3. The Bible authenticates itself by prophecy.

a) Jeremiah told that Judah would be in Babylon for seventy years (Jer. 29:10).

b) Judah were taken captive to Babylon in 605 BC

c) Isaiah prophesied of Cyrus who would rebuild Jerusalem and the foundation for the temple (Isa. 44:28-45:1).

(1) This was about 150 years before Cyrus' reign.

(2) The Lord stirred Cyrus c. 539-538 and Israel began their return c. 537-536 (Ezr. 1:1; 2 Chr. 36:22).

(3) The Cyrus cylinder tells of his letting captives return.

d) Daniel prophesied (c. 550) that the Greeks would defeat the Persians (Dan. 8:5-7, 18-21), which began in 480-479 BC and was final in 331 BC.

4. The Bible authenticates itself by recording reality, not superheroes dazzling us with great faith, but cowards and selfish people.

a) Abraham feared for his life and made Sarah tell others she was his sister to save his own skin (Gen. 20:2, 11).

b) Moses did not want to go to Pharaoh or to Israel (Ex. 3:10-12).

c) David was afraid at times and committed adultery (1 Sam. 21:12-13; 2 Sam. 11:1-5).

d) God's prophet Elijah feared (1 Ki. 19:9-10).

e) Jonah disobeyed (Jon. 1:2-3).

- f) Jesus's disciples doubted (Mt. 17:16-17; Lk. 24:10-11).
  - g) The apostles could not always get along (Acts 15:36-39).
  - h) Paul argued with the Lord (Acts 22:17-19).
5. The Bible records a history of sin and disbelief among men.
- a) Israel sinned many times (Ex. 32:21, 30-31; Jdg. 2:10-11 (7x)).
  - b) Solomon sinned (1 Ki. 11:6).
  - c) Israel did evil (1 Ki. 12:30; 14:22; 15:26; many more).
6. The Bible presents God as the God of mercy and exceptions in responding to Israel's sin (Ex. 34:6-7; Jdg. 2:16; many more).
7. Nearly every New Testament book was written to correct errors in thinking or behavior among Christians. Some examples follow.
- a) The Corinthians were dividing over loyalty to different human teachers (1 Cor. 3:4-5). They were tolerating immorality (5:1-2). Some were suing each other (6:1). Some men were still visiting prostitutes (6:15-20).
  - b) The Ephesians were to stop stealing and struggling with bitterness, rage and anger and rude speech (Eph. 4:28, 29-31).
  - c) Peter's readers thought it was strange that they were suffering (1 Pet. 4:12-13).
- D. Because the Bible was written by God, what it says rests on His character (Mal. 3:6-7).
1. The testimony of the Lord is faithful (sure) (Ps. 19:7).
  2. His Word is right (straight) (Ps. 33:4).
  3. His Word is truth and His judgments endure (Ps. 119:160).
  4. The Word of God cannot be broken (Jh. 10:35).
  5. We are not denying that man played a role in writing God's Word. That role is more than just a mouthpiece, but God superintended their work to assure it communicates what He wanted to say.

VIII. Some critics of Christianity claim that “Jesus” is a rip-off of other religious figures.

A. Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy contend in *The Laughing Jesus: Religious Lies and Gnostic Wisdom* that the Jesus story is a Jewish version of pagan myths. They list thirteen points in which they claim Jesus mimics or rips off pagan religions.

1. He is hailed by his followers as the savior, God made flesh and Son of God.
2. He is born in a cave or humble cowshed on the twenty-fifth of December in front of shepherds.
3. His father is God, and his mother is a virgin girl.
4. He surrounds himself with twelve disciples.
5. He offers his followers the change to be born again through the rites of baptism.
6. He miraculously turns water into wine at a marriage ceremony.
7. He rides triumphantly into town on a donkey while people wave palm leaves to honor him.
8. He attacks the religious authorities who set out to destroy him.
9. He dies at Easter time as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, sometimes through crucifixion.
10. On the third day he rises from the dead and ascends to Heaven in glory.
11. His followers await his return as the judge during the Last days.
12. His death and resurrection are celebrated by a ritual meal of bread and wine, which symbolize his body and blood.
13. By symbolically sharing in the suffering and death of the Godman, initiates of the mysteries believed they would also share in his spiritual resurrection and know eternal life.

B. Their claims, and many others make similar claims, are baseless often misrepresenting the myths of other gods and/or misreading the Scriptural account of Jesus.

1. His father is God, and his mother is a virgin girl.

- a) Perseus was son of Zeus who was taken with the beauty of Danae. Her father locked her away to keep her from men. Zeus fell upon her as a shower of gold and impregnated her.
- b) Heracles was son of Zeus who took the form of Alceme’s husband who was absent and consummated the marriage.
- c) Romulus was son of Mars who ravished the priestess of the goddess Vesta. When her pregnancy was questioned, she said Mars was the father.
- d) Alexander the Great was son of Zeus. His mother claimed Zeus struck her as lightning immediately before consummating her marriage to Philip of Macedon.
- e) In each of these, a god is smitten with a woman and comes and has sex with her, therefore, she is not a virgin.
- f) The god Mithras is claimed to be virgin born, but the ancient rituals surrounding him claimed that he slowly emerged from solid stone.
- g) The Biblical account is quite different.
  - (1) Mary was pregnant from the Spirit before she married (Mt. 1:18).
  - (2) Mary did not claim she was pregnant by God, God personally told Joseph this was the case (Mt. 1:20).
  - (3) Jesus was conceived by a work of the Holy Spirit who is always spirit and not physical. He was not conceived by a physical act of the Father with Mary (Mt. 1:18, 20).
  - (4) Joseph kept her a virgin until after she gave birth (Mt. 1:25).

- (5) God refers to Isaiah 7:14, a prophecy that predates Jesus' birth by 700 years.
  - (6) Mary questioned how she would have a son because she did not "know" a man (Lk. 1:34).
  - (7) Mary conceives by the Holy Spirit and power of the Most High **shadowing over** her (Lk. 1:35).
  - (8) In no place does God have sex with Mary. There is no physical act.
- h) The virgin birth is vital to our salvation.
- (1) Jesus is not special because He has some God "DNA" mixed with human DNA.
  - (2) He is not part God and part man as myths tell of their gods having sex with women and producing unusual children.
  - (3) Jesus is human, but without a human father.
    - (a) The Spirit caused Mary to conceive without the aid of a father.
    - (b) The Spirit's work resulted in His being the Son of God (Lk. 1:35).
    - (c) He has shared flesh and blood like us to release us from the fear of death through His own death (Heb. 2:14-15).
    - (d) He was made like us to be a merciful and faithful high priest (Heb. 2:17).
  - (4) Jesus has no sin nature.
    - (a) He was tempted in all ways we are apart from sin (a sin nature) (4:15). He had no sin nature, in this way He was the Holy thing which the Spirit produced.
    - (b) He appeared to take away sins but no sin was in Him
- (1 Jh. 3:5). A sinner cannot bear the sins of others, but a lamb without blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). The virgin birth assured that Christ was the sinless lamb.

2. He is hailed by his followers as the savior, God made flesh and Son of God.
- a) Most pagan religions were polytheistic, so it was not a big deal for people to be followers of various gods.
  - b) Jesus Christ came to the nation of Israel (Matt. 15:24; Rom. 15:8).
  - c) The Jews were monotheists (Dt. 6:4; Ex. 34:14).
  - d) Many Jews rejected Jesus because He claimed to be God (Jh. 5:18; 8:58; 10:33).
  - e) His disciples recognized Him to be the Son of God (Mt. 16:16). His disciples, unlike pagans, went against the grain of their culture and accepted Jesus to be God. This was not like pagans who easily adopted other gods within their pantheon (all/every god).
3. He is born in a cave or humble cowshed on the twenty-fifth of December in front of shepherds.
- a) The Bible only reveals that Jesus was laid in a manger. We don't know where exactly this was (Lk. 2:7). He was in a location where animals were kept or at least fed.
  - b) A second century writer claimed it was a cave.
  - c) The Bible does not give us a date or time of year for Jesus' birth. Some scholars have suggested His birth was closer to Spring because that was when shepherds spent all night out with their flocks during lambing season which began late January through June (Lk. 2:8).
  - d) The Bible nowhere commands or even suggests that we celebrate the birth of Jesus.
  - e) The first Christians did not celebrate the birth of Jesus.
  - f) The Roman bishop Telesphorus announced services about AD 136 for the birth of Christ, but it was celebrated in September either with the feast of Trumpets or Booths. THE ROMAN CHURCH AND BISHOP HAD NO SIGNIFICANT AUTHORITY OVER THE CHURCHES AT THAT TIME.
- g) To displace the Roman celebration of Saturnalia which normally fell about December 22-23, the Roman bishop Julius made December 25 the official date in AD 320.
  - h) Constantine celebrated it in 336.
  - i) In 354 Bishop Liberius of Rome made December 25 official for the churches in the vicinity of Rome.
    - (1) Many Christians refused to celebrate Christmas for the next few hundred years as they viewed it as a pagan festival.
  - j) The Bible neither requires nor suggests that we celebrate Christmas.
    - (1) We are not to let anyone pass judgement on us for not observing a festival (feast, e.g. Christ mass) or new moon or sabbath (Col. 2:16).
    - (2) The huge focus on Christmas has largely developed in America over the last 170 years. In Europe, Christmas was a very solemn event.
  - k) The Church celebrates only the Lord's table (1 Cor. 11:23-26).
    - (1) This is not commanded.
    - (2) Jesus only said that, "As often as you..."
    - (3) This is the "feast" we keep (1 Cor. 5:8).
  - l) The early Church specially remembered the resurrection every Sunday, but even this is not commanded.

4. He surrounds himself with twelve disciples.
- a) Skeptics claim Mithras surrounded himself with twelve disciples. His disciples represented the twelve signs of the Zodiac. This tradition does not occur until after Christianity began.
    - (1) Nowhere does Mithras surround himself with twelve disciples.
    - (2) Two critics cite an engraving which supposedly shows Mithras slaying a bull between two rows of what may be six figures.
    - (3) Later disciples of Mithras donned the twelve signs of the Zodiac for a parade celebrating Mithras.
  - b) Jesus called twelve disciples.
    - (1) He chose them all, even when He fully knew that one was a devil or slanderer (Jh. 6:70).
    - (2) The disciples were not always great “followers” of Christ.
      - (a) They didn’t know how Jesus could feed the crowd (Mt. 14:15-17).
      - (b) They had the same problem later (Mt. 15:32-33).
      - (c) They were worried that Jesus had offended the Pharisees (Mt. 15:12).
      - (d) They didn’t have enough faith to heal a boy (Mt. 17:16-20).
      - (e) They were indignant that a woman “wasted” expensive ointment on Jesus (Mt. 26:7-9).
      - (f) They could not stay awake while Jesus prayed (Mt. 26:40).
      - (g) They abandoned Jesus when He was arrested (Mt. 26:56).
    - (h) They argued about who of them was greatest (Lk. 9:46).
5. He offers his followers the change to be born again through the rites of baptism.
- a) Nearly all other religions that had “baptism” practiced it as a purification ritual.
  - b) Only one religion practiced it as giving life and it was a bath in bull’s “blood” for just the faithful.
  - c) Some thought that the three-times-a-year baptism for the god Mithras brought immortality. It has since been seen to be a purification so one could enter the presence of this god three times during the year. NO SALVATION.
  - d) The Bible does not present water baptism as saving under Judaism or in Christianity.
    - (1) Most comparative religious studies miss the point that water baptism does not save.
    - (2) Under the law it was a purification ritual for those who touched or were involved in something unclean (Lev. 16:26; 17:15-16).
    - (3) This was practiced by the Jews in response to John the baptizer’s preaching (Mt. 3:6).
    - (4) Jesus never proclaimed baptism to be born anew or to be forgiven.
    - (5) Jesus, Paul, and Peter all attribute the new birth to the Holy Spirit (Jh. 3:3, 5; Tit. 3:5).
    - (6) The Spirit came upon Peter’s listeners before they were water baptized (Acts 10:44-47).
    - (7) Christian’s baptized to represent being placed into Christ and taking the place of believers who have gone before us (Rom. 6:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:29).

6. He miraculously turns water into wine at a marriage ceremony.
  - a) The claim that Dionysius did this is false. People brought empty jars into Dionysius' temple and locked the doors. In the morning they were full of wine. No water in the jars and jars were out of sight.
  - b) Dionysius supposedly made a spring taste like wine one day a year.
  - c) Jesus had servants fill twenty-thirty gallon jars with water and it was wine when the master drew some to drink. The jars were in plain view of others the whole time (Jh. 2:1-11).
  - d) Jesus performed this as a sign to show that He could change one thing to another and this forms the background for the new birth dialogue with Nicodemus (Jh. 3).
7. He rides triumphantly into town on a donkey while people wave palm leaves to honor him.
  - a) This may have been true in myths.
  - b) Honored people often rode upon donkeys.
  - c) Dignitaries were often greeted in this way.
  - d) Jesus rode on the colt of the donkey, though both were present (Mt. 21:5-7). The colt would have been unbroken, yet it submitted.

8.



9. He dies at Easter time as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, sometimes through crucifixion and then rose again and ascended to heaven.
- a) The following are “examples” from other religions.
  - b) Many religions had gods who died, but always at the hand of other gods, not mortals. None died to save humanity, but often in selfish pursuits: love, wisdom, honor.
  - c) Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead, was killed and chopped into 14 pieces by his brother who was jealous of how successful he was as a ruler. Isis (another goddess) gathered thirteen of the pieces and brought him back to life so he could oversee the dead. She brought him back to life by placing the pieces in a coffin and floating it in the Nile (baptism) and saying a spell. He didn’t actually rise but became a god in a different realm,. His devotees wished to be buried near the location of his body, so did he really rise? He did not die to provide salvation.
  - d) The Romans worshipped two gods Cybele and Attis who were in love until from jealousy Cybele caused Attis to go insane. He killed himself for love of a woman after castrating himself. Cybele asked Zeus to prevent his body from decaying. He then lives again every year in Spring with the sprouting of new violets. He was celebrated as a fertility/crop ritual. His is an annual death and life ritual. He did not rise.
  - e) The Canaanites claimed that Adonis a young god died after being attacked by a wild boar. His death involved jealousy over His love for Aphrodite who poured magical nectar on his wounds so when he died, his blood caused the ground to produce a new flower and to color the waters of a nearby river. He did not rise. Zeus required him to spend half the year (winter) in Hades.
  - f) Many critics claim that Jesus is based on the Greek/Roman mythological deity Dionysius.
    - (1) Some say he traveled teaching like Jesus.
    - (2) Dionysius traveled teaching men how to grow grapes, make wine, and party.
    - (3) He was said to die for the world, but he was torn apart, boiled and eaten by the Titans. Zeus’ wife Hera incited them to kill him for jealousy of Zeus’ love for Dionysius’ mother. His mother saved his heart, brought it to Zeus who ate it and then caused another woman to conceive and bear Dionysius again or he sowed the heart into his thigh where it gestated. They claim this is “resurrection.”
  - g) A graffiti scratched on a Mithras “temple” from about 200 AD says, “And us, too, you saved by spilling the eternal blood.” The blood is the bull Mithras slew, not his blood. He did not sacrifice himself.
  - h) Critics claim Mithras also rose, but according to his mythology he didn’t die, so no record exists of his resurrection.
  - i) Jesus did not die by suicide, but was commanded to lay down His life (Jh. 10:17-18).
  - j) Jesus submitted to the Roman soldiers (Jh. 18:4-12).
  - k) Jesus released His spirit at the proper time (Jh. 19:30).

- l) Jesus died once for all. His was not a repeated death and life cycle like the false gods of mythology (Heb. 7:27).
- m) Jesus' death was a payment (redemption) for sin (Matt. 20:28; Heb. 9:12).
- n) Jesus' death was real tied to historical events not a mystical drama of gods used to explain seasons, planting, and harvest.
- (1) His death involved a well-known Jewish High-priest (Jh. 18:12-13).
  - (2) His death involved Pilate the Roman governor (Jh. 18:28-29).
  - (3) His death involved Herod the regional king for the territory north of Jerusalem (Jesus was from Galilee; Lk. 23:6-12).
- o) Jesus rose bodily from the grave, never to die again.
- (1) His resurrection was physical, real, and tangible (Lk. 24:36-43; Jh. 20:19-20, 26-27).
  - (2) His resurrection did not consist of causing a flower to bloom, a river to change colors, or spending half the year in Hades and the other half on the earth.
- p) Jesus does not live and die again and again.
- (1) He rose to never die again (Heb. 7:16).
  - (2) He continues forever and always lives (Heb. 7:24-25).
10. On the third day he rises from the dead and ascends to Heaven in glory.
- a) Nearly every "resurrection" account which looks similar to Christ's such as "third day" or around Easter, etc. were written more than hundred years after Christ's resurrection. Even critics admit that these may have been modeled on the Christian tradition.
  - b) Christ died at the Jewish Passover (Jh. 18:28-29).
    - (1) Passover was established 1,500 years earlier.
    - (2) Christians who had worshipped Ishtar (Aphrodites, Eostre (in England and France)) moved their Vernal (Spring) equinox festival to coincide with the Sunday following Passover, thus uniting a pagan tradition to a Christian celebration.
    - (3) Christians are never told to observe "the resurrection Sunday" i.e. Easter. Christians celebrated the resurrection every week.
  - c) Christ died as our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7).
  - d) The pagan examples of "resurrection" are nothing like Biblical resurrection.

IX. Can we trust a book which certainly has been hopelessly corrupted in its many copies?

A. It is true that copies of Scripture have been corrupted over time.

B. It is true that copies of the Old Testament include deviations.

1. The deviations are not large or significant.
2. The oldest Masoretic Texts [M] date from the AD 900. That's about 1,300 years after the last Old Testament book (Malachi) was completed.
3. The oldest copies of the Septuagint [LXX] dated in the AD 400's.
  - a) Scholars were sure the Hebrew text was very corrupt.
4. The Dead Sea Scrolls [DSS] changed this.
  - a) They were discovered in sealed clay pots in caves on the Dead Sea.
  - b) The material contain about 1,000 texts and thousands of fragments.
  - c) 40% of the Scrolls were copies of Old Testament Scriptures.
  - d) They contained portions of every Old Testament book except Esther and Nehemiah.
  - e) These scrolls date from about 200 to 30 BC.. That's 1,000 years closer to the original writings.
  - f) They contain a complete scroll of Isaiah.
  - g) They contained a Greek translation (Septuagint) of portions of the Old Testament.
  - h) The DSS did not substantially disagree with the Masoretic texts. On Isaiah, Gleason Archer said the texts agree 95% of the time and the 5% of changes are minor slips of the eye or hand.
  - i) Most differences are alternative spellings, synonyms, or transposed verses.
5. Let's compare the DSS and the M.
  - a) Lamentations 1-4 contain alphabetical acrostics which

differ in 1:16-17 in the Masoretic text.

(1) In chapters 2-4 the verse beginning with פ precedes the verse with ו (alphabetical), while 1:16-17 is flipped.

(2) The DSS has it correct.

(3) The verses are present in both just flipped in order.

b) Deuteronomy 32:8, the M has sons "of Israel" and DSS has "of God."

c) Before 1 Samuel 11:1-3 the DSS includes an explanation of Nachash's actions. "Nachash, king of the people of Ammon, sorely oppressed the people of Gad and the people of Reuven, and gouged out all their right eyes and struck terror and dread in Israel. There was not one left among the people of Israel beyond the Jordan whose right eye was not put out by Nachash king of the people of Ammon; except that seven thousand fled from the people of Ammon and entered Yavesh Gilead. About a month later, Nachash the Ammonite went up..."

d) The DSS (sing) describes Goliath as 4 cubits and a span, about 6.5 feet (1 Sam. 17:4).

e) Scholars both Jewish and Christian recognize this is an error. The context requires him to be large, such as the weight of his mail 125+ lbs, and a 15 lb spear head.

f) The DSS have only "holy, holy" in Isaiah 6:3. This does not dramatically change the text.

g) The DSS differ in a few spots in Isaiah 53.

(1) 53:3 - "acquainted" is וידוע passive, DSS ויודע is active.

(2) 53:3 - "hide" is a noun כמסתר, DSS וכמסתיר a participle "hiding."

(3) 53:3 - "despised" is nif part נבזה, DSS has ונבוזהו "we despised him."

- (4) 53:8 - “my people” עמי, DSS has עמו “his people.”
- (5) 53:10 - “put to grief” החלי, DSS is a stronger form of made sick ויחללהו.
- (6) 53:11 - DSS adds He shall see “light” אור.
- h) None of these alter crucial truths.
- C. Changes do exist among the thousands of New Testament copies.
1. The oldest recognized portion of the New Testament is a scrap of text from John, and dates from about AD 100. That is within 10 years of when John was written.
  2. Around 5,800 copies of the NT in Greek exist.
    - a) About 116 papyri manuscripts have been catalogued. These are oldest from AD 100-400’s.
    - b) Over 300 uncial (capital letter) manuscripts exist from 4th-10th centuries.
    - c) Over 3,000 minuscule (small letter) manuscripts exist.
    - d) Many lectionaries, texts with collected texts for reading in church services exist.
    - e) Many quotations in written sermons exist.
- D. The critics like to point out, “What good is it to say that the autographs (i.e., the originals) were inspired? We don’t have the originals! We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways.... There are more variations among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.” Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*.
1. This scholar misrepresents the evidence he knows exists.
  2. The New Testament contains about 138,000 words.
3. There are about 400,000 variants. Manuscripts -mss
    - a) If one text has  $\omega\alpha\nu\nu$  and five have  $\omega\alpha\nu$ , that counts as five variants. These are variant spelling of “John.”
    - b) This inflates the numbers because we have thousands of mss.
  4. An occasional ms accidentally substituted  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  [and] for  $\chi\omicron\varsigma$  [abbreviation of Christ].
  5. Some mss change word order “all and baptizing” vrs “and baptizing all” (Mk. 1:5). Meaning unchanged.
  6. Some mss flip letters as  $\epsilon\beta\alpha\lambda\omicron\nu$  [throw] for  $\epsilon\lambda\alpha\beta\omicron\nu$  [take] (Mk. 14:65).
  7. Some mss confuse letters by sound. So *nikos* [victory] becomes [*neikos*] conflict (1 Cor. 15:54). The last has minor support.
- E. Some variants are clearly wrong and poorly supported.
1. In John 5:39 someone transposed letters in one text and changed  $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$  [to witness] to  $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\alpha\nu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$  [to sin].
- F. Some variants are significant but other texts state what is omitted.
1. The two earliest copies (4 C) of Mark omit 16:9-20, but Mt., Lk. and Jh. include these ideas. One of these texts leaves a large space to include the words.
  2. The earliest copy of Mark to include these verses dates from the late 4th to 5th C. Irenaeus (130-220) quotes it and it is included in the Diatesseron (Gospel harmony) (165-170).
- G. The textual evidence favors a mostly reliable transmission of the text. Do not let “scholars” sow doubt about the reliability of the text.

- X. Can we trust a book written by the winners of a religious battle?
- A. Some suggest that gnostics presented an alternative Christianity and Scriptures but lost the battle.
1. Pre-agnostics may have existed at the time the Church formed.
  2. Gnostics didn't emerge until the second century after the Scriptures were completed.
  3. Gnostics presented a mix of Greek philosophy and Jewish law.
  4. Gnostics emphasized secret knowledge and wisdom accessible to the intellectual but hidden from the "simple."
  5. Gnostics contradicted the Old Testament by thinking that matter and therefore, flesh are evil. They concluded that many gods or demigods created matter because absolute God could not.
    - a) Scripture states that God created matter and called it very good (Gen. 1:31).
    - b) God makes man a material being (Ps. 139:13-14).
  6. Gnostic and pre-gnostic teaching were rejected by Jewish religious leaders. Judaism was not anti-materialistic and didn't promote "secret knowledge."
  7. Gnostic writings were rejected because Christians saw them as contrary to Christianity.
    - a) Gnostics taught that people needed to acquire secret knowledge.
    - b) Gnostics taught ignorance is our problem, and acquiring knowledge will not save us but will free us from this flesh (material).
    - c) Jesus came to provide salvation through His death for sins and His resurrection (Mt. 20:28; Rom. 5:8).
    - d) Christians taught that God saves us through faith (Eph. 2:8).
8. Gnostic teaching mimics Jesus' saying, but are cryptic riddles. Jesus often taught plainly, or He explained His parables.
- a) "Beware that no one lead you astray, saying, 'Lo here.' or 'Lo there.' For the Son of man is within you. Follow after Him." *The Gospel of Mary*
  - b) "Jesus said, 'If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty.'"
  - c) "That which you have will save you if you bring forth from yourselves." *Gospel of Thomas*.
  - d) "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."
  - e) The person old in days will not hesitate to ask a child seven days old about the place of life, and he will live. For many who are first will become last, and they will be a single one."
  - f) "Simon Peter said to them: 'Let Mary go away from us, for women are unworthy of life.' Jesus said, 'Look, I will draw her in so as to make her male, so that she may become a living male spirit, similar to you. But I say to you, every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

- B. Many modern critics claim that the canon was not established until Constantine (4 C.) and took these other gospels away from Christians.
1. These other writings had already been rejected as not apostolic.
  2. The gnostic writings were later, and not recognized by early Christian writers who recognized New Testament writers.
  3. Clement of Rome (c. 95) recognized the gospels and distinguished the authority of the apostles from his authority.
  4. Papias (c. 125) identified four gospels as we have them.
  5. The Muratorian Fragment (c. 180) identifies 22 of the New Testament books: 4 Gospels, Acts, Paul's 13 letters, Jude, 1&2 John, Revelation.
  6. Irenaeus (c. 180) added Hebrews, James, 1 Peter.
  7. Theophilus of Antioch (c. 177) affirmed the four Gospels were equal to the Old Testament Scriptures, Paul's letters and references others NT letters.
- C. The Bible is not for the intellectual or educated elite but for every believer.
1. It is for the man of God (2 Tim. 3:16).
  2. God has not chosen many powerful, wise, etc. but He has chosen mostly common people (1 Cor. 1:26-29). This contradicts the "secret knowledge" teaching of gnosticism.
- D. Jesus' teaching did not contradict the Old Testament but fulfillment both the law and prophets.
1. Jesus claimed the kingdom was in their midst, not that the Son of man was in them (Lk. 17:20-21).
  2. Jesus did not come to destroy the law or prophets (Matt. 5:17).
  3. Jesus valued women as women.
    - a) He recognized that God created **them** male and female (Matt. 19:4).
- b) Jesus initiated a conversation with the Samaritan woman which also surprised her (Jh. 4:7-9).
  - c) Jesus did not refuse to interact with with women.
    - (1) He stayed at Martha and Mary's house (Lk. 10:38).
    - (2) He did not prohibit Mary from sitting at His feet and listening to His teaching (Lk. 10:39).
  4. Jesus taught that God created and material beings and a material world (Mt. 19:4; Mk. 13:19). He did not teach that a lesser god or demigod created it.
  5. Jesus did not view flesh as evil but showed mercy to people's physical needs.
    - a) He showed mercy to people's physical ailments (Lk. 13:11-16).
    - b) He taught that the Sabbath was for man for rest (Mk. 2:27).
    - c) He had compassion on the crowds for they were hungry (Mt. 15:32).
    - d) He taught that resurrection was real and physical.
    - e) He countered the Sadducees pointing out that God is God of the living (Mt. 22:23-33).
      - (1) This points to real resurrection.
      - (2) Matthew has to explain to us that the Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection, because it is the very point Jesus counters.

XI. Can we trust a book filled with contradictions?

- A. The Bible has some contradictions in the transmitted form we possess.
- B. The Bible has been copied for centuries. We have yet to recover an original of any Scripture text. Following are some examples.
  1. Who killed Goliath (1 Sam 17:50; 2 Sam 21:19)?
    - a) 1 Samuel names David.
    - b) 2 Samuel tells us Elhanan.
    - c) 1 Chronicles 20:5 tells us Elhanan killed Goliath's brother Lahmi.
  2. How much did David pay for the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam. 24:18-24; 1 Chr. 21:23-25)?
    - a) It is possible that a copyist miswrote one of the values.
      - (1) Six hundred is שש מאות
      - (2) Fifty is חמשיים
    - b) It is likely that David payed both amounts, the smaller for the threshing floor and the larger for the surrounding area, for Solomon built the temple (a large space) on this place (2 Chr. 3:1).
  3. Did the Philistines have a field of lentils or barley (2 Sam. 23:11; 1 Chr. 11:13)?
    - a) It is possible they both.
    - b) It is also possible that a copyist altered one of the texts, transposing and confusing the letters ש and ד with ש and ר. The word "barley" is שעורים and "lentils" is עדשים. The words sound different but visually are similar.
  4. How many horseman did David take (2 Sam. 8:4; 1 Chr. 18:4)?
    - a) Did he take 7,000 or 1,700.
    - b) It appears a copyist omitted "chariot" and another copyist corrected the odd numbering (in Hebrew) and changed thousand to "hundred."

C. The Bible has some apparent contradictions based on a selected reading of the text, not considering all the evidence.

1. Did Saul ask God or not (1 Chr. 10:14; 1 Sam. 28:6)?
  - a) 1 Chr. 10:14 states one of the reasons the LORD put Saul to death. Saul did not seek Jehovah.
  - b) 1 Sam. 28:5-6 Saul "asks" the LORD but the Lord does not answer, because the LORD had already said that He would talk with Saul anymore.
  - c) 1 Sam. 15:11 tells us the Saul stopped from going after the LORD. He had not obeyed the LORD (15:1-3, 8-9).
  - d) The issue was not whether Saul "asked" God but that he no longer sought counsel from God.
2. Why didn't Saul know David (1 Sam. 17:57-58)?
  - a) David became Saul's beloved musician (16:21-23).
  - b) David as "warrior" was unknown to Saul. Saul wanted to know who David's family was, something he likely had not asked about before this.
3. How large was Israel's armed forces (2 Sam. 24:9; 1 Chr. 21:5-6)?
  - a) The first text includes only those who drew the sword.
  - b) The number in 1 Chr. also includes 288,000 who served at different times through the year as commanders of thousands and hundreds.
  - c) The second number probably also includes the 12,000 horsemen located at Jerusalem (2 Chr. 1:14).
4. Did Jesus contradict Himself regarding to whom the disciples were to go (Mt. 10:5-6; 28:19; 15:24-26)?

- a) One critic states that no papyri of Matthew contains the verses at the end of Matthew 28.
  - b) This is misleading/dishonest, because no complete papyrus of Matthew exists, but only partial copies. For example, one papyrus has only about 17 verses from Matthew and another begins toward the end of Matthew 12 through Matthew 26.
  - c) This critic does not recognize that Christ had one work when He was on the earth, and even Paul stated this (Rm. 15:8).
  - d) After Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, He directed His disciples to a new and expanded ministry.
5. Should not Jesus have returned by now (Mt. 24:30-34; 10:23; 16:28).
- a) Jesus foretold His return (14:30).
    - (1) Jesus promised that this "generation" would not pass away until all these things happen (14:34).
    - (2) "This generation" refers either to "this race," that is Israel, or to the generation that would see the signs.
  - b) Jesus promised that despite persecution, His disciples would not cover all the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes (10:23).
    - (1) "Until the Son of Man comes" indicates a departure and return.
    - (2) His reference to His coming means this was not about the time He was on earth.
  - c) Jesus promised that some present at the time would not die until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Mt. 16:28).
    - (1) Immediately following this verse, Jesus takes up into the mountain three of those present (17:1).
    - (2) He was transfigured before them (17:2). They saw Him in His kingdom glory.
- D. The Bible has some apparent contradictions based on history.
1. Did Nebuchadnezzar destroy Tyre (Ezk. 26:3-14)?
    - a) Critics state that this text prophesies Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Tyre, though 29:17-18 states that he and his army could not gain wages from Tyre.
    - b) God would bring "many nations" against Tyre, not just Babylon (26:3).
    - c) The nations "they" will destroy Tyre's walls and plunder the city (26:4, 5, 12).
    - d) Nebuchadnezzar destroyed mainland Tyre (26:8).
    - e) Nebuchadnezzar built siege mounds and brought battering rams against Tyre and shook its walls but did not destroy it (26:8-11). All "he" and "his."
    - f) Other nations, Alexander the Great specifically, destroyed and plundered Tyre proper.
    - g) This is not a contradiction but a lazy reading of the text.
  2. Did Nebuchadnezzar invade Egypt (Jer. 43:8-13)?
    - a) Critics claim no historical record exists for this invasion, except for Josephus. They claim he was trying to align secular history with the Bible.
    - b) They ignore a statue of Hophra, king of Egypt, which bears an inscription describing this invasion.
    - c) They ignore that a Babylonian chronicle (c. 567 B.C.) records Nebuchadnezzar's invasion.



XII. Isn't the Bible Sexist?

A. Some critics of Christianity claim Judaism, Christianity and the Bible are anti-women. Following a verses they use to support their claims

1. We should admit that the Bible records some horrible situations involving women.
  - a) These are not what God dictated for people, but what people did.
  - b) Lot offered his two daughters to the men of Sodom (Gen. 19:8). This is inexcusable.
  - c) Abraham almost allowed other men to be with his wife because he was afraid for his life (Gen. 20:2, 20-12). BUT GOD INTERVENED!
  - d) A Levite gave his concubine to the men of Gibeah (Benjamites) (Jdg. 19:24-25). This was at a time when every man was doing what as right in his own eyes (Jdg. 17:6; 21:25).

B. God created man [*adam-dirt*] male [*zakar*] and female [*neqevah*] (Gen. 1:27).

1. This was God's design.
2. God distinguished the physical design of each as partners.

C. God awarded inheritance to daughters who had no brother (Nu. 27:1-11).

1. Normally, the inheritance went to the oldest son, so as not to diminish the size of inheritance.
2. Sarah would not have inherited Abraham's wealth but his servant (Gen. 15:2).

D. God charged the men of Judah with being unfaithful to the wife of their youth (Mal. 2:13-16).

E. Solomon charged his son to enjoy the wife of his youth (Prvb. 5:18-19). (This is ironic due to all the women Solomon loved. Perhaps at the end of his life, he saw that it was better to faithfully love one woman as opposed to hundreds). Solomon illustrates that God can teach us something or give great wisdom, but that does not mean we use it well.

F. God logically counts us in Christ not as male or female but as part of His new creation (Gal. 3:28).

1. As a result, God places women in various positions to serve.
2. In the Lord, our position in the one who is in charge, neither women or men are independent of each other (1 Cor. 11:11).
3. Women can pray and prophesy in church as long as they have their heads covered (1 Cor. 11:4). Head-coverings was a local issue in Corinth.

G. Some claim that motherhood was a God-inflicted curse based on Genesis 3:16.

1. Eve had the potential to be a mother before this event.
2. Her curse is increased pain in childbirth.
3. Her desire is for or against her husband. She wants to be the boss, but he will be.

H. Women are told to learn in silence with submission (1 Tim. 2:11-14).

1. The Greek word "silence" *hēsuchia* means "rest, quiet, tranquillity" [*Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words: 1166*].
2. This words does not emphasize absolute verbal silence but a calmness. Paul is telling women to not be boisterously challenging and arguing with what is taught.
3. Paul had to also tell the men to not be angry and not argue when they were together, so they also had a problem (1 Tim. 2:8).
4. Paul's words to the women begin with "likewise" meaning the men had the same problem.

I. Women are not permitted to teach or to exercise authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12).

1. Priscilla with her husband Aquila explained the way of God more accurately to Apollos (Acts 18:26).
2. Paul also refers to her as a co-worker in Christ Jesus (Rm. 16:3).

3. Priscilla does not teach as a sole teacher but along with her husband.
  4. The second half of Paul's charge probably helps explain the first; she is not to authorize herself to take charge over men (2:12). Therefore, she taught along with her husband.
  5. Paul charged the Roman believers to attend to whatever Phoebe needed (Rom. 16:1-2).
    - a) Phoebe was one who organized believers (patron)(16:2).
    - b) Phoebe served by organizing
    - c) J.H. Thayer defines this word, "a woman set over others." Many translate it "patron" as though she were a financial supporter, though this was not the meaning of the word. It comes from a narrow view of what women could do.
    - d) When this word is used of men, it is often "rule" (cp 1 Tim. 5:17).
- J. Some charge that women could be owned as sex slaves (Ex. 21:7-11).
1. Slavery was part of their culture. Like it or not, freedom for many involved poverty.
  2. She was not treated as a sex slave but a wife (21:10).
  3. God gave a command about caring for a slave that a man had taken as a wife, especially if he took another wife.
  4. God commanded that he allow her to go free if he violated these commands.
  5. This was a change in the relationship to women.
- K. Some charge that women were unclean for different lengths of time following the birth of a boy or a girl (Lev. 12:1-14).
1. The designation "unclean" was due to the law that Israel chose.
  2. The law showed Israel how hard it was to do everything God asked (Ex. 19:8).
  3. Uncleaness took many forms and affected men and women.
- L. They claim women had to serve outside the temple but could not go inside the temple (Ex. 38:8).
1. Only priests were to go inside the temple, all others would die if they entered (Nu. 18:21-22). So this rule applied to every man and woman.
  2. Even when they cleaned the temple, the priests did the work inside and brought things out to the Levites (2 Chr. 29:16).
- M. They claim that a slave woman who had sex with her master was "scourged" (Lev. 19:20).
1. The woman is not free.
  2. The word "scourge" in the AV and NKJV should be "examine" meaning a search to determine what the man owed.
  3. The text addresses treating her properly, not just for sex.
- N. They claim that the Bible says women are unclean (Job 14:1-4).
1. All people are unclean.
  2. This verse isn't blaming mom.
- O. They claim that the woman in Deuteronomy 22:23-24 is raped, and yet she is stoned.
1. She did not cry out.
  2. She is not seized.
  3. She appears to consent.
  4. She is not like the woman in 22:25
    - a) This woman is "seized" or taken by force.
    - b) This woman cries out.
- P. They claim that Solomon had many wives and concubines (1 Ki. 11:1-4).
1. The Bible does not share this approvingly.
  2. God commanded Israel's king not to multiply wives (Dt. 17:15-17).
- Q. They think the "woe to them with child" is a woe to childbirth (Mt. 24:19).
1. Jesus pronounced this warning.
  2. It is a woe for those who have to flee while they are pregnant, as it will make the trip harder.

XIII. Isn't the Bible Homophobic?

XIV. Why is it so important for Christians to be pro-life?