

Answering A Bible Critic #2

Introduction. In this morning's lesson, we examined five of the ten worst, or weakest, arguments people use to dismiss the New Testament. This lesson will examine five more of them. This is the big problem today: the most common reasons for rejecting Christ are also the worst reasons for rejecting Christ. However, they are still effective in preventing people from obeying and drawing away disciples.

"Apologetics" does not mean saying you are sorry. It is based on a biblical term that means offering reasons in support of your position (Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Philippians 1:7, 17; 2 Timothy 4:18; 1 Peter 3:15). Therefore, "Christian apologetics" is the art of offering rational grounds and evidence in support of a Christian worldview. The emphasis in this lesson will continue to be how you can build your own faith, and respond to these arguments.

I. "Christians Are Always Warning People About Hell"

- A. If we think something really bad might happen to someone, what is wrong with warning them about it? The Bible warns people about Hell all the time and Christians are just following what Jesus (Matthew 8:11-12; 13:49-50; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43-48) and the apostles (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:10, 15; 21:8) taught.
- B. The more fundamental question hinges on whether or not Jesus was who He claimed to be. If Jesus is God, then whatever He said was true and there is a Hell. He knew what He was talking about! And if there is a Hell, there is absolutely nothing wrong with warning others about it.

II. "There Is No Evidence Jesus Ever Existed"

- A. If that were true, then there is no evidence that anyone else from ancient history ever existed either, since the evidence for Jesus is far greater than nearly all other figures from ancient history.
 - 1. This objection expresses a radical view. In fact, it is so off-the-wall that it is usually counterproductive to even argue against it, since by arguing against it one runs the risk of giving the objection more credibility than it deserves.
 - 2. But because this view is so widely touted by teenagers and the common "skeptic on the street" we need to address it.
- B. The truth is we have more evidence for Jesus than we have for anybody else in His time period. When we use the same historical standards as we do in other areas of ancient history, the historical evidence that Jesus existed is overwhelming. Virtually every professional historian regards the existence of Jesus as historically certain (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3). There are four strong reasons for this, which we can only summarize here:
 - 1. Ancient Christian sources say Jesus was a historical person. Jesus is mentioned as a historical person in the gospels and the New Testament epistles. Moreover, He is also mentioned by numerous Christian writers outside of the New Testament. To reject all of these sources just because they are Christian and "biased" is a fallacy.

- a) All an alleged “bias” here means is that they really cared about the issue, not that they were lying about it.
 - b) Just because someone cares about something and thus might be said to be “biased” does not mean they cannot be accurate sources of information. Just like Jews can be reliable historical sources about the Holocaust, so too Christians can be reliable sources about Jesus.
2. Numerous non-Christian sources say Jesus was a historical person. For example, the ancient Jewish historian Josephus says Jesus was a historical person, and he also mentions other New Testament figures like John the Baptist, King Herod, Pilate, and others. Other ancient writers also mention Jesus and treat Him as a historical person. They did not think Jesus was a mythical figure, so why should we?
 3. The historical Jesus is the best explanation for the rise of belief in the gospel. If Jesus never existed, we would be without any explanation for the explosive growth of the church. Why would there ever be a religious movement that grew so rapidly if Jesus never existed? Why would the disciples risk their lives in promoting a man who never existed (Acts 7:60; 12:1-2; Revelation 2:13)?
 4. If Jesus never existed, why did not the early Jewish enemies of the church point this out? If Jesus never existed, why did not any of the ancient rabbis (who hated Jesus and Christians and wanted to stomp them out) ever use this argument? Not one ancient rabbinical writing ever makes the argument that Jesus never existed. On the contrary, they all use the events of His life against Him, saying He was a born out of wedlock, worked tricks with evil magic, taught heresy and led fellow Jews astray, and was justifiably executed. This means, at the very least, that Jesus’ worst enemies confirmed His existence!

III. “Christian Belief Is Unscientific”

- A. What scientific discovery has ever disproved any Bible teaching? Many famous scientists from the past and today have believed the scriptural account of Genesis 1-11 which includes Creation and the Flood.
- B. Sometimes it is said that believing in these miracles is unscientific, but this is mistaken. The reason why is because science studies natural laws and the way the physical universe operates barring any outside intervention by a divine agent. If God exists and is the author of these natural laws, God can intervene on occasion and provide an exception to the ordinary operations of nature to show that He is alive and active. This exceptional action no more undermines science than the exceptional presidential pardon undermines the legal system.
- C. Sometimes people say “only science can give us knowledge” but this is self-refuting since there is no scientific experiment that can prove that statement. The Bible mentions several accurate scientific facts: food and sanitation guidelines (Leviticus 11:9-12, 24-43; 13:1-17), life in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), the shape of the earth (Isaiah 40:22), the suspension of Earth by gravity (Job 26:7), and the number of stars (Jeremiah 33:22). It is not a science textbook, but when it does

mention scientific fact, it is accurate. This shows that a biblical worldview, which existed long before modern science, is valid.

- D. Creationists have an impressive arsenal of evidence to confirm the conclusion that the Creation model better fits the available scientific facts than the Evolution model. Darwinism is a merely materialistic philosophy masquerading as science, and people are recognizing it for what it is. Science, done right, points toward God. There is no war between science and religion — it is a myth. The positive case for intelligent design in the Universe is absolutely compelling.

IV. “Christians Believe In God As A Crutch To Handle Life”

- A. The Bible can help with the problems of life (John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Philippians 4:7). However, reaching for a crutch is not limited to religious people. In fact, people of all belief systems use some help or another to get them through life — alcohol, Prozac, a stoic philosophy, etc.
- B. The important question is not whether some people use the Bible as a crutch, but whether the Bible is true. If Jesus rose from the dead, then biblical faith is true, regardless of how many people use it for a crutch. If it is true, then it needs to direct (and comfort when necessary) your life.

V. “Believing In Jesus Is As Silly As Believing In Zeus”

- A. This is a clear example of the straw man fallacy.
 - 1. The straw man fallacy occurs when one ignores a person’s actual position by misrepresenting it in order to make it easy to refute. But such misrepresentations do nothing to refute one’s true position.
 - 2. The reason why comparing belief in Jesus to belief in Zeus commits the straw man fallacy is because the New Testament contends that there are good reasons for believing that Jesus was a divine being. His character, His teaching, His fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, His miracles, including His resurrection from the dead, all verify His claim that He was God — even His enemies had to agree (Matthew 27:54; John 3:2; 11:47)!
 - 3. While there are good reasons for believing in the divinity of Jesus, there are absolutely no good reasons to think that a god like Zeus exists (Acts 17:23-29; Galatians 4:8). So the two cases are simply not parallel.
- B. To pretend that all Christians believe on “blind faith,” as if Jesus was some sort of fantasy for grownups, is a straw man misrepresentation. In order to sincerely investigate the gospel, one needs to address the true claim and not some weak or false caricature of it.

Conclusion. Your faith is valuable, and you need to fully accept the power of God’s written word. It will always be criticized and maligned, but you do not have to be moved by the assaults of the world.