

# Apologetics 101: Divine Existence & Creation

## The Existence of God & his role as the Creator

### Learning outcomes for the series:

- You will learn the basic apologetics of a Christian worldview
- You will understand how to articulate various evidentiary claims for the legitimacy of Christianity
- You will discover a deeper understanding of the tenability of the Christian faith

**Introduction:** The world is a skeptical place. And skepticism is not a bad thing. But in a very diverse and sinful world, sometimes Christianity can seem like one of many worldviews to hold. Countless people worldwide would never see Christianity as *false*. They would simply see it as *equal*. Then, you have to take into account the various forms of atheism, agnosticism, and other such belief systems. The question we are seeking to answer in this series is essentially this: *what makes Christianity the only true religion?* And we will answer that by looking at several things:

1. The Existence of God and his role as Creator (theism)
2. The existence of evil and suffering + our purpose as created beings (benevolent theism)
3. The Incarnation and the Bible (benevolent theism in the form of Jesus)
4. Christianity vs. other world religions (Christianity's Jesus over all others)

### Definitions of some key terms:

- Syllogisms — a type of logical argument where a conclusion is drawn from premises that are considered true
- Wide Evidentialism — Critical rationalism; religious beliefs must be based on evidence, even though the evidence may fail to provide conclusive and irrefutable proof
- Apologetic Miscalculation — the idea that knowing an apologetic defense for Christianity is the same as understanding the Gospel

***The Existence of God: Proofs that support theism (that are good... not great)***

*Kant's Teleological Argument:* It's necessary that God exists because the universe needs an architect; there must be an ending point of pure reason, encapsulated in an all-powerful being known by some as God

*Issue:* this makes God impersonal, or it makes him merely an abstract idea as opposed to him having personhood; cannot simply reason ourselves to the Gospel

***Moral Argument:***

1. If objective morality exists, then there must be a God who is the standard
2. Objective morality does exist
3. Therefore, there is a God

*Issues:* what classifies as morality is up for debate (for example: freedom); this does not get someone to the God of the Bible; if God is perfect, we cannot understand his morality vs ours

***Kalam Cosmological Argument:***

1. Everything that began to exist has a cause
2. The Universe began to exist
3. Therefore, the universes has a cause

*Issues:* this does not necessarily prove Xnity true, just theism

*Intelligent Design:* the scientific theory that life in the universe is the result of an architect as opposed to an act of random chance

*Issue:* intelligent design is not creationism; intelligent design supports the Bible in a sense, but the Bible does not explicitly support this specific theory

***The Existence of God: The Bible's claim on the existence of God******The Creation Account:*****- [Gen. 1:1-2] — First event**

- God has no beginning. He predates time.
- Verse 1 is the first event of creation.
- Verse 2 shows us the issue: No order and no inhabitants.

**- [Gen. 1:3-5] — Day 1**

- The "light" is God

- God creates time
- **[Gen. 1:6-8] — Day 2**
  - There are two “waters”: the water on earth and like the atmosphere
  - God creates space (sky and sea).
- **[Gen. 1:9-13] — Day 3**
  - This is when God creates land and plants
  - **ILLUSTRATION:** everything we use technically comes from plants or land
  - God creates all matter (land and plant life).
- **[Gen. 1:14-19] — Day 4**
  - God created and ordered time. Now, he “inhabits” time with ways to keep it (Sun, moon, stars, etc.)
  - God creates inhabitants for time (ways to keep time).
- **[Gen. 1:20-23] — Day 5**
  - God created and ordered sky and sea (space). Now, he “inhabits” it with creatures.
  - God creates in inhabitants for space (sky and sea).
- **[Gen. 1:24-25] — Day 6: Part I**
  - Day 6 has two major events.
  - First, God inhabits the land with land creatures
- **[Gen. 1:26-31] — Day 6: Part II**
  - “Us” is the trinity in verse 26

***Ultimately, we are the biggest proof of God's existence.***

# Apologetics 101: Evil, Suffering, & Purpose

**How do we know that this God is good when everything seems so bad?**

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## Definitions of some key terms:

- Theodicy — Argument attempting to explain why God permits evil
- Wide Evidentialism — Critical rationalism; religious beliefs must be based on evidence, even though the evidence may fail to provide conclusive and irrefutable proof
- Apologetic Miscalculation — the idea that knowing an apologetic defense for Christianity is the same as understanding the Gospel

**The Problem of Evil:** It doesn't take a rocket scientist or even a religious person to see that the world we live in is full of pain, evil, and suffering. And we're not talking just broken toes and playground bullies. Rape, murder, genocide, theft, natural disasters, cancer, you name it— these things are terrible. Even just in the 20th Century, dictators like Hitler, Stalin, and Mao systematically killed tens of millions of people for evil causes. If there is a God, which we have proven that there is, how on earth are we to understand the prevalence of such evil and suffering if he really is a *good* God? Daniel Howard-Snyder presents us with an interesting take. The problem of evil is two-fold. The practical problem of evil is this: how do we have a relationship with God in the midst of evil? The second problem, though, which we will be covering in this session is this: does the presence of such immense and unrelenting evil and suffering prove that God does not exist? The God of the Bible is a loving, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, perfect, holy, righteous, just God. Doesn't the existence of unadulterated evil go against all of these claims? This is the number one claim against Christianity.

What we will do is attempt to do something very simple: we will seek to justify the presence of evil and suffering in the world. Is there a reason that can justify God allowing so much evil and suffering to persist if he really is a good God?

**A point of clarification:** We are not here to debate that a loving God would *never* allow evil in any form. This does not make any logical sense. God's permission of evil does not mitigate his benevolence. It is false that it is wrong or unloving to permit evil under any circumstance. We are not trying to justify why he would allow evil. We are trying to justify why he would allow *so much*, and why he would allow seemingly "unjustified" evil.

**Theodicies:** We will look at several theories. We will describe them, give an example, show how they prove a benevolent God, and how they may have issues.

*The Punishment Theory:* some evil and suffering is just punishment for people who commit sins

- Ex: Take drugs, get addicted
- Proof of Benevolence: God is simply acting justly if he punishes someone
- Problem with theory: this doesn't account for suffering that comes "accidentally" (i.e. cancer)

*The Counterpart Theory:* Evil must exist because good exists; there can be no real good if there is nothing to compare it to

- Example: life would mean less without death
- Proof of Benevolence: God must allow evil if he is to allow good, else free will would be null and void
- Problem with theory: the logical conclusion would be that God is evil in part if he preexisted the created order— so good doesn't "need" evil to be good

*The Free Will Theory:* evil and suffering are only a result of the free-will choices of people

- Example: God doesn't commit gang violence— gangs do
- Proof of Benevolence: Once again, God is not committing the actions. So, it is not an indictment on his character that sins are committed *against* people
- Problem with theory: doesn't account for other forms of suffering and evil that arise from natural causes
- Objection: can't God just make good people? (not with free will)

*The Natural Consequences Theory:* evil and suffering will naturally achieve God's desired outcome, which is that people turn to him and realize their need for him

- Example: an inmate becomes a Christian on death row
- Proof of Benevolence: God knows that the best way to get us to come to him is for something to force us, and the reward outweighs the cost
- Problem with theory: seems unnecessary

*The Natural Law Theory:* natural law dictates that freedom be in place for it to work and the by-product of that is evil (similar to the free-will argument)

*The Higher-order Goods Theory:* higher-order goods are unachievable without the potential for evil (similar to the free-will argument)

- Example: impossible to love if one has no option to hate
- Proof of Benevolence: God has given us a higher chance of potential by allowing higher-order goods to be freely achievable
- Problem with theory: natural disasters and natural evil do not correlate here

**Partial conclusion:** It seems pretty clear that there can at least be *usually* a good reason for why evil and suffering would be allowed. Almost each of these theodicies help us fill in almost all of the gaps in why God would allow evil. But the problem we have not dealt with, that it still left standing, is this: *why does God allow so much?* The argument of amount is the hardest to answer. That's where we finish our argument: *the Noseeum Assumption*.

An adaptation of *William Rowe's Noseeum Inference*

1. There could be a reason justify God's allowance of tremendous evil.
2. If there were a reason to allow it, we would have the capacity to see and understand it. (Rowe's Noseeum Assumption)
3. We cannot see or understand a reason.
4. Therefore, there is no reason to justify God's actions
5. Therefore, a benevolent God is not real

What's the problem with this argument? [Job 38] Premise 2 is very presumptuous: if there was a reason to justify God's actions, we would clearly see and understand the reason. There is no reason to think that is true at all.

So, where do we stand? What is our purpose, then? Our purpose is to glorify God

# Apologetics 101: The Incarnation & the Bible

## The case for Jesus, the Bible, and the Historical Resurrection

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**The Direction for this session:** We have proven that there is a God. We have also shown that, though evil and suffering exist, God is still good. Tonight, we are going to zero in on the person of Jesus, how he informs our belief and God, and what Christianity means for theism moving forward. We will look at the case for the historical Jesus, the validity of the Bible, and the reality of the historical resurrection.



**The Bible:** The Holy Bible is the most controversial, important, and influential book in all of human history. It is also the most scrutinized, read, and referenced book of the last 2000 years. We read it every week, and some of us read it every day. But can we even trust this thing? How do we know that it's true? That it's reliable? All good questions. So, let's answer them.

1. The Bible is a reliable collection of historical documents written down by real people.
2. The only legitimate version of the modern Bible is the version that includes the 66 current books of the English Bible.
3. The Bible is God's word, meaning it is inspired, inerrant, and infallible.

### **How do we know these things to be true?**

1. **How did we get the Bible?** The Bible is a reliable collection of historical documents written down by real people with accurate knowledge of the events and people about which they wrote. But it took over 40+ authors, from multiple places in the world, across 1500 years to write all of the documents that compose the Bible. So, how in the world did this happen?

**A. Canonization, which means putting the books of the Bible together, happened across a couple hundred years.** Through many different councils, meetings, and general inquiries, it became very clear that there were documents being passed around among churches that these Christians saw as divine, authoritative, and inspired by the Lord. The "first" canon of the Bible was introduced in 170, missing only the books of Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John. By 393 at the Council of Hippo, the 27 books of the New Testament were agreed upon as the final canon along with the Old Testament.

**B. The Bible has been and is verified by several thousand manuscript copies.** The Old Testament is a heavily reliable document, having been copied and recopied meticulously for several hundred years before Jesus is even born. The New Testament is backed by thousands upon thousands of manuscripts and portions of manuscripts. In 1946/47, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Qumran, and they contain every book of the OT except for Esther.

2. **Which Bible should we read?** In order to really understand the Bible, one of the things we need to grapple with is which Bible to read.

**A. There are technically multiple "Bibles."** The Protestant Church recognizes a different canon than the Roman Catholic church, as well as other traditions.

The Bible we read is 66 books in total, whereas other Bibles contain what's called the Apocrypha. There are 14 or 15 of these Apocryphal books, depending on who you ask. Why do we not use them? We do not use them because they are not what we would call "inspired and inerrant," which we will dive into next.

**B. Bible translations exist, and they do matter!** The original Bible was written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. As far as I know, I don't really speak any of those, and neither did many of the Christians who came before us. So, today, the Bible has been translated into other languages. As many of us probably know, there are dozens of English translations alone. Why is that? Translations exist for two reasons. The first reason translations exist is because different historical manuscripts exist. The second reason translations exist is because different translation philosophies exist (see chart).

**3. What's with the layout, the numbers, and the titles of the books?** The original manuscripts of the Bible are perfect and authoritative. The verses, chapters, headings, and even some of the book titles are not in the original manuscripts, though. So, where did we get them from and are they legit?

**A. Many of the titles of the books were added later.** Logically, this makes sense. Paul wrote *letters* to these churches, so it seems weird to just call a letter "First Corinthians." Many of the books did not necessarily have titles. For example, the Pentateuch, which is the first five books of the Bible, was originally one work, not five. The titles of the books were given later after they were split up in order to categorize them. More on that in a second.

**B. The numbers and chapters were added later, with the version we used today being first printed in 1560 — the Geneva Bible.** The original authors of the Bible did not put their own chapters or verse numbers in there. This system was added later to help people conveniently navigate the Bible. These, along with subheadings, were added for organization, but the major downside is that they break up certain sections that were originally written together. This is very clear in places like Paul's epistles.

**C. The order of the books of the Bible has changed over time.** Many do not know this, but the Bible is not necessarily put together in chronological order. For example, the Psalms were written by different people. This means, by default, they were not written in order of events or life situations. They

were put into the order they exhibit now due largely to their genres. They are organized generally by literary type.

### **The Three Important “I” words: inerrant, inspired, infallible**

- Inerrant: without errors; without inconsistencies or mistakes
  - Bruce Metzger (1914–2007), a Princeton University scholar of Greek, New Testament, and Old Testament, observed that after 2000 years of copying, only 40 of 20,000 lines in the New Testament are debatable. None affect doctrinal understandings (Anders). Philip Schaff estimated that of 150,000 variations, only 400 affected the sense; and of those only 50 were of significance; and of these not one affected an article of faith. No fundamental doctrine rests on a disputed reading.
- Inspired: the holy spirit guided the writing of the text
  - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Infallible: the Bible cannot and will not ever lead us to do the wrong thing, say the wrong thing, think the wrong thing; it is the highest standard of life

**The Quest for the Historical Jesus:** We are going to intertwine the argument for the historical Jesus with the argument for the historical resurrection because both of them prove one another in a sense.

#### *Pagan sources mentioning the historical Jesus:*

- Tacitus (53 AD) — claims “Christ’s” got the death penalty
- Pliny (112 AD) — wrote to Trajan about Xns singing hymns to X
- Suetonius (120 AD) — recorded the ongoing religious debates among the Jews about the person of Christ
- Thallus (52 AD) — attempted to explain the darkness that happened during Christ’s crucifixion
- Mara Ben-Serapion (73 AD) — mentioned that the Jews gained nothing from killing their “king,” mentions Jesus’ teachings
- Jewish: Josephus — mentioned that Jesus is the Messiah (*Antiquities*)

#### *Proof of the historical resurrection:*

- Women found the tomb first
- All four Gospels record the Resurrection
- The Jews and Romans admitted that the body was gone

- All of the disciples were punished for their belief in Jesus
- Jesus appeared to over 500 people
- Jesus resurrected in Jerusalem and the Gospel was preached *in Jerusalem*
- Jesus was buried in Joseph of Arimathea's Tomb
- Gravesite is disputed/never was venerated because the bones were never recovered

# Apologetics 101: Christianity & The World

## How does our faith stack up against the others?

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- Epistemology — the study of knowledge; makes belief distinct from “opinion”
- *What about the definition of religion?*

Clifford Geertz	Bruce Lincoln	Kevin Schillbrack	Cooper Short
a system of symbols	“a discourse whose concerns transcend the human, temporal, and contingent, and that claims for itself a similarly transcendent status”,	belief in superempirical beings or powers,	System of belief seen as objectively true by its adherents
about the nature of things,	practices connected to that discourse,	has ethical norms,	that requires fidelity of belief
that inculcate dispositions for behavior	people who construct their identity with reference to that discourse and those practices, and	has worship rituals,	that inculcates a particular ethic
through ritual and cultural performance,[3]	institutional structures to manage those people.	participation believed to bestow benefits on participants, and	in order to bring about personal realization
so that the conceptions held by the group are taken as real.		those who participate in this form of life see themselves as a distinct community.	to achieve an end that is seen as a higher-order good

**Our working definition of Religion:** *A system of belief seen as objectively true that requires fidelity of belief and that inculcates a particular ethic in order to bring about personal realization and to achieve an end that is seen as a higher-order good.* But what we are going to zero in on is the *beliefs*. By doing so, we will see that Christianity stands alone as uniquely true and valuable.

**What about Christianity?** The essence of Christianity is the Gospel:

- Each and every person is made in the image of God, to know him and to love him. All people were designed to be in fellowship with God. — Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 139:13-16
- This fellowship, this opportunity to know God intimately, was and is ruined as a result of sin, which was first committed in the Garden of Eden. — Genesis 3
- Each and every person has committed sins, and has therefore forfeited and lost their ability to have a relationship with God. This is due to the fact that human beings are naturally sinful as a result of the sin committed in the garden of Eden. — Romans 3:10, 23; Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 51:5, Ephesians 2:1-3

- Because every person has committed sins, the only thing anyone deserves is to be eternally separated from God, who is holy, perfect, and righteous. Their eternal punishment is the lake of fire. — Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 6:23
- On top of this, no one can do anything to save themselves. There are no amount of deeds to be done in order to earn salvation. — Matthew 7:21-23
- But God, being rich in mercy and grace, abounding in steadfast love, and desiring to know his creatures in an intimate and loving way, chose to set in motion a divine plan of salvation for all people. — Genesis 3:15; Ezekiel 34-36; Romans 5:8
- God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, who was fully God and fully man, to earth. Jesus lived a perfect life, free from sin. Jesus was then killed on a cross on behalf of all sins for all people as a substitutionary sacrifice. — John 19; Isaiah 53:4-12; Psalm 22
- Jesus then rose from the dead, securing victory against sin and death. — John 20; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
- Each person is called to trust this Gospel, fully, repenting of their sins and surrendering to Jesus as Lord and Savior. All a person must do to be saved from their sins is trust in/believe in/have faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as the sufficient atoning sacrifice for their sins. — John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10; Romans 6:23; Acts 2:21
- This Gospel is the free gift of salvation to all who believe, purely as an act of grace from God. And Jesus is the only way by which anyone can be saved. — Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6
- Once a person believes in the Gospel, they are a new person, with a new heart, called to live a life of obedience and surrender. — Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 36:24-27
- Anyone who has not trusted this Gospel is not a Christian, and they are subject to eternal separation from the LORD in the lake of fire, taking on the full payment for their own sins. — Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 6:23

Now, we will take Christianity and we will stack it up against 5 major belief systems: Atheism (Scientism), Marxism, Islam, Progressive Christianity/Humanism, & Mormonism

### **Atheism:**

- *Essence:* there is no God/intelligent deity underneath reality; all that is true is what can be known and discovered empirically/scientifically
- *Adjacent belief systems:* evolutionary atheism, agnosticism

- *Core beliefs of atheism:*
  - The ultimate purpose of existence is elusive or nonexistent
  - The necessary end of existence is to simply cease to exist
  - The means to the end of existence is a combination of natural selection, evolution, and empirical predictability
- *Evolutionary atheism:*
  - It is an unguided process
  - Must be an evolutionary origin of intellect
  - Thesis of Deep Unreliability — no way the human intellect are reliable enough to understand philosophy fully
  - Principle of Defeat — if a conclusion x is considered unrealistic, then one must not believe anything congruent with x
  - *COUNTER:* if atheism is actually true, then atheism does not make rational sense
- *Issues with this system:* this system of belief does not fulfill or answer some of the most fundamental questions of life; this system is also outweighed epistemologically by human history; there is overwhelming science to at least believe in intelligent design; man-centered; offers no Gospel hope

**Marxism:**

- *Essence:* the highest achievable good is for human civilizations to evolve in utopian, communal societies that seek only what is just and good for the whole
- *Adjacent belief systems:* Socialism, Critical Race Theory, Secularism, social marxism
- *Core beliefs of Marxism:*
  - 1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
  - 2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
  - 3. Abolition of all rights of inheritance.
  - 4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
  - 5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
  - 6. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
  - 7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands, and the improvement of the soil



generally in accordance with a common plan.

8. Equal liability of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country by a more equable distribution of the populace over the country.

10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, &c, &c.

- "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."
- *Issues with this system:* epistemologically errant; impossible to create true communism because of human nature; serves the sin nature ("destroy the system because we feel offended!"); man-centered; offers no Gospel hope

### **Islam:**

- *Essence:* Human existence serves one purpose and that purpose is to worship and proclaim Allah as the Most High God
- *Adjacent belief systems:* Sunni Islam, Shia Islam, Sufism
- *Core beliefs:*
  - Belief in one God (Allah)
  - Belief in the Angels
  - Belief in the holy books sent to all the prophets including Torah that was revealed to the prophet Moses, Bible that was revealed to the prophet Jesus, and Qur'an (Koran) that was revealed to the prophet Muhammad
  - Belief in all the prophets sent by God including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Although Muslims believe in Isa or Jesus they don't think of Jesus as the Son of God the way Christians do.
  - Belief in the Day of Judgment and life after death. The best reward for performing good deeds is getting closer to God.
  - Belief in divine decree. This means that God is all-powerful and nothing can happen without His permission, however, he has given human beings freedom

to choose whether to be good or bad. In the end, everyone will be questioned about how they lived in this life.

- *Issues with this system:* Salvation in Islam is works-based; does not deal with or believe in original sin; man-centered; rips off Christianity and Judaism; offers no Gospel hope or assurance of salvation

### **Progressive Christianity: Define the word “progressive”**

- *Essence:* The “faith once for all delivered to the saints” is contingent exclusively on God’s lovingkindness and is subject to the authority of the perception of the relationship between Christians and Jesus
- *Adjacent belief systems:* liberal theology, Social Gospel, Christian Nationalism, prosperity Gospel & Deliverance
- *Core Beliefs:*
  - The Bible is not inerrant, inspired, infallible; it is also subject to change in meaning
  - The highest-order good is love and happiness for any and all people within a desired category
  - God’s primary character disposition is blessing, favor, and patience
  - Christianity should be and often is compatible with any and every social ideology that seeks “the good of others”
- *Issues with this system:* the Bible and the contents contained therein are not subject to selective interpretation or change; the Historical Faith of Christianity is at odds with modern progressivism; man-centered; offers no Gospel hope; places the authority at least equally with man and God and at times can usurp God for man

### **Mormonism:**

- *Essence:* all people are meant to be eternal; the chief end of all people is to be obedient on earth so that they can spend eternity in glory
- *Adjacent systems:* n/a
- *Core beliefs:*
  - All people are eternal beings, created by God to become human to live a life on earth for their sanctification
  - The plan of salvation:
    - The earth was created as a place for us to learn and progress.
    - Because of the fall of Adam and Eve, we are physically separated from God.

- Through our sins, we are spiritually separated from God.
- Physical death is the separation of our spirits from our physical bodies.
- Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer because He performed the Atonement to overcome the barriers that separate us from God.
- Jesus Christ also broke the bands of death through His Atonement, which means that our spirits and bodies will be reunited during time of the Resurrection.
- Our eternal destination will depend upon our choices. Rather than being strictly a heaven or hell, there will be degrees of glory that we can obtain.
- The plan of salvation includes all of the doctrines, covenants, ordinances and teachings that will lead us back to the presence of God.
- *Issues with this system:* rejects the Bible as the exclusive authority and the Christian conception of God; works-based; cultic practices and dogma; does not believe in the true Gospel; rejects the trinity; rejects the transcendence of God