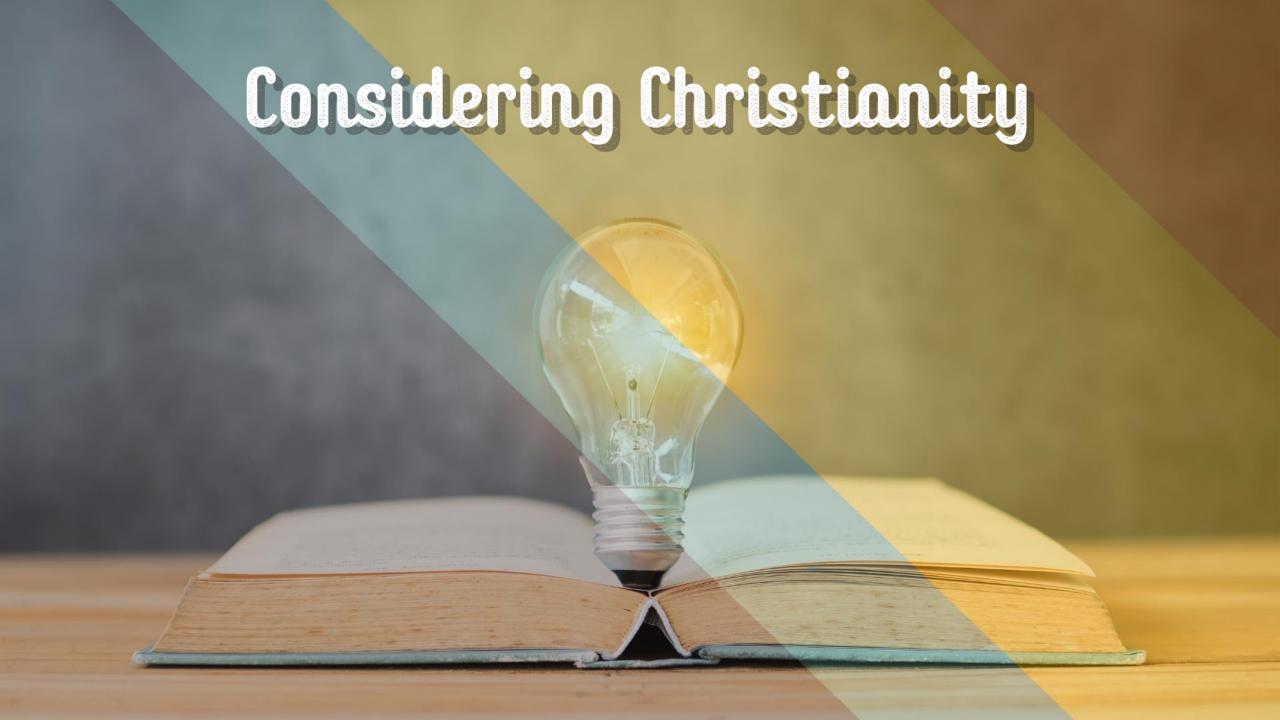
CONSIDERING CHRISTIANITY

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Antony Flew in *There is a God:*

"I think the Christian religion is the one religion that most clearly deserves to be honored and respected whether or not its claim to be a divine revelation is true. There is nothing like the combination of a charismatic figure like Jesus and a first-class intellectual like St. Paul...If you're wanting Omnipotence to set up a religion, this is the one to beat."



2 Goals

Not Christian:

Persuade you that Christianity is...

Reasonable

Respectable

Remarkable

And therefore is worth serious consideration.

Christian:

Increase your...

Confidence in Christianity

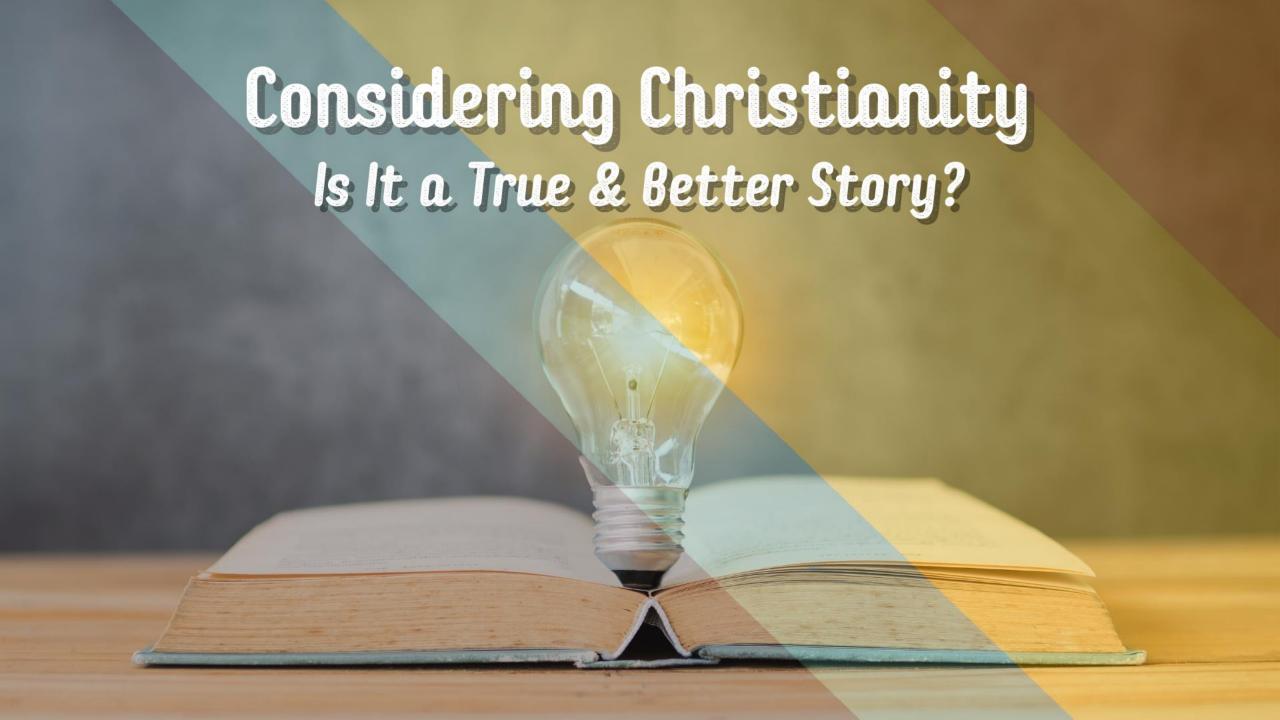
&

Your ability to defend and commend it.

2 Claims

1. Everyone tells themselves a story about the world and our place in it.

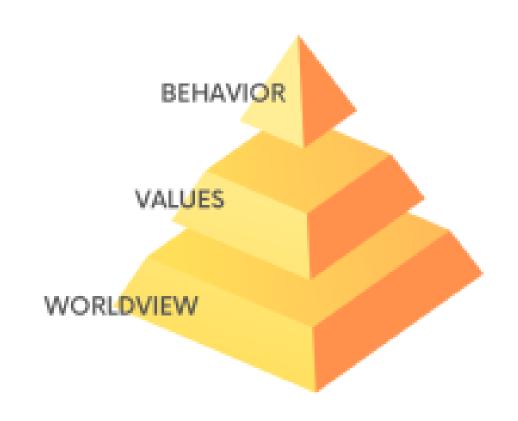
2. Christianity is a true and better story.



CLAIM #1: Everyone tells themselves a story about the world and our place in it.

Worldview:

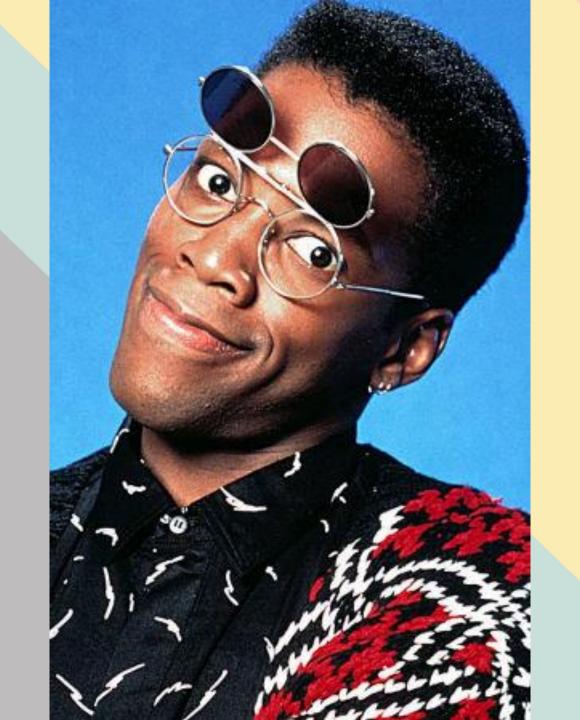
A lens through which you perceive the world, make sense of it, form values, and make choices.



"I can only answer the question, 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?"

- Alisdair MacIntyre





How do we know this is true?

1. History/Culture



"There have been societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories."

- Ursula Le Guin

How do we know this is true?

1. History/Culture

2. Science/Psychology



"Some [therapy] models give these cognitive/ emotional repertoires a technical name, such as 'narrative', 'schema', or 'core belief.' In ACT, we can freely use any of those terms just mentioned - but typically we use more common, everyday language, such as 'stories' or 'themes'."

- Dr. Russ Harris

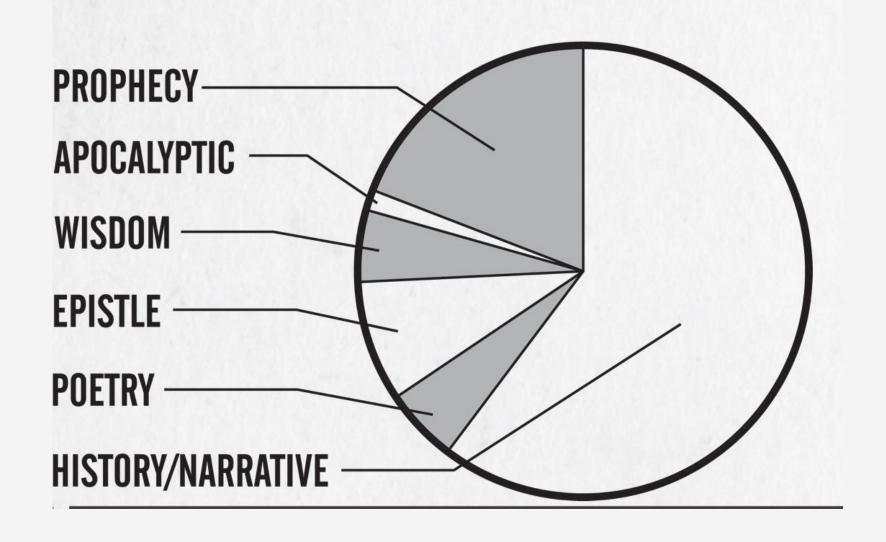
How do we know this is true?

1. History/Culture

2. Science/Psychology

3. Scripture

GENRES IN THE BIBLE



Which story do you believe? (Identify & Evaluate)

1. Look Inward

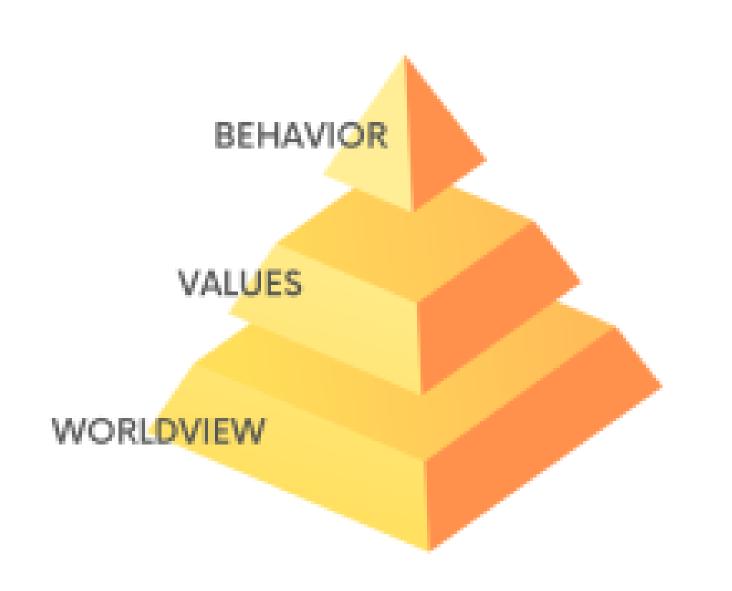
Reflection Questions

- 1. What are you ultimately seeking?
- 2. Who do you trust to deliver it?
- 3. How's that going for you?
- 4. How will it make you whole?

Which story do you believe? (Identify & Evaluate)

1. Look Inward

2. Look Under



Which story do you believe? (Identify & Evaluate)

1. Look Inward

2. Look Under

3. Look Outward

Super-Naturalism \ Naturalism \

Atheism
Secular Humanism
Scientism
Marxism

Agnosticism Deism

Judaism Christianity Islam Buddhism Hinduism Paganism



1. Why are we here?

2. What's wrong with us?

3. How do we fix it?

Which story do you believe? (Identify & Evaluate)

	Naturalism	Supernaturalism
1. Why are we here?	Accidental byproducts of natural processes.	Created by a supernatural force/being.
2. What's wrong with us?	Death.	Death.
3. How do we fix it?	We can't. Survive as long as possible.	Afterlife: heaven, resurrection, paradise, nirvana, moksha

Super-Naturalism \ Naturalism \

Atheism
Secular Humanism
Scientism
Marxism

Agnosticism
Deism
Enlightenment
Romanticism
Consumerism

Judaism Christianity Islam Buddhism Hinduism Paganism



"Enlightenment is man's emergence from his selfimposed immaturity...the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance...Dare to know! 'Have the courage to use your own understanding' is therefore the motto of the enlightenment."

- Immanuel Kant in What is the Enlightenment?

Which story do you believe? (Identify & Evaluate)

	Enlightenment	Romanticism	Consumerism
1. Why are we here?	To gain happiness through knowledge		
2. What's wrong with us?	Dependent ignorance		
3. How do we fix it?	Independent thought		

"Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of subjects nor in exact truth, but in a mode of feeling. They looked for it outside themselves, but it was only to be found within."

- Charles Baudelaire in *The*Salon of 1846



Which story do you believe? (Identify & Evaluate)

	Enlightenment	Romanticism	Consumerism
1. Why are we here?	To gain happiness through knowledge		To gain happiness by consuming things
2. What's wrong with us?	Dependent ignorance	Outside pressures to conform	Lack of choices and resources
3. How do we fix it?	Independent thought	Expressive individualism	More choices and resources

CLAIM #2: Christianity is a true and better story.

Super-Naturalism \ Naturalism \

Atheism
Secular Humanism
Scientism
Marxism

Agnosticism
Deism
Enlightenment
Romanticism
Consumerism

Judaism
Christianity
Islam
Buddhism
Hinduism
Paganism

The Christian Story

	Christianity	
1. Why are we here?	Created by God in love.	
2. What's wrong with us?	Death.	
3. How do we fix it?	We can't. But God did through Jesus' death & resurrection.	

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

CLAIM #2: Christianity is a true and better story.



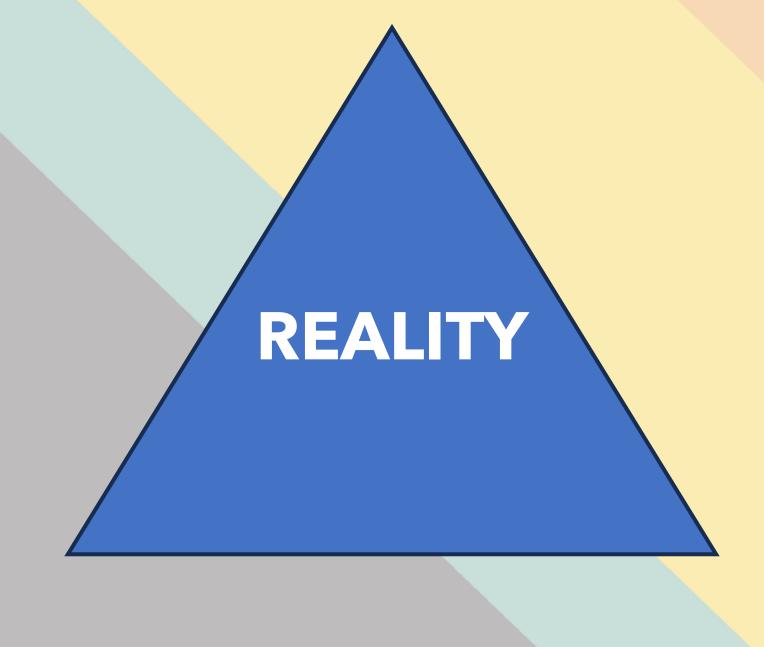
"Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it might be true. The cure for this is...

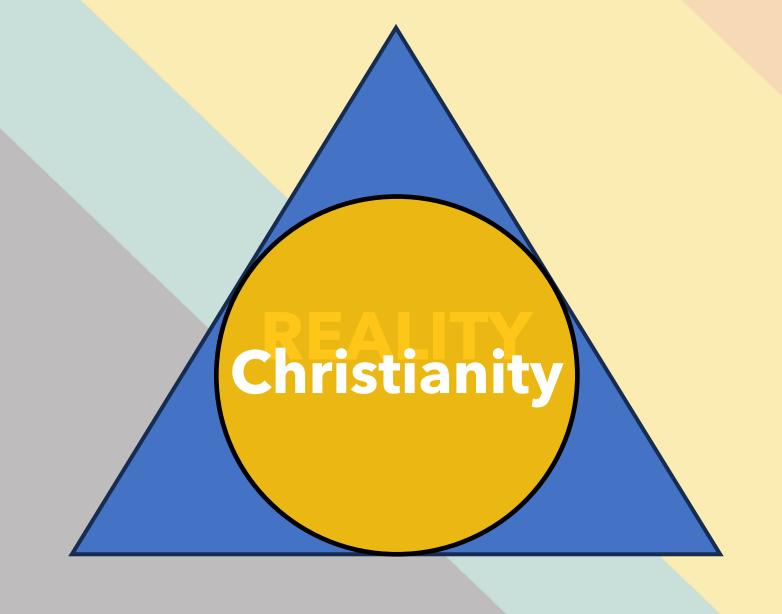
...First, to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect.

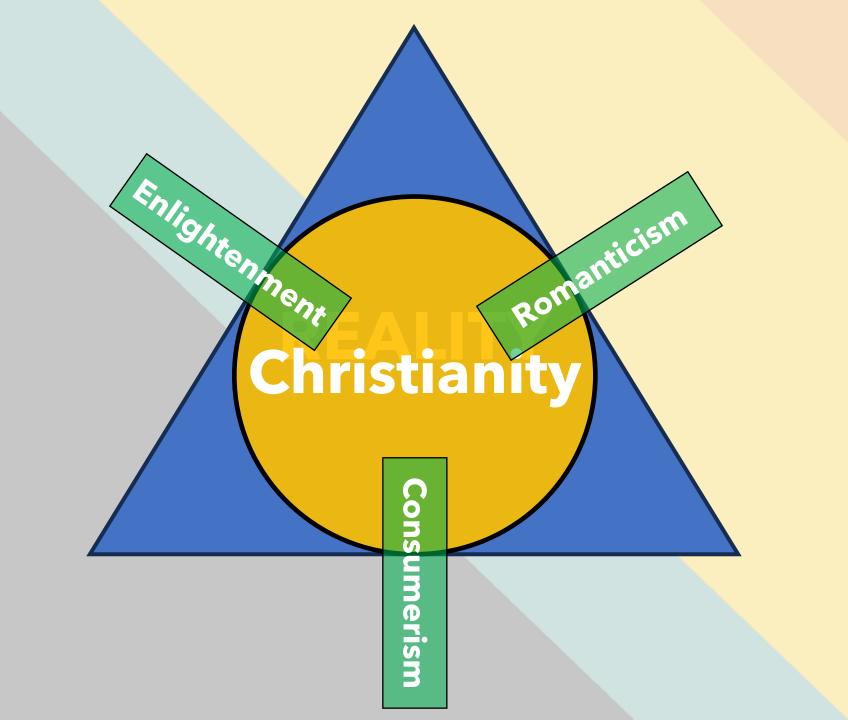
Next, make it attractive, make good men wish it were true.

And then, show that it is."

- Blaise Pascal in *Pensees*







Upcoming Classes...

Is Christianity a True & Better Story?

Oct. 16

Scientific Evidence & Objections **Nov. 20**

Moral Evidence & Objections

Jan. 15

Historical Evidence & Objections

"...The lesson I learned from my years with the **Muslim Brotherhood** was the power of a unifying story...Unless we offer something as meaningful, I fear the erosion of our civilization will continue. And fortunately, there is no need to look for some new-age concoction of medication and mindfulness. Christianity has it all."



Renew: Considering Christianity

Session 1: The Stories We Tell

ldview Definition:	Which story do you believe?
	1) Look Reflection Questions:
	2) Look
we know this claim is to	ue?
	3) Look
	_ <u> </u>

_	Naturalism	Supernaturalism
1. Why are		
we here?		
2. What's		
wrong		
with us?		
3. How do		
we fix it?		
,		Å.
1 Why are		
1. Why are		
we here?		
2. What's		
wrong		
with us?		
3. How do		
we fix it?		
We lik it.		
Claim #2:		
=		Christianity
4 14/1		Christianity
1. Why are we		
here?		
2. What's wrong		
with us?		
3. How do we		
fix it?		
		-

Q&A Session

Use the space provided below to take notes during the Question & Answer Session.

Weekly Reflection & Application Questions

The content from this class is a lot to process in one sitting. To help you think more deeply about these ideas and how to apply them to your life, consider answering the following reflection and application questions in the weeks prior to the next class.

Week 1:

- 1. Do you think you've spent an adequate amount of time and effort considering Christianity? Why or why not?
- 2. Which book/movie/TV show/song best captures the "big story" that you believe about the world and your place in it?
- 3. Answer the personal reflection questions from the lesson:
 - a. What are you ultimately seeking?
 - b. Who do you trust to deliver it?
 - c. How's that going for you?
 - d. How will it make you whole?

Week 2:

- 1. Think about a major decision you made recently or a memorable behavior you exhibited (positive or negative).
 - a. What does that decision/behavior reveal about what you value?
 - b. What do those values reveal about the story you are believing?
 - c. Did this decision/behavior align with what you say you believe?
- 2. Out of the three specific stories we focused on during the class (Enlightenment, Romanticism, Consumerism), which one do you think influences you the most? What is positive about this influence? What is negative?
- 3. When's the last time you can remember thinking about your own mortality? What do you think happens when you die? Does the way you're living align with that belief?

Week 3:

- 1. What has been your experience with Christianity? Would you describe that experience as generally positive or negative?
- 2. Which part of the Christian story do you find the most attractive or appealing? Which part do you find the most offensive or hard to accept?
- 3. Out of the 3 upcoming classes (Scientific, Moral, and Historical Evidence & Objections), which one are you most intrigued or excited about? Why?
- 4. Since the next class will discuss *scientific* evidence for and objections against Christianity, what is one question that you hope is answered during that teaching?

Resources

Books

- Making Sense of God Timothy Keller
- Reason for God Timothy Keller
- Why God Makes Sense in a World that Doesn't Gavin Ortlund
- Surprised by Doubt Joshua Chatraw & Jack Carson
- Miracles C.S. Lewis

Articles

- https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/apologetics-age-despair/
- https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/knowing-who-when/
- https://unherd.com/2023/11/why-i-am-now-a-christian/
- https://davidmays.org/BN/WilHidd.html
- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4408496/

Video/Audio

- Essentials of Apologetics, Lectures 1-6 Dr. Sean McDowell, BiblicalTraining.org
- Richard Dawkins Loves Cultural Christianity Dr. Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites
- The Inconsistency of Rhett's Critique of Christianity Dr. Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites
- <u>Dawkins vs. Ali: The Key Takeaway</u> Dr. Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites

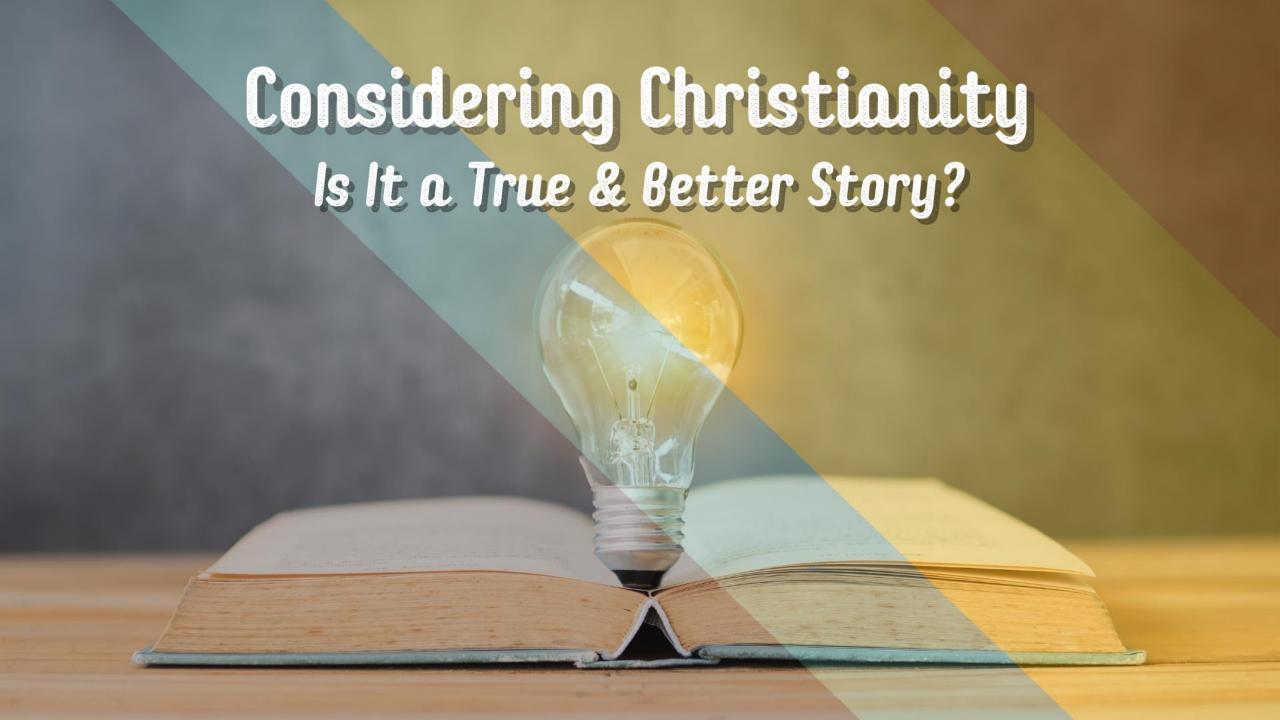
CONSIDERING CHRISTIANITY

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2 Claims

1. Everyone tells themselves a story about the world and our place in it.

2. Christianity is a true and better story.



2 Claims

1. Everyone tells themselves a story about the world and our place in it.

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The Christian Story

	Christianity
1. Why are we here?	Created by God in love.
2. What's wrong with us?	Death.
3. How do we fix it?	We can't. But God did through Jesus' death & resurrection.

EVIDENCE FOR THE CHRISTIAN STORY (Commending the Faith)

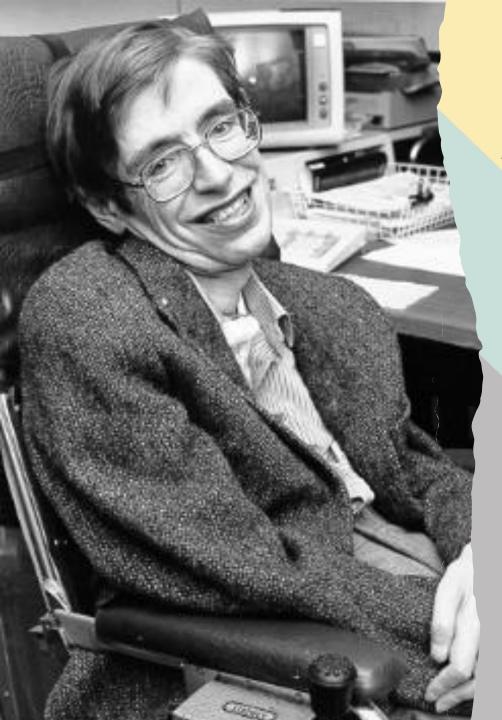
- 3 Physical Realities:
- 1) The universe had a definite beginning.

3 Non-Physical Realities:

"Many people do not like the idea that time has a beginning, probably because it smacks of divine intervention...There were therefore a number of attempts to avoid the conclusion that there had been a big bang."

> - Stephen Hawking in *A Brief History of Time*





"Even if there is only one possible unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe? The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe. Why does the universe go to the bother of existing?"

- Stephen Hawking in A Brief History of Time

3 Physical Realities:

- 1) The universe had a definite beginning.
- 2) The universe is finetuned for life.

3 Non-Physical Realities:





"A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question."

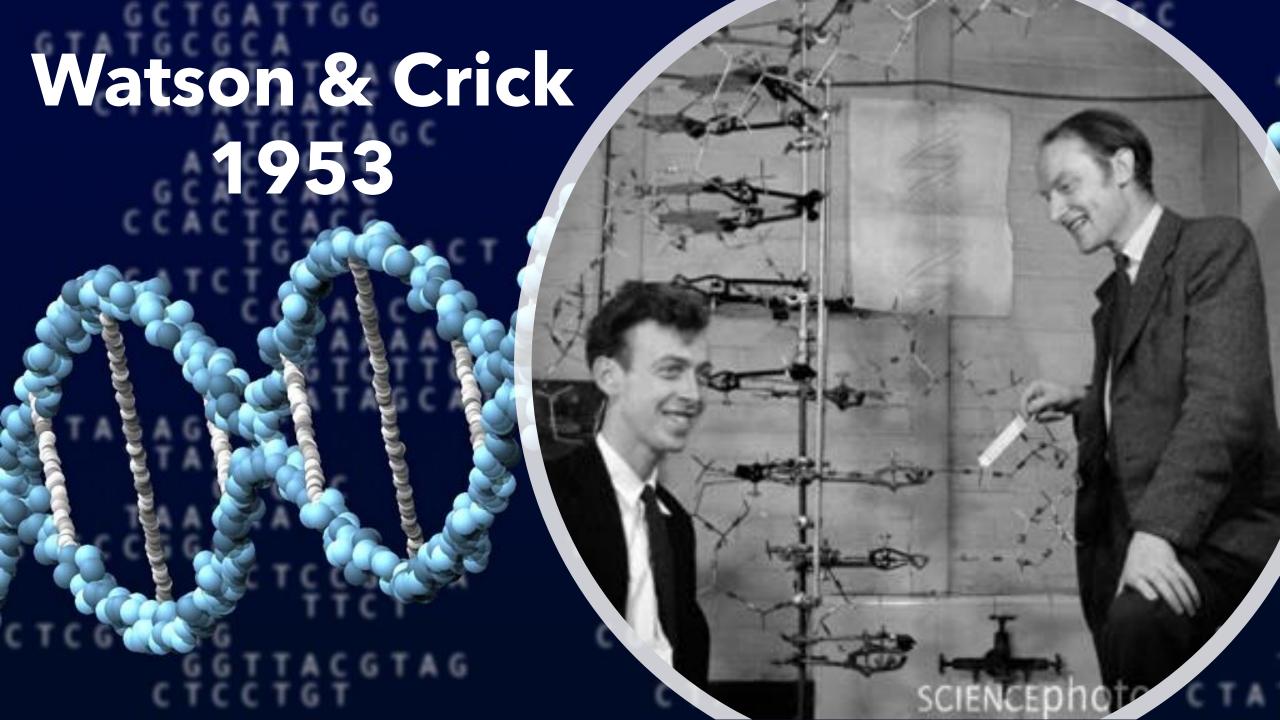
> - Fred Hoyle in *The Universe: Past* & *Present Reflections*



3 Physical Realities:

- 1) The universe had a definite beginning.
- 2) The universe is finetuned for life.
- 3) Life is extraordinarily complex.

3 Non-Physical Realities:





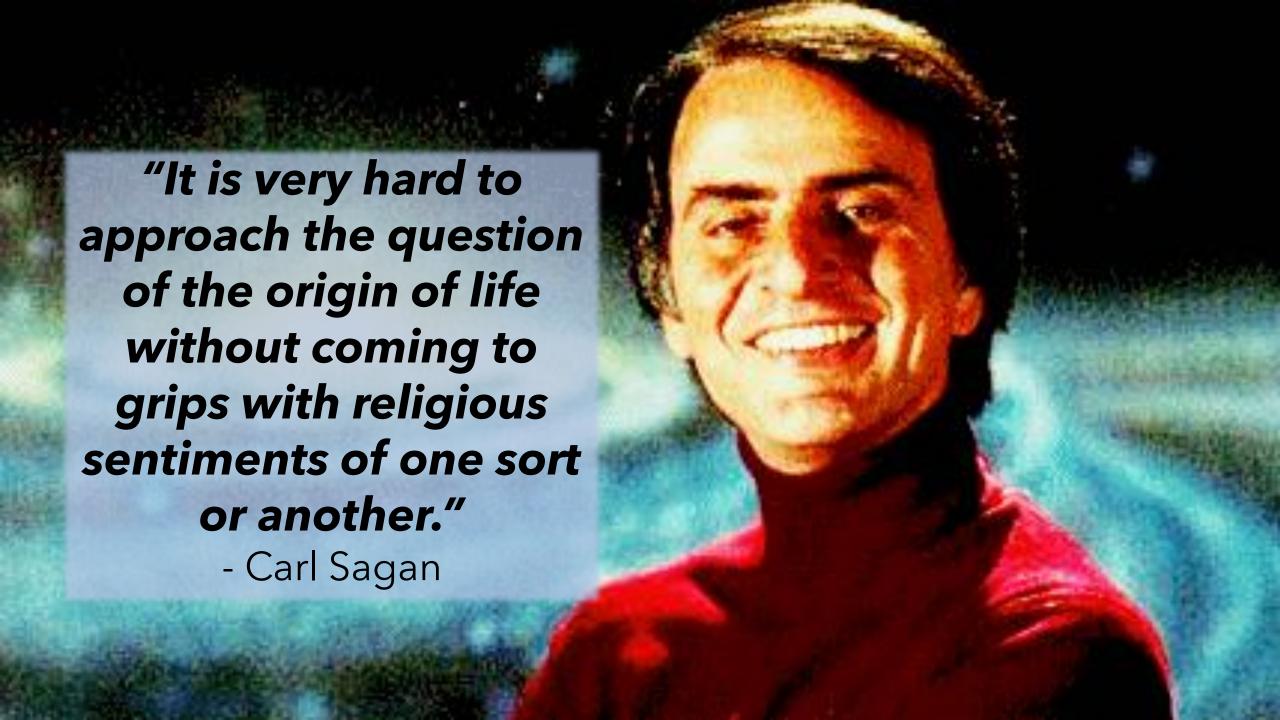
"The machine code of the genes is uncannily computer-like."

- Richard Dawkins in *River Out of Eden*

"DNA is like a computer program, but far, far more advanced than any software ever created."

- Bill Gates in The Road Ahead



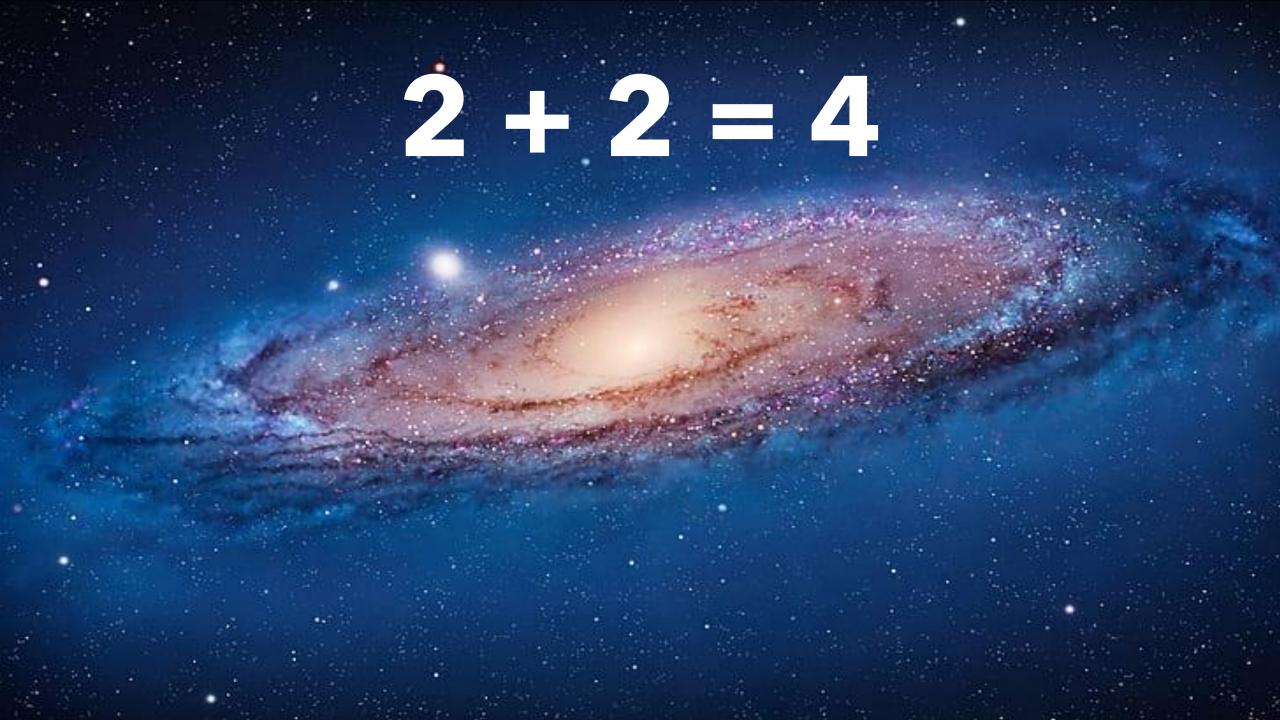


3 Physical Realities:

- 1) The universe had a definite beginning.
- 2) The universe is finetuned for life.
- 3) Life is extraordinarily complex.

3 Non-Physical Realities:

1) Math

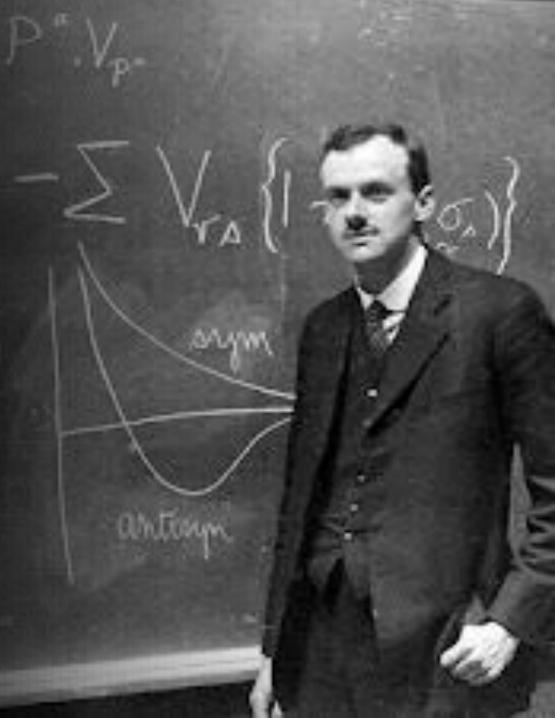


 $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$

"It seems to be one of the fundamental features of nature that fundamental physical laws are described in terms of a mathematical theory of great beauty and power, needing quite a high standard of mathematics for one to understand it...

...One could perhaps describe the situation by saying that God is a mathematician of a very high order, and He used very advanced mathematics in constructing the universe."

- Paul Dirac in The Scientific American



3 Physical Realities:

- 1) The universe had a definite beginning.
- 2) The universe is finetuned for life.
- 3) Life is extraordinarily complex.

3 Non-Physical Realities:

1) Math

2) Music



"You playing is the best argument I've ever heard for the existence of God, because I don't really believe a human alone can do this." - Steve Jobs



3 Physical Realities:

- 1) The universe had a definite beginning.
- 2) The universe is finetuned for life.
- 3) Life is extraordinarily complex.

3 Non-Physical Realities:

1) Math

2) Music

3) Love

"Suppose we have only dreamed or made up all those things - trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself...Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow."

- Puddleglum in The Silver Chair



OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN STORY (Defending the Faith)

3 Common Objections

1. Aren't faith and science opposed to each other?

Answer: No.

Scientific Revolution (1500-1700)





"Throughout history, there have been great scientists who are also very devout Christians. People like Isaac Newton, who wrote significantly more about his Christian faith than about science. You could also argue that the whole enterprise of looking for order and meaning in the universe presupposes that it's there - that it's not just random, purposeless, meaningless forces floating around with no origin."

- Rosalind Picard

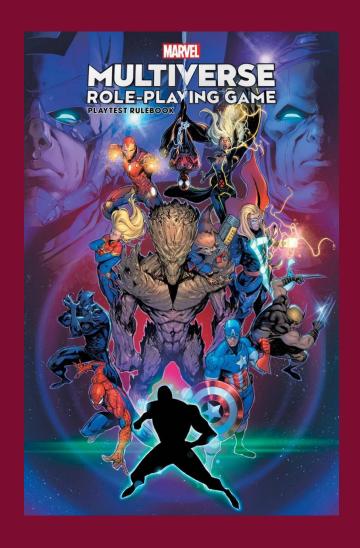
3 Common Objections

1. Aren't faith and science opposed to each other?

Answer: No.

2. Doesn't the multiverse explain the origins & fine-tuning of the universe?

Answer: No.









3 Common Objections

1. Aren't faith and science opposed to each other?

Answer: No.

2. Doesn't the multiverse explain the origins & fine-tuning of the universe?

Answer: No.

3. Doesn't the theory of evolution explain the origins of life?

Answer: No.

Want Modern Proof Of Evolution? Look At The Elephants Of Mozambique

Ivory poaching during 15 years of civil war fired up the process of natural selection.



Edited by Francesca Benson



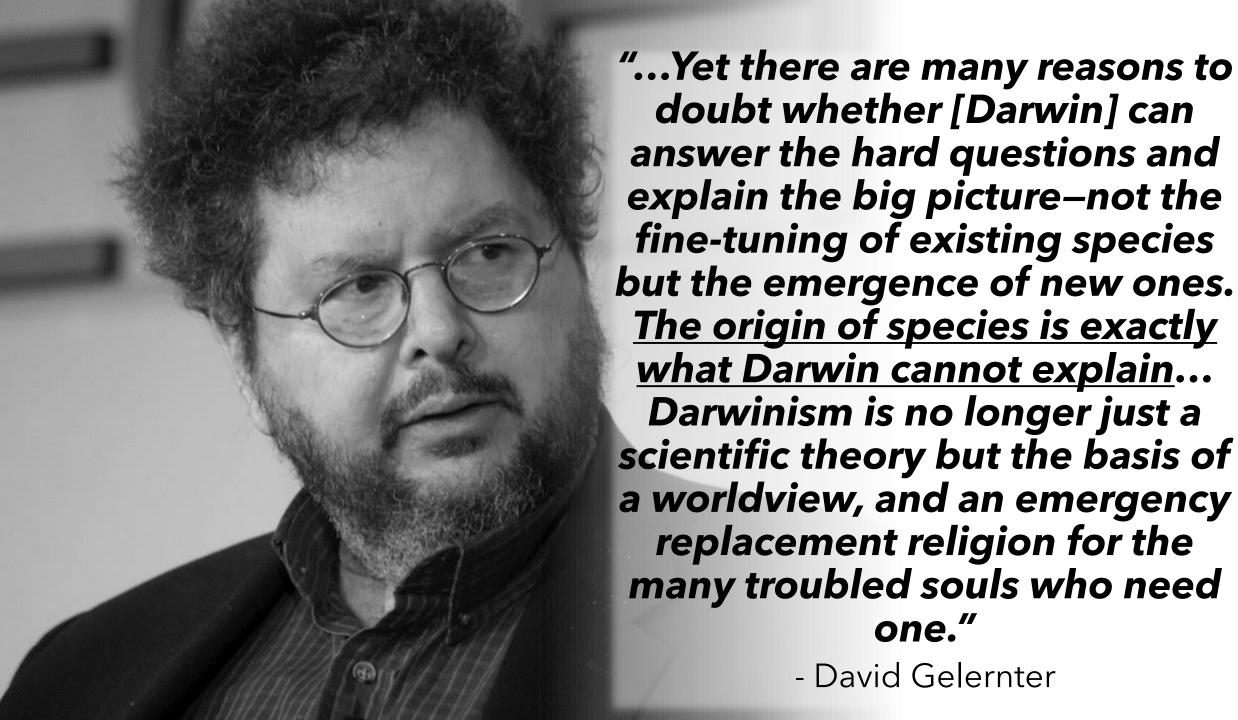




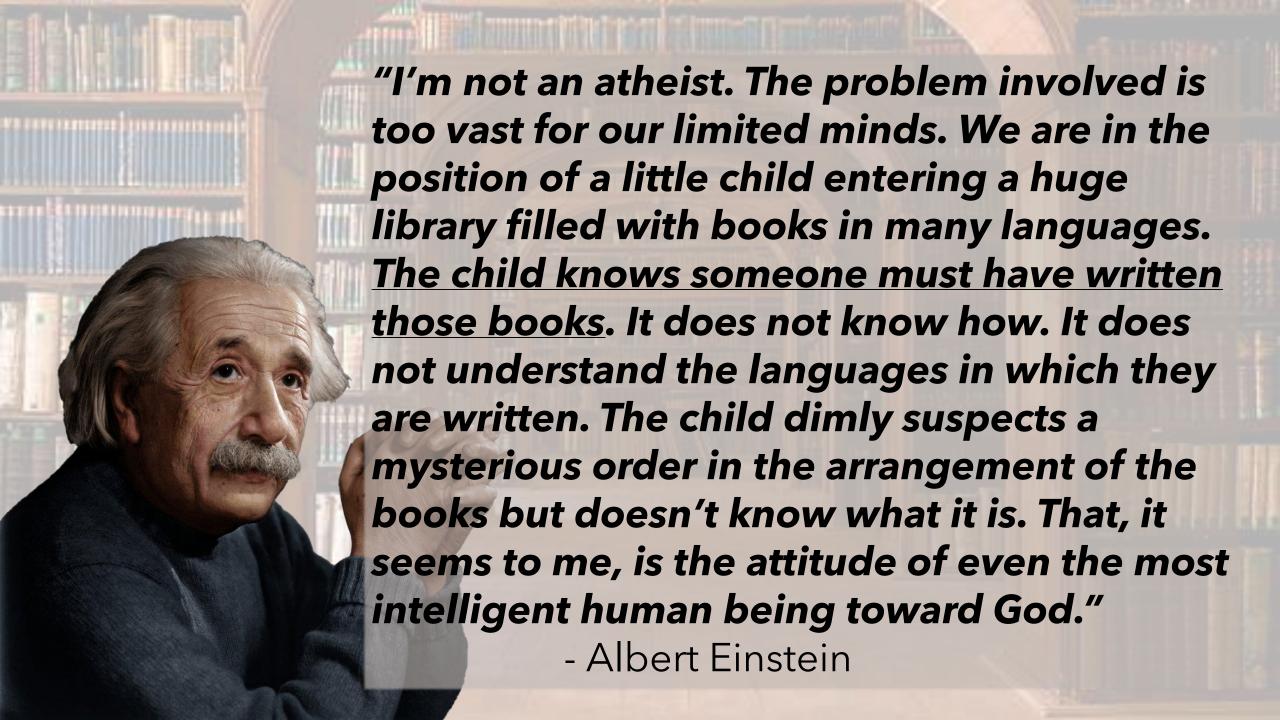
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CONCLUSION



Hebrews 1:1-3

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (3) He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Upcoming Classes...

Is Christianity a True & Better Story?

Oct. 16
Scientific
Evidence &
Objections

Nov. 20

Moral Evidence & Objections

Jan. 15

Historical Evidence & Objections

Renew: Considering Christianity

Session 2: Scientific Evidence & Objections

Part 1: Evidence For the Christian Story

6	
3	3
	_
(3)	3

Part 2: Objections Against the Christian Story

1)				
2)				
				
3)				
3)				
	So what's	the conclusi	on2	
	——————————————————————————————————————		011:	
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	:			

Q&A Session

Use the space provided below to take notes during the Question & Answer Session.

Weekly Reflection & Application Questions

The content from this class is a lot to process in one sitting. To help you think more deeply about these ideas and how to apply them to your life, consider answering the following reflection and application questions in the weeks prior to the next class.

Week 1:

- 1. Which of the 6 "undeniable realities" do you find most compelling as a pointer to God? Which do you find least compelling? Why?
- 2. Besides math, music, and love, can you think of any other non-physical realities that can't be satisfactorily explained by science alone?
- 3. Do you find the natural world around you enchanting and awe-inspiring? Why or why not? What can you do to help increase this sense of enchantment?

Week 2:

- 1. Which of the three common objections do you think is the most challenging for Christians to answer? Why?
- 2. Were you personally unpersuaded by any of the answers to the three common objections? If so, which one(s) and why?
- 3. Are there any other objections that you wish had been included in the teaching? If so, spend some time this week researching responses to these objections using https://reasons.org/ or https://www.discovery.org/id/.

Week 3:

- So, what's your conclusion? Do you think it makes sense to believe in a God who created everything?
 If not, what additional evidence would you need to persuade you?
- 2. Since the next class will discuss *moral* evidence for and objections against Christianity, what is one question that you hope is answered during that teaching?

Resources

Books

- <u>Reason for God</u> Timothy Keller
- Why God Makes Sense in a World that Doesn't Gavin Ortlund
- Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion Rebecca McLaughlin
- On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision William Lane Craig
- Surprised by Doubt Joshua Chatraw & Jack Carson
- Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World Tom Holland

Articles

- https://reasons.org/
- https://www.discovery.org/id/
- https://evolutionnews.org/2017/11/ids-top-six-the-fine-tuning-of-the-universe/
- https://www.discovery.org/a/17905/
- https://www.premierchristianity.com/interviews/professor-rosalind-picard-i-used-to-think-religious-people-had-thrown-their-brains-out-the-window/4359.article
- https://claremontreviewofbooks.com/giving-up-darwin/
- https://biologos.org/articles/creation-evolution-and-christian-laypeople¹

Video/Audio

- <u>Essentials of Apologetics, Lecture 9</u> Sean McDowell, BiblicalTraining.org
- Return of the God Hypothesis Short Videos Stephen Meyer
- 7 Days That Divide the World John Lennox
- Science Doesn't Explain What You Think It Does John Lennox
- <u>Fine Tuning is Simply a Good Argument</u> Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites
- <u>Can Math Prove God?</u> Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites
- <u>Does Music Prove God?</u> Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites

¹ This is the article referred to during the teaching that attempts to reconcile some aspects of evolutionary theory with Christianity.

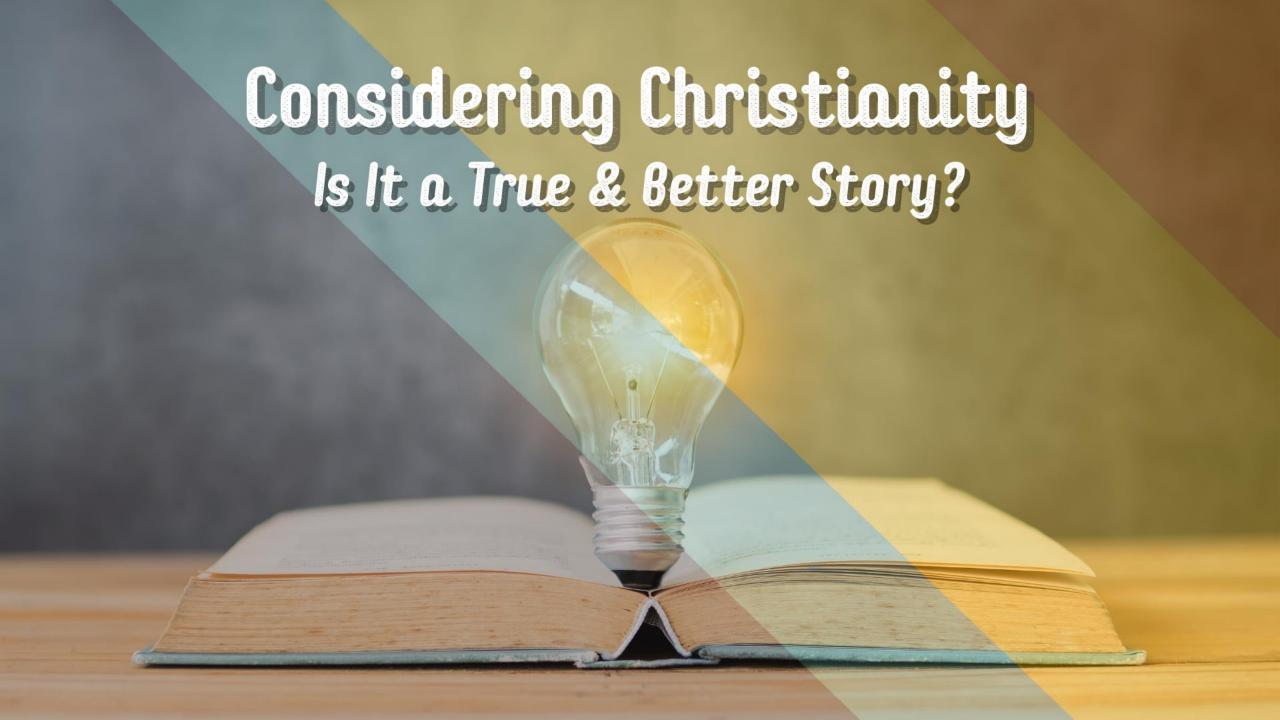
CONSIDERING CHRISTIANITY

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2 Claims

1. Everyone tells themselves a story about the world and our place in it.

2. Christianity is a true and better story.



2 Claims

1. Everyone tells themselves a story about the world and our place in it.

2. Christianity is a true and better story.

Christianity is a True & Better Story





A Provocative Question

Is the Holocaust morally wrong for all people at all times?





A Provocative Question

Is the Holocaust morally wrong for all people at all times?

A Moral Common Ground

The strong should protect the weak, not destroy them.

BUT WHY?

Which story makes the most sense?

Super-Naturalism \ Naturalism \

Atheism
Secular Humanism
Scientism
Marxism

Agnosticism
Deism
Enlightenment
Romanticism
Consumerism

Judaism Christianity Islam Buddhism Hinduism Paganism

The Moral STORY of Naturalism

Beginning: Accident <u>End</u>: Death

"That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins--all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand..."

- Bertrand Russell in A Free Man's Worship

The Moral STORY of Naturalism

Beginning: Accident Middle: Natural

Selection

<u>End</u>: Death

"Morality, or more strictly our belief in morality, is merely an adaptation put in place to further our reproductive ends...In an important sense, ethics as we understand it is an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate."

- Michael Ruse & E.O. Wilson in *The New* Scientist





"I don't quite know what good is, if it indeed exists. I'm quite suspicious of the concept. I think it might be another one of these unfortunately quite nihilistic evolutionary sort of illusions."

- Alex O'Connor



The Moral STORY of Naturalism

Beginning:

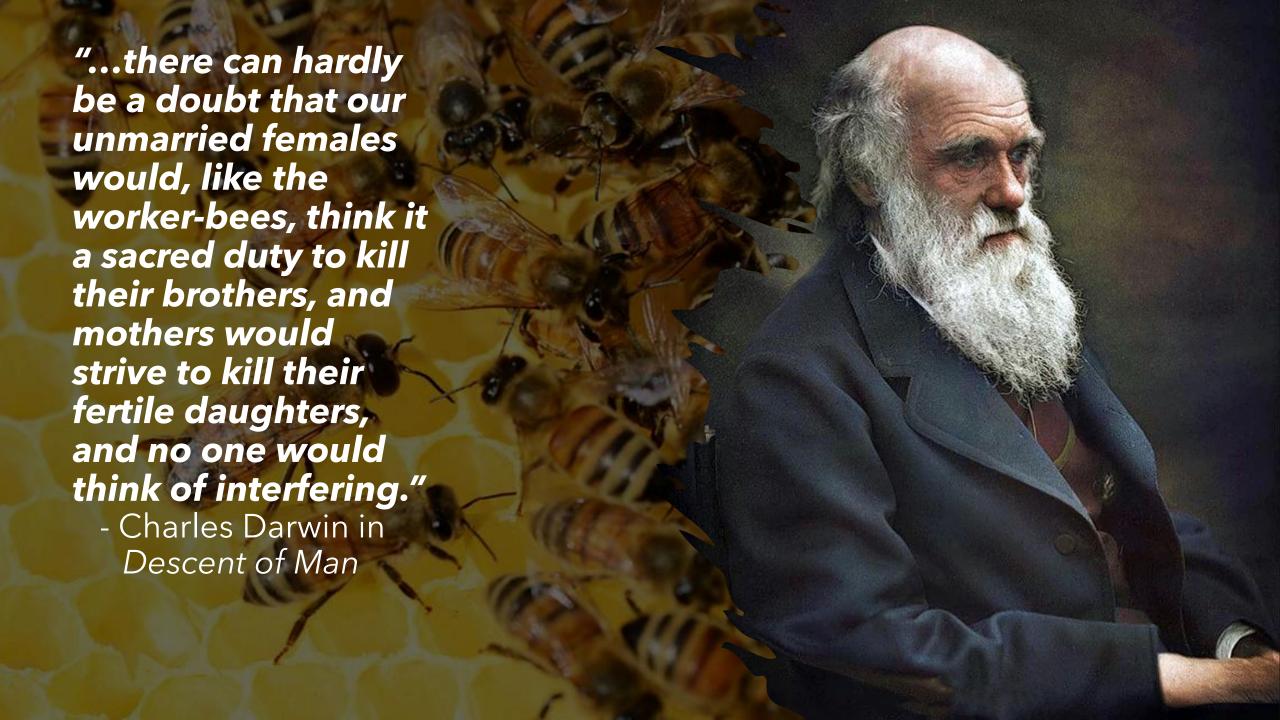
Accident

Middle:

Natural Selection End:

Death

Morality is a Trick



The Moral RESULTS of Naturalism

- What would it look like if people lived consistently in line with the story of naturalism?
 - > Look at 20th century dictatorships



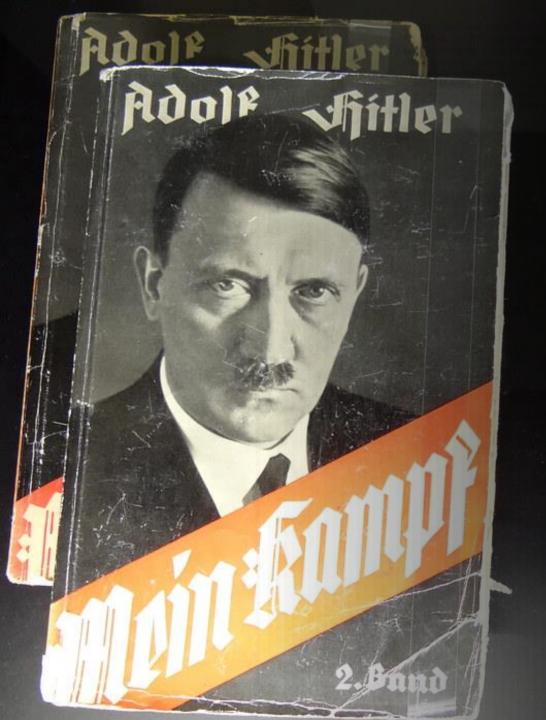




"Of all religions, secular and otherwise, that of Marxism has been by far the bloodiest - bloodier than the Catholic Inquisition, the various Catholic crusades, and the Thirty Years War between Catholics and Protestants...."

"...In total, Marxist regimes murdered nearly 110 million people from 1917 to 1987. For perspective on this incredible toll, note that all domestic and foreign wars during the 20th century killed around 35 million. That is...Marxism is more deadly than all the wars of the 20th century, including World Wars I and II, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars."

- R.J. Rummel in *The Killing Machine That Is Marxism*



"The stronger must dominate and not mate with the weaker...Only the born weakling can look upon this principle as cruel, and if he does so it is merely because he is of a feebler nature and narrower mind; for if such a law did not direct the process of evolution, then the higher development of organic life would not be conceivable at all."

- Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*

The Moral RESULTS of Naturalism

- What would it look like if people lived consistently in line with the story of naturalism?
 - > Look at 20th century dictatorships
 - The strong would dominate the weak.

The Moral STORY of Naturalism

Beginning:

Accident

Middle:

Natural Selection End:

Death

Morality is a Trick

Super-Naturalism \ Naturalism \

Atheism
Secular Humanism
Scientism
Marxism

Agnosticism
Deism
Enlightenment
Romanticism
Consumerism

Judaism
Christianity
Islam
Buddhism
Hinduism
Paganism

The Moral STORY of Christianity

Beginning:

Creation

Middle:

Supernatural Redemption End:

Life

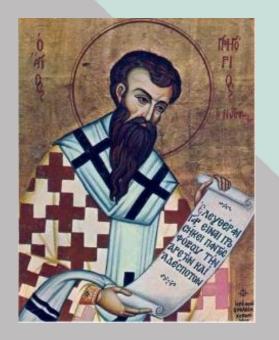
Morality is True

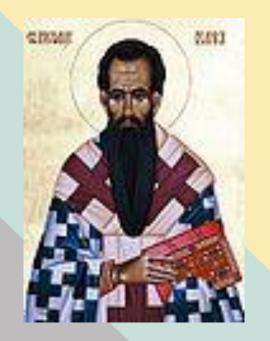
The Moral RESULTS of Christianity

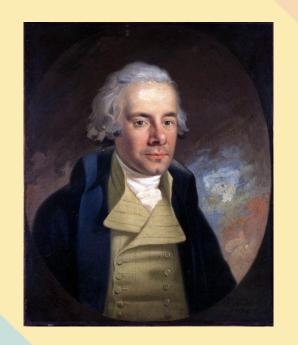
- What would it look like if people lived consistently in line with the story of Christianity?
 - Look at children, slaves, and women.

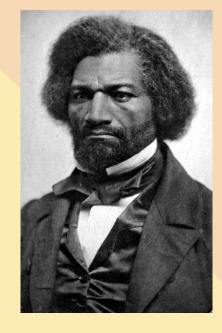


"At the time of Jesus' life...child abuse, as noted by one historian, was 'the crying vice of the Roman Empire.' Infanticide was common. Abandonment was common. Hippocrates, who lived about 400 years before Jesus, often wrote about how physicians should ethically interact with patients. But Hippocrates never mentioned children. That's because children were property, no different than slaves. But Jesus stood up for children, cared about them, when those around him typically didn't." - Dr. Paul Offit in Why I Wrote This Book



















"The human body was not an object, not a commodity to be used by the rich and powerful as and when they pleased. 2000 years of Christian sexual morality had resulted in men as well as women widely taking this for granted. Had it not, then #MeToo would have had no force."

> - Tom Holland in Dominion



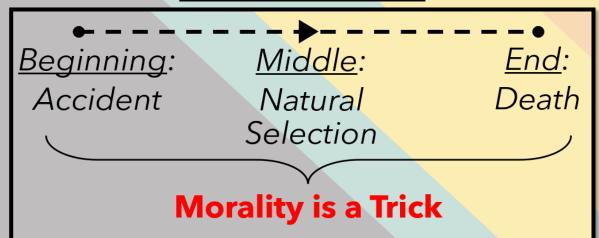
"Crucifixion was not merely a punishment. It was a means of achieving dominance...Terror of power was the index of power. That was how it had always been and always would be. It was the way of the world. For 2000 years, though, Christians have disputed this. Many of them, over the course of this time, have themselves become agents of terror. They have put the weak in their shadow; they have brought suffering, and persecution, and slavery in their wake. Yet the standards by which they stand condemned for this are themselves Christian... 'God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.' This is the myth that we in the West still persist in clinging to."

- Tom Holland in Dominion

The Moral RESULTS of Christianity

- What would it look like if people lived <u>consistently</u> in line with the story of Christianity?
 - Look at 1st century children, slaves, and women.
 - >The strong would protect the weak.

Naturalism

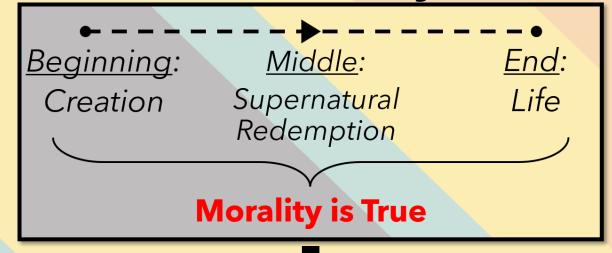






The Strong Dominate the Weak

Christianity



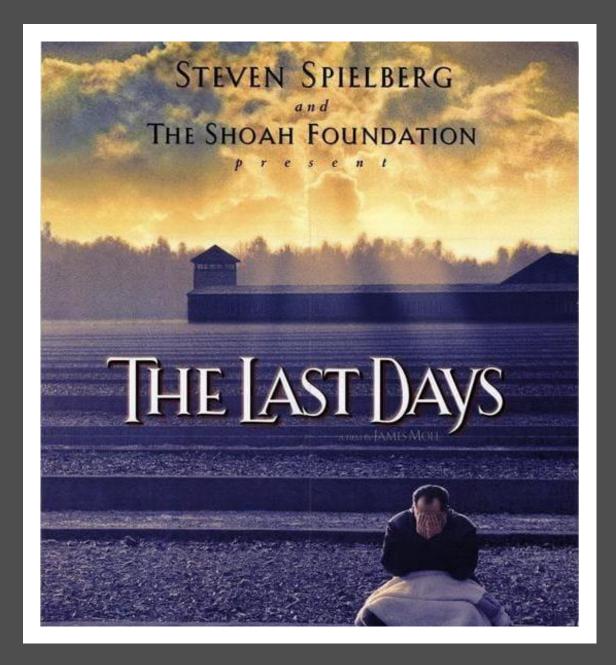
Elevation of Children, Slaves & Women



The Strong Protect the Weak

The BIG Objection

 Why would a good God allow evil – like the Holocaust?





- Why would a good God allow evil like the Holocaust?
 - o I don't know...but I don't like the alternative

- Why would a good God allow evil like the Holocaust?
 - o I don't know...but I don't like the alternative
- What Christianity does offer:
 - o Help for the Present

Frodo: You've left out one of the chief characters - Samwise the Brave. I want to hear more about Sam...Frodo wouldn't have got far without Sam.

Sam: Now Mr. Frodo, you shouldn't make fun; I was being serious.

Frodo: So was I.



- Why would a good God allow evil like the Holocaust?
 - I don't know...but I don't like the alternative
- What Christianity does offer:
 - o Help for the Present
 - Hope for the Future

"I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage, like the despicable fabrication of the impotent and infinitely small Euclidean mind of man, that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, of all the blood that they've shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened."

- Fyodor Dostoevsky in The Brothers Karamazov



Revelation 21:4

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

One more class...

Is Christianity a True & Better Story?

Oct. 16
Scientific
Evidence &
Objections

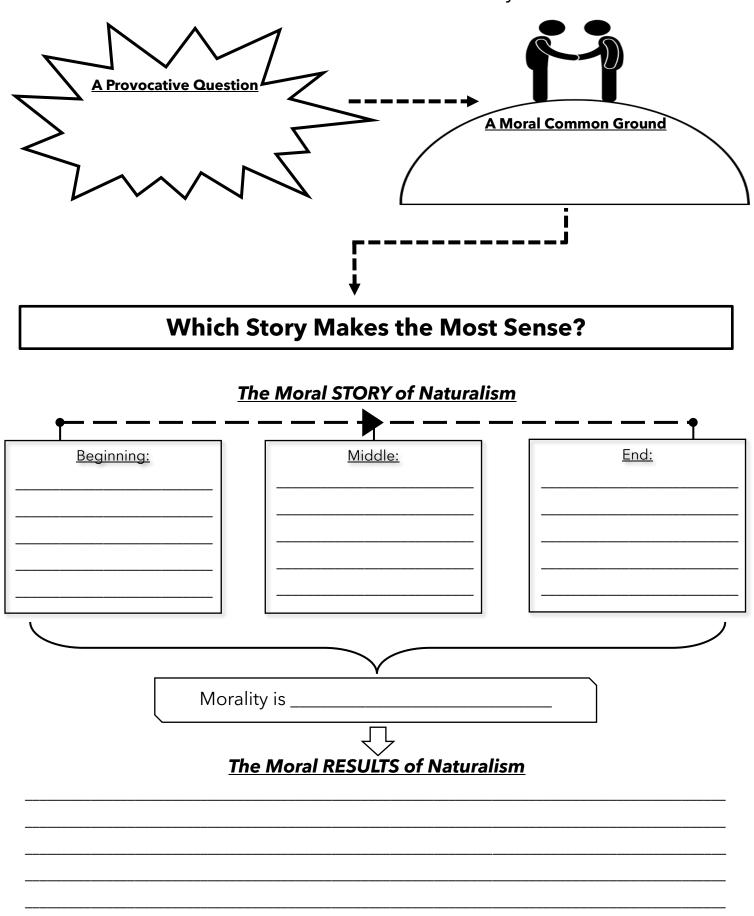
Nov. 20

Moral
Evidence & Objections

Jan. 15
Historical
Evidence &
Objections

Renew: Considering Christianity

Session 3: Moral Evidence & Objections



<u>1</u>	ne Moral STORY of Christiani	<u>ity</u>
Beginning:	<u>Middle:</u>	<u>End:</u>
	lity is ne Moral RESULTS of Christian	nity
<u></u>	e Moral Resolis of Christian	<u></u>
	The BIG Objection	
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Q&A Session

Use the space provided below to take notes during the Question & Answer Session.					

Weekly Reflection & Application Questions

The content from this class is a lot to process in one sitting. To help you think more deeply about these ideas and how to apply them to your life, consider answering the following reflection and application questions in the weeks prior to the next class.

Week 1:

- 1. Can you think of any other moral beliefs that represent a "common ground" between Christians and most non-Christians in our culture?
- 2. Think about a recent time that someone treated you or someone you love poorly. How did it make you feel? Which of the two stories we discussed in the class best explains and satisfies that feeling?
- 3. Read Romans 2:14-16. Do people need God's Law (i.e. Scripture) to have a general knowledge of what's right and wrong? Why or why not?

Week 2:

- 1. Some people who believe in the naturalistic story argue that the main reason we should live moral lives is not because moral truths actually exist, but because it simply leads to the wellbeing of individuals and society. For them, wellbeing is the ultimate standard of what is good and right.
 - a. How would you define wellbeing?
 - b. Why do you define it that way?
 - c. Do you think it's possible that other people/groups have different definitions?
 - d. Who should get to decide which definition a society uses?
- 2. During the class, we discussed how Christianity elevated children, slaves, and women. Scripture also calls followers of Jesus to love, protect, and help other "weaker" segments of society, like the poor, the immigrant, the unhealthy, and the imprisoned. Take some time this week to read the following passages about these groups of people: Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Luke 14:12-14; Matthew 25:31-46
 - **a.** How does your attitude/actions towards these vulnerable groups of people compare to the way Scripture talks about them? Does anything need to change?

Week 3:

- 1. The "problem of evil" isn't just theoretical; it's very personal and emotional. Have you (or someone you know) wrestled with the question of why a good God would allow so much evil? What conclusion have you (or they) arrived at? Did you find any of the "answers" from tonight's class helpful?
- 2. One of the unique truths of the Christian story is that the God who made us can also sympathize with us because he became a human and suffered with us. Read Hebrews 4:15-16.
 - a. Think about the last time you experienced suffering (maybe even right now). How do you think Jesus is able to sympathize with this specific suffering?
 - b. Consider praying and asking him to help you.
- 3. At the end of the class, we read an excerpt from *The Brothers Karamazov* that painted a beautiful picture of God's justice and restoration at the end of history. Can you think of any other books or movies that also paint a beautiful picture of justice and restoration? Why do you think those kinds of stories move us so much?
- 4. Since the next class will discuss *historical* evidence for and objections against Christianity, what is one question that you hope is answered during that teaching?

Resources

Books

- Reason for God Timothy Keller
- Why God Makes Sense in a World that Doesn't Gavin Ortlund
- Mere Christianity, Book One C.S. Lewis
- Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion Rebecca McLaughlin
- On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision William Lane Craig
- Surprised by Doubt Joshua Chatraw & Jack Carson
- Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World Tom Holland

Articles

- https://www.gotquestions.org/moral-argument.html
- https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jesus-made-moral-world/
- https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/3-ways-movies-are-searching-for-the-gospel/
- https://theopolisinstitute.com/conversations/has-christianity-been-good-for-women/# ftnref16
- https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/is-bible-pro-slavery/
- https://www.exploregod.com/articles/how-to-cope-with-pain-and-suffering
- https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/problem-of-evil-is-problem-for-everyone/

Video/Audio

- The Moral Argument William Lane Craig
- Essentials of Apologetics, Lecture 7 Sean McDowell, BiblicalTraining.org
- The Moral Argument Still Works Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites
- What If We're Wrong About Christianity's Impact? Glenn Scrivener, Speak Life
- Is Morality Better Explained by God or Science? Sean McDowell & Michael Shermer
- How Do We Climb Rights Mountain? Glenn Scrivener, Speak Life
- The Conquest of Canaan: Genocide or Just Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites
- Slavery in the Bible: Answering Atheist Critiques Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites

CONSIDERING CHRISTIANITY

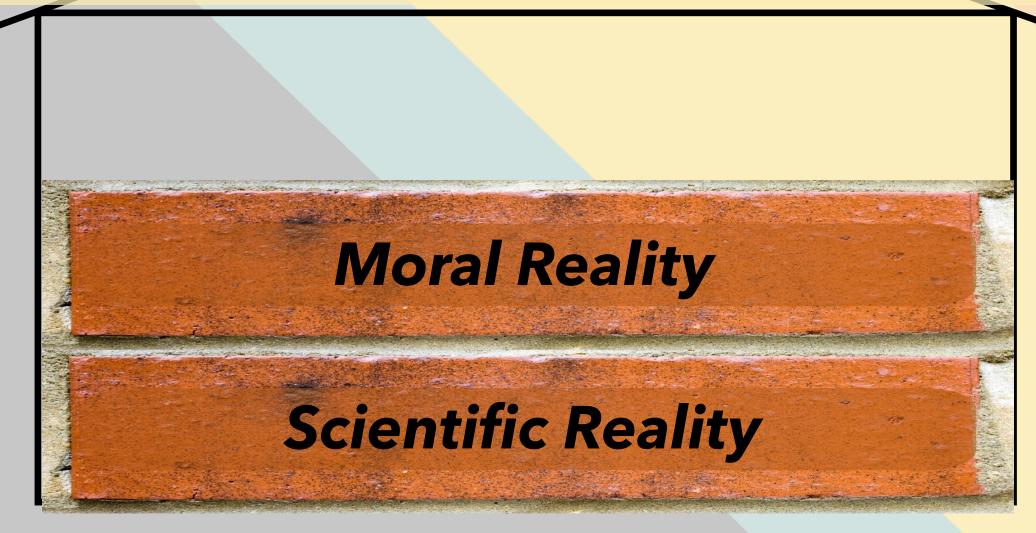
WelcomeToTheTable.church/renew

2 Claims

1. Everyone tells themselves a story about the world and our place in it.

2. Christianity is a true and better story.

Christianity is a True & Better Story



The Christian Story

	Christianity			
1. Why are we here?	Created by God in love.			
2. What's wrong with us?	Death.			
3. How do we fix it?	We can't. But God did through Jesus' death & resurrection.			

Christianity is a True & Better Story



3 Historical Statements

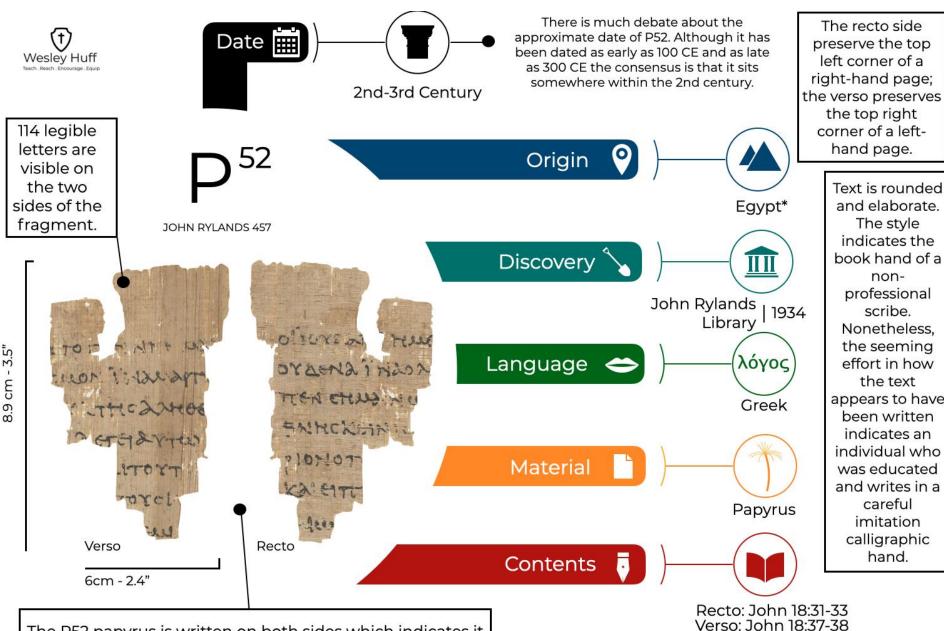
- 1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.
 - o Authentic
 - o Accurate

3 Historical Statements

1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.

- o Authentic
 - Transmission multiple people & places
 - Preservation more and earlier ancient manuscripts than any other ancient document

NAME	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST MANUSCRIPT	TIME GAP	# OF MANUSCRIPTS
Herodotus' History	480-425 BC	c. AD 900s	1350 years	109
Livy's History of Rome	59 BC - AD 17	c. AD 400s	400 years	150
Pliny the Elder's Natural History	AD 49-79	c. AD 400s	400 years	200
Homer's Iliad	800 BC	c. 400 BC	400 years	1757
New Testament	AD 50-100	c. AD 130	40 years	5795



The recto side preserve the top left corner of a right-hand page; the verso preserves the top right corner of a lefthand page.

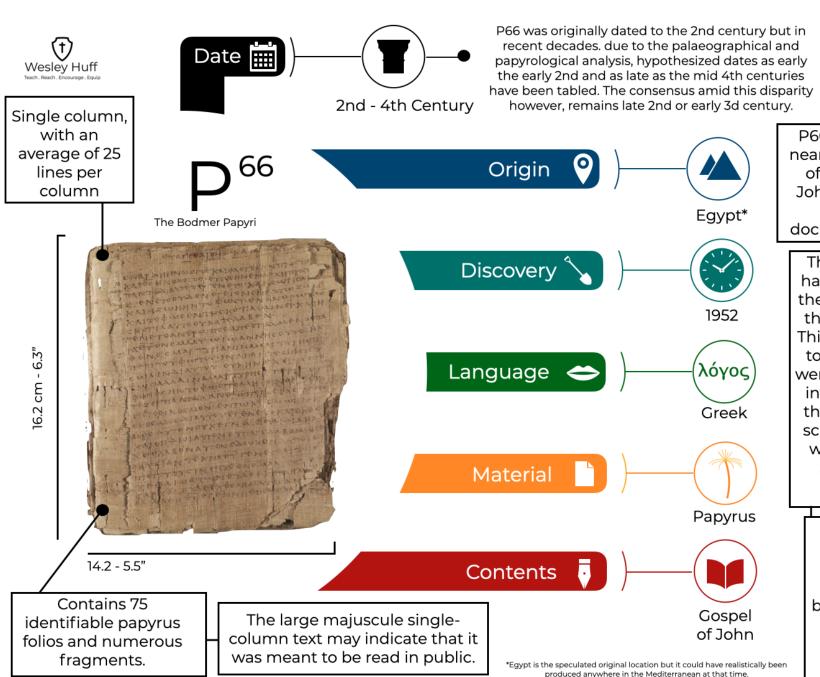
> and elaborate. The style indicates the book hand of a nonprofessional scribe. Nonetheless. the seeming effort in how the text appears to have been written indicates an individual who was educated and writes in a careful imitation calligraphic hand.

TANNA THAN PROCEDUTY TANPWENDE HABENOYNHANINEICTOMPAITW ELAATOC KALE WNHCENTONIN

If the codex from which P52 originates contained the entire text of the Gospel of John, it would have constituted a single quire book of around 130 pages (33 large folded papyrus sheets written on both sides); measuring approximately 21 by 16 cm when closed. This could have been as many as 576 pages in total.

The P52 papyrus is written on both sides which indicates it originally came from a codex and not a scroll

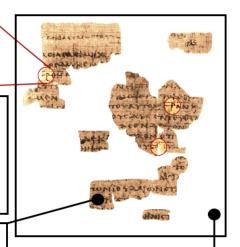
*Egypt, and maybe even Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, is the speculated original location but it could have realistically been produced anywhere in the Mediterranean at that time.



P66 is our earliest near complete copy of the Gospel of John. About 2/3 of the original document remains.

There are three hands present in the production of the manuscript. This has led some to believe there were three scribes involved, others that the original scribe is the one who made the subsequent corrections.

Several of the verses in Ch.13 were marked heavily with breathing marks, indicating a lectionary purpose.



The staurogram symbol was used by early New Testament scribes when writing about Christ's death, often substituting staurograms in place of the words "cross" and "crucifixion." This was done by taking the Greek letter tau (τ), and the letter (p), combining them to create the final pictogram. In the above picture you can see a number of staurograms taken from the text of John 19:15-20 of P66. There are 10 staurograms within P66.



- 15"

EJ

א is made up of over 400 large leaves of parchment. It could have taken as many as 360 sheep to produce.

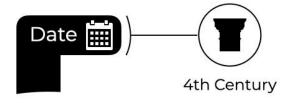
34cm - 13.3"

There appears to be at least 2

(debatably 3) scribes and as

many as 7 possible correctors

involved in the state of x, as we_



Along with Codex Vaticanus, א is considered one of the most valuable Greek manuscripts of the Bible in existence.

Quality parchment relies on the selection of good skins unblemished by flaws. The colour of the wool also reflects the final surface of the parchment. White sheep or calves and goats will tend to produce white

parchment, whereas animals with darker coats will produce parchment showing shadowy or brown patterns.

отгоесьяненс

ECTINONIAPATE

CTIACHOOCTAPH

MATATOYOTAXASI

OYTAPEKME IPOY

AIADCITOLINA MOTATIA TAGHTATIO

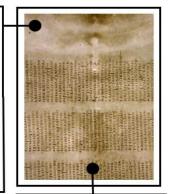
YNKAITIANTAKE

ACOKENENTHXEL

PALIOLOHICLEA

HOHOMOHO

JEICTON THEXE



Detail here reveals a skeletal parchment feature on Ouire 41. folio 4 recto. The image is rotated 90 degrees to the right.

א carries on patterns of textual features of earlier Christian manuscripts. Nomina Sacra, ekthesis, titles, paragraphoi, etc. are all present in x and manuscripts from centuries earlier.



0

CODEX SINAITICUS

(**א**)





Language



λόγος

Even though the text of x is Alexandrian, the first 8 chapters of John's Gospel in it are Western in their text type.*

Material

Contents



Parchment

world, however, the majority of the extant manuscript is held in the

have it today. Text is Alexandrian and written in scripta continua majuscule. display.

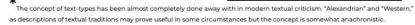
Parts of x are scattered across four libraries in the British Library in London, where it is on public

Large sections of the beginning books of the OT are missing. However, it is very confidently assumed that the codex originally contained them.

Half of the OT LXX + Deuterocanonical Books. all of the NT + The Shepherd of Hermes & Epistle of Barnabas

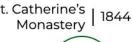
א exemplifies a unique column format and a clear script like that of high quality book rolls of the Roman Imperial peak. Below you can see a section of the text of Hebrews from א on the top and Hawara Homer (2nd century) on the bottom.







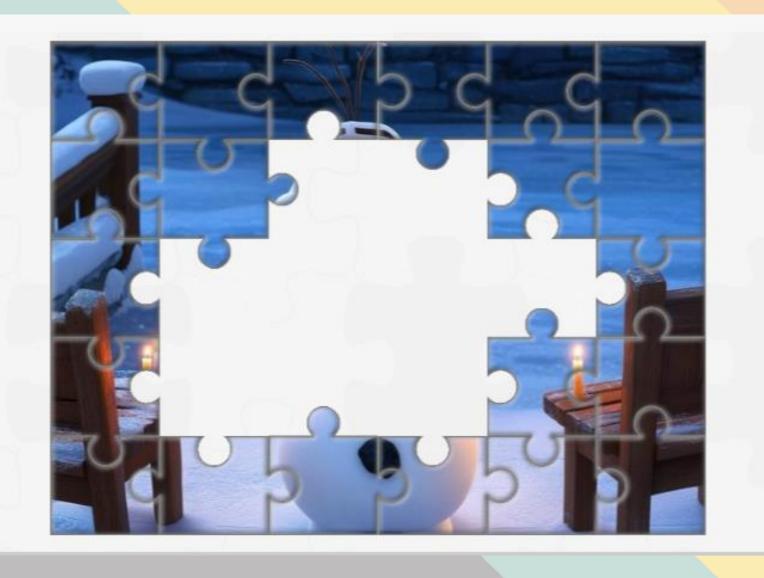


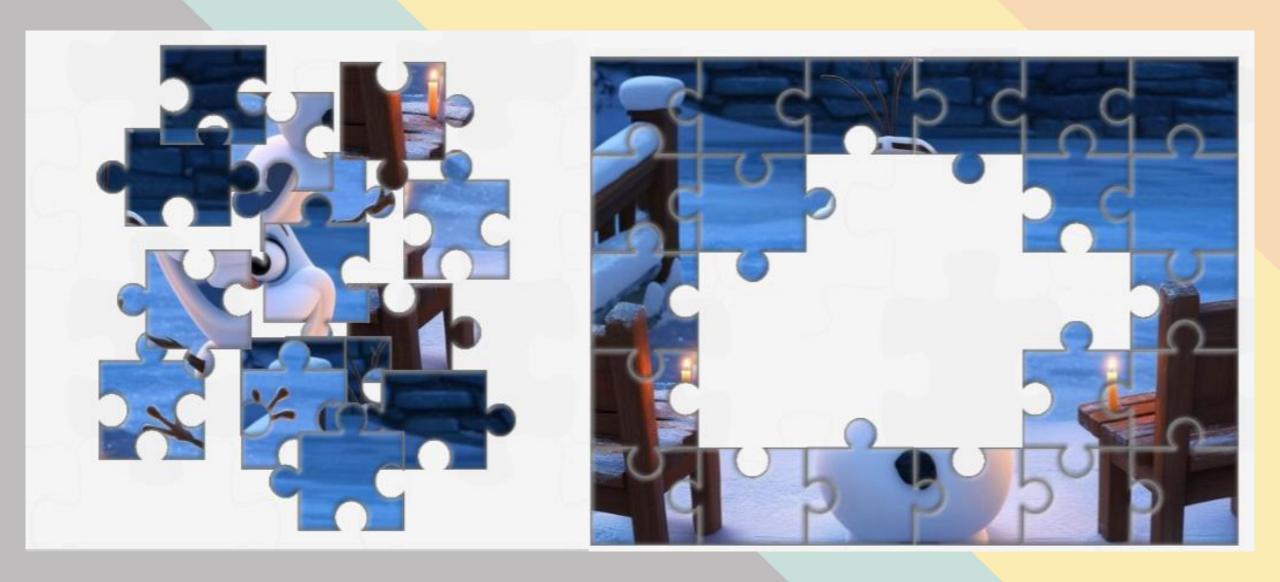


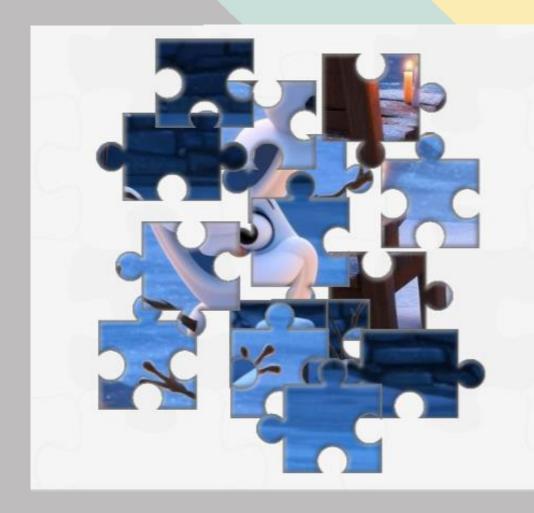










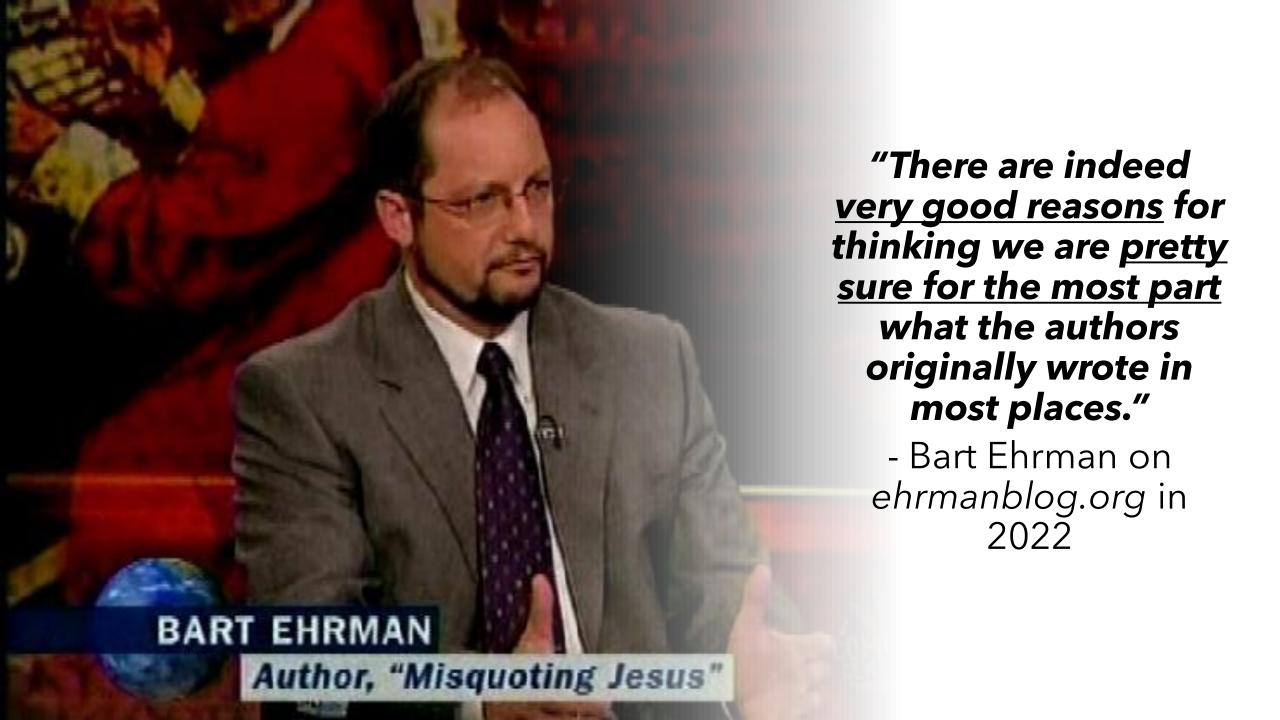






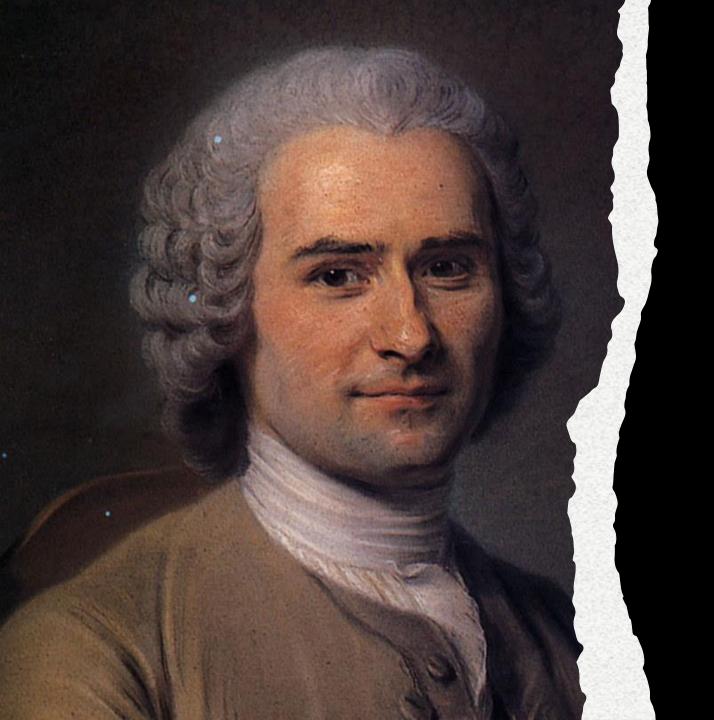
"The position I argue for in 'Misquoting Jesus' does not actually stand at odds with [the] position that the essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament."

- Bart Ehrman in Misquoting Jesus



1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.

- o Authentic
 - Transmission multiple people & places
 - Preservation more and earlier ancient manuscripts than any other ancient document
- o <u>Accurate</u>
 - Historical fit
 - Independent, early sources
 - Embarrassment



"Shall we say that the gospel story is the work of the imagination? My friend, such things are not imagined; and the doings of Socrates, which no one doubts, are less well attested than those of Jesus Christ...the gospel indeed contains characters so great, so striking, so entirely inimitable, that their invention would be more astonishing than their hero."

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Emile*

- 1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.
- 2. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God.
 - o Mark 2:1-12

Mark 2:10-12

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— (11) "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." (12) And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

- 1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.
- 2. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God.
 - o Mark 2:1-12 Jesus claims authority to forgive sins
 - o Mark 14:53-65

Mark 14:62-64

And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (63) And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? (64) You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving

- 1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.
- 2. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God.
 - o Mark 2:1-12 Jesus claims authority to forgive sins
 - o Mark 14:53-65 Jesus says he will share God's throne
 - o Philippians 2:6-11

Philippians 2:6

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

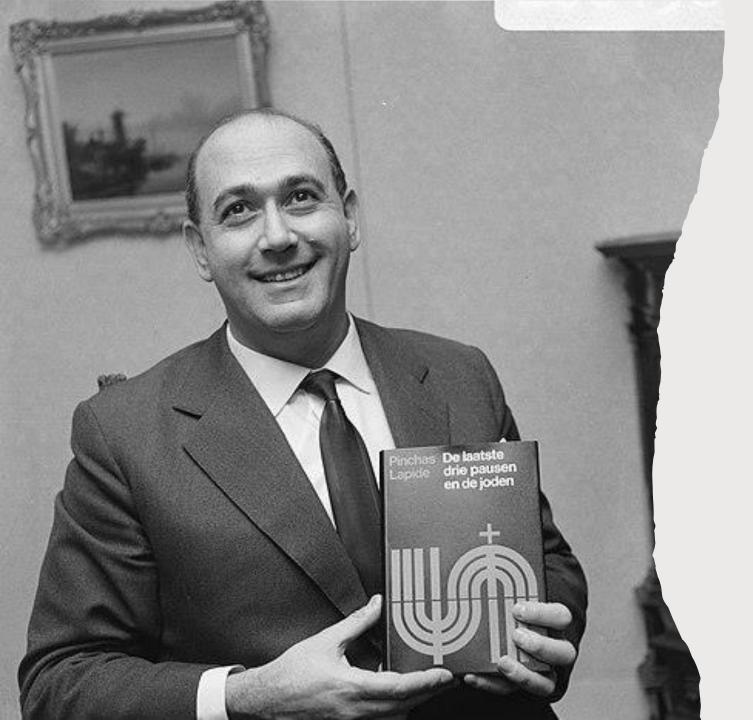
- 1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.
- 2. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God.
 - o Mark 2:1-12 Jesus claims authority to forgive sins
 - o Mark 14:53-65 Jesus says he will share God's throne
 - o Philip. 2:6-11 Earliest docs refer to Christ as God

"The time between the death of Jesus and the fully developed Christology which we find in the earliest Christian documents...is so short that the development which takes place within it can only be called amazing."

- Martin Hengel in *Christology & NT Chronology*



- 1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.
- 2. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God.
- 3. Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead.
 - Eyewitness encounters
 - o Empty tomb
 - o Extreme Conversion
 - Executions



"I accept the resurrection of Easter Sunday not as an invention of the community of disciples, but as a historical event."

 Pinchas Lapide in The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective

- 1. The NT books are historically reliable documents.
- 2. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God.
- 3. Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead.

But reliable history can't contain miracles!

- ☐ That's a belief. Why do you believe that?
 - ☐ Re-consider the previous classes.

Why does this matter?

1. It's remarkable evidence that Jesus is God and really did die to save us.

	Naturalism	Supernaturalism
1. Why are we here?	Accidental byproducts of natural processes.	Created by a supernatural force/being.
2. What's wrong with us?		Death.
3. How do we fix it?	We can't. Survive as long as possible. Life After After	Life after death.

Why does this matter?

1. It's remarkable evidence that Jesus is God and really did die to save us.

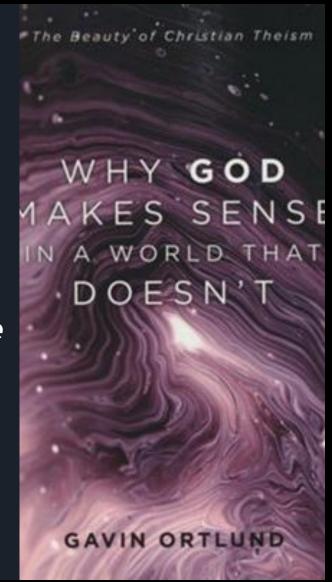
2. It's the most unique, powerful, and satisfying answer to death.

1 Corinthians 15:20-54

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (24) Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy to be destroyed is death...(51) Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (53) For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (54) When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."



"The resurrection of Jesus was as significant a turning point in the course of created reality as the initial moment of creation itself...[It is an] anticipation of what God will one day do to the whole universe. Thus, Easter has been called 'the emergence within history of the life of the world to come,' 'the embryonic principle of cosmic transformation', 'the womb of the new aeon', and 'the beginning of the new and final world-order."



"The Biblical view of things is resurrection - not a future that is just a consolation for the life we never had, but a restoration of the life you always wanted."

- Timothy Keller in *The* Reason for God

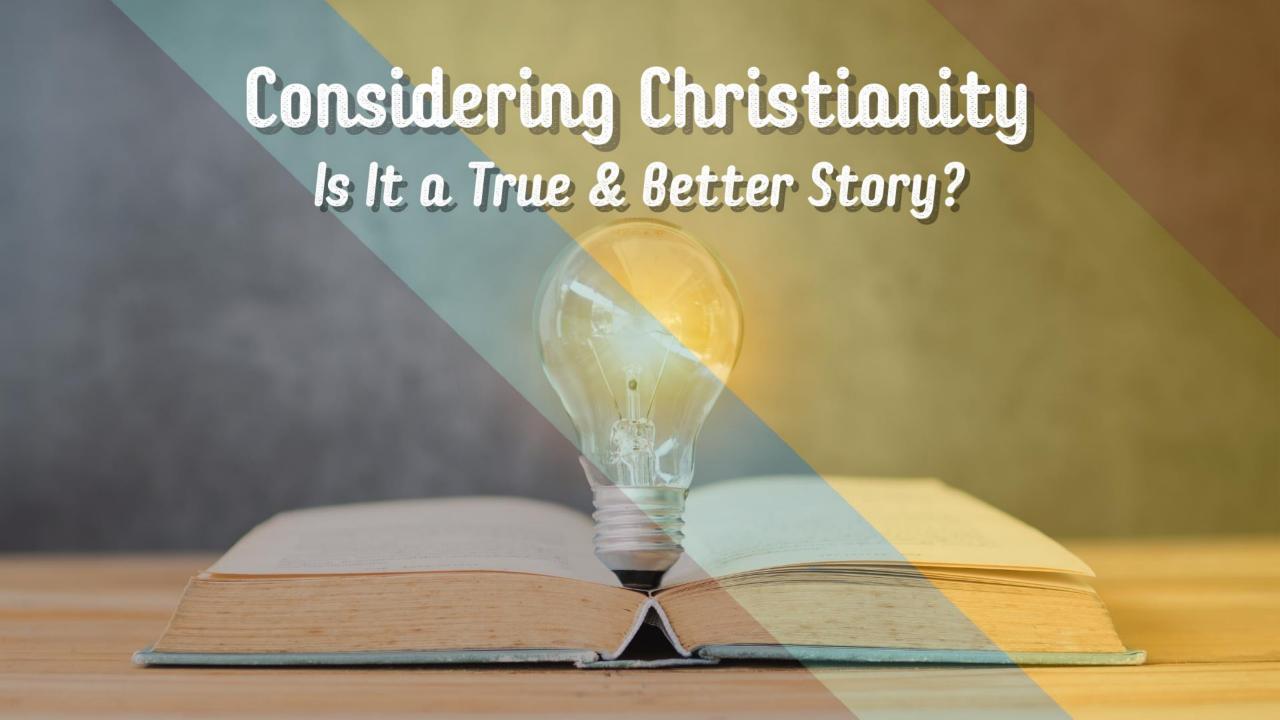


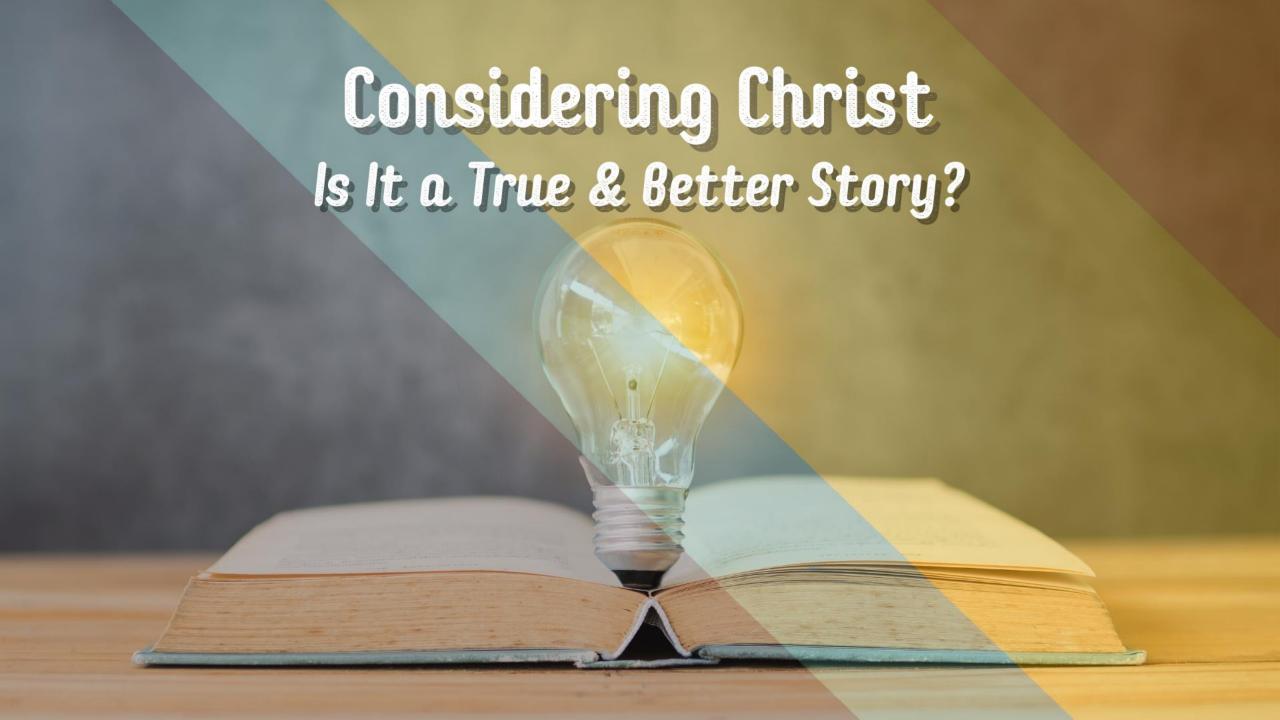
Why does this matter?

1. It's remarkable evidence that Jesus is God and really did die to save us.

2. It's the most unique, powerful, and satisfying answer to death.

3. It means Jesus is alive and you can meet him.





Final Question...

Have you met Him?

John 1:46

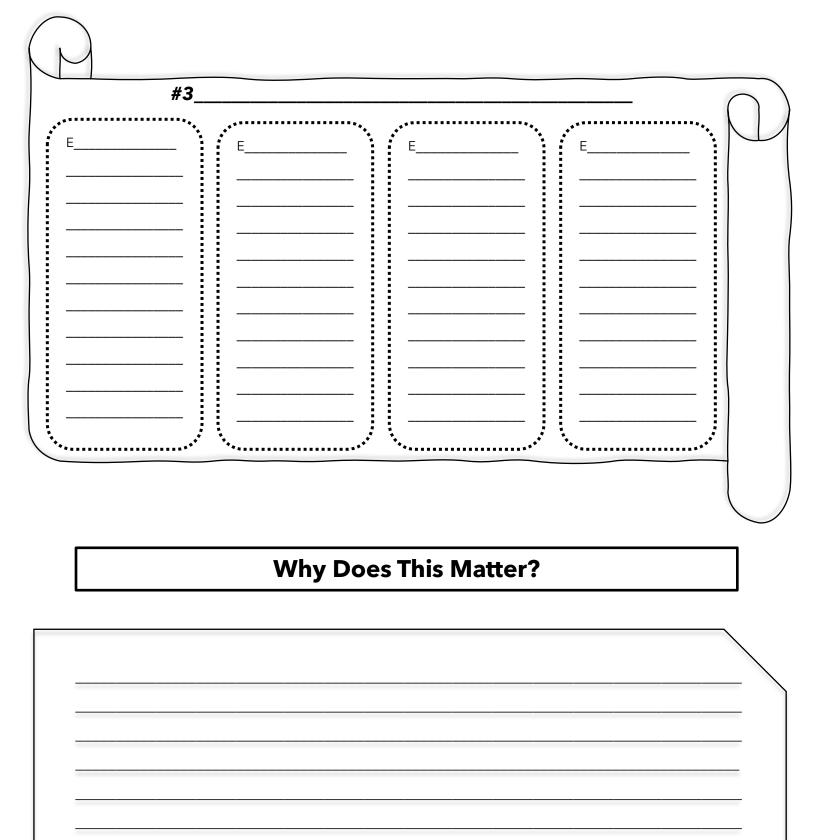
...Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Renew: Considering Christianity





A	0	OBJECTION:
•		
	0	COUNTER-EXAMPLES: A)
<u> </u>		
A		
•		B)
		B)
•		
		C)
•		



Q&A Session

Use the space provided below to take notes during the Question & Answer Session.		

Weekly Reflection & Application Questions

The content from this class is a lot to process in one sitting. To help you think more deeply about these ideas and how to apply them to your life, consider answering the following reflection and application questions in the weeks prior to the next class.

Week 1:

- 1. Have you met Jesus? If not, what is the next step you can take to go to where he is?
- 2. Before this class, did you consider the New Testament books to be reliable historical documents? Why or why not?
- 3. Did the information presented in the class persuade you that the New Testament books are both authentic and accurate?
 - a. If yes, what did you find most persuasive?
 - b. If no, what would you need to know in order to be persuaded?

Week 2:

- 1. Over the course of this next week read the Gospel of Mark (on average this take about 1 ½ hours total). As you read, keep notes of the following:
 - a. Actions or events that seem to imply that Jesus is God
 - b. Statements that seem to imply that Jesus is God
- 2. What surprised you most about the content of the Gospel of Mark?
- 3. In 2-3 sentences, how would you describe Jesus as he's portrayed in the Gospel of Mark?

Week 3:

- 1. Do you believe that miracles are possible? Why or why not?
- 2. Out of the 4 "E"s discussed during the class, which did you find most compelling? Least?
- 3. In 2-3 sentences, explain why the resurrection of Jesus matters, if indeed it really happened.
- 4. Do you accept the resurrection as a historical event?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - b. If no, what further evidence would you need to change your mind?

Resources

Books

- The Reason for God Timothy Keller
- Why God Makes Sense in a World that Doesn't Gavin Ortlund
- Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion Rebecca McLaughlin
- On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision William Lane Craig
- Surprised by Doubt Joshua Chatraw & Jack Carson
- How God Became Jesus Michael Bird

Articles

- https://www.str.org/w/-misquoting-jesus-answering-bart-ehrman
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- Intro to Textual Criticism Daniel Wallace, BiblicalTraining.org
- The Historical Reliability of the Gospels Craig Blomberg, Biblical Training.org
- <u>5 Reasons You Can Trust Your Bible</u> Cold Case Christianity
- <u>Can I Trust the Bible? Series</u> Wes Huff & Apologetics Canada
- <u>Did Jesus Claim to be God? Answering Bart Ehrman</u> Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites
- The Case for Jesus' Resurrection with Mike Licona Gavin Ortlund, Truth Unites