

Is Jesus God?

IF THE TESTIMONIES OF THE WORLD'S GREAT LEADERS AND
SCHOLARS ABOUT **JESUS CHRIST** ARE CORRECT, HE IS
THE **MOST UNIQUE** PERSON TO EVER LIVE IN THIS WORLD.

IS JESUS GOD?

BY JOHN MAISEL

*Adapted from a lecture delivered to faculty and students
at Moscow State University, Russia*

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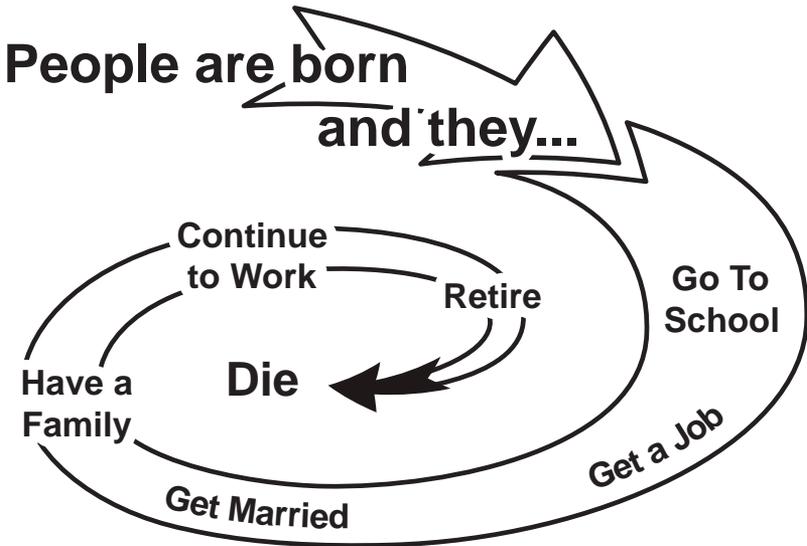
FOREWORD

This lecture was given to the faculty and students at Moscow State University in 1990. The purpose for the lecture was to give a clear understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, His claims and purposes, and to explain clearly how a person could find a relationship with the true and living God through Christ. Because of this lecture, a large part of the audience acknowledged that they wished to pray with the lecturer and committed their lives to Christ. As one professor said, “This is the first time I have ever heard a rational explanation of the uniqueness and reason for the Christian faith.”

Another professor of physics said, “The only time I have ever thought of God is when I took the atheistic examinations to become a professor. For some unknown reason I came to your lecture and now know that only God can fill the emptiness of my life.” If you are searching to find abundant life and forgiveness, I hope this will be your experience as you read this book.

May God bless you,
Professor John M. Maisel

INTRODUCTION



Is this all there is to life? Where do we go from here? What is our purpose? What is our destiny? How can we be fulfilled and have the emptiness of our lives filled with true meaning?

The following study will answer each of these questions, and give a more clear understanding of how true meaning in life can be found.

The big question in the world today is, **WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?** This lecture deals with two major questions:

One: Is Jesus God?

Two: How Can I Know Him Personally?

These questions have been chosen rather than asking, “Is there a God?” and “How can I know God exists?” Even if a rational basis for the existence of a personal, infinite God is presented, eventually we would have to ask, “Who is Jesus Christ?”

1 IS JESUS CHRIST WHO HE SAID HE IS?

KEY POINTS

1. *If Jesus Christ IS NOT who He (and others) claimed He was, the reality of His claims and teachings is invalid.*
2. *If Jesus Christ IS who He (and others) claimed He was, the reality of His claims and teachings is valid.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- Is God's existence possible?
 - What is the starting point to knowing whether Jesus is God?
 - How does Jesus Christ differ from other religious figures in history?
 - What is the significance of your decision about Jesus Christ?
-

IS GOD'S EXISTENCE POSSIBLE?

If we gathered religious experts from all over the world from different faiths and different backgrounds and asked them, “Who is God?” we would have many different definitions. Some would say God is personal. Some would say God is impersonal. In the same respect, if we believe that truth is non-contradictory, we would have to conclude that God cannot be both personal and impersonal at the same time. When we examine the questions about God—“Who is He?” and “How can I

know him?”—we encounter the limitations of a finite mind as it attempts to understand the infinite being, person, or God. Because of our finite minds, humankind has developed many different opinions about God.

When a person says there is no God, that person violates a basic philosophical principle. That is a person with a finite understanding making an absolute statement about the nature of infinity. It would be like asking how much total knowledge humankind possesses. Commonly attributed to Albert Einstein, the Nobel Prize winner in physics, is the saying that humankind grasps less than one percent of total knowledge. If we comprehend less than one percent of total knowledge, is it not possible for God to exist in the other ninety-nine percent?

***Can a person
with finite
understanding
make an absolute
statement about
the nature of
infinity?***

Humans' 1% 



TOTAL KNOWLEDGE

You can see that it is impossible for a person with a finite mind to make an absolute statement that there is no God because to do so one would need to possess total knowledge. Therefore, it is very difficult for people to think about what God is really like and be confident that their opinions are correct.

The following conversation at a university between a university professor and a man who said he was an atheist, helps to illustrate this point:

IS JESUS GOD

Professor

Man

How can you say you are an atheist (absolutely there is no God), when you agree that you have less than one percent of total knowledge?

I guess I need to say I am an agnostic. I don't know if there is a God.

Are you a hard agnostic or a soft agnostic?

What do you mean?

A hard agnostic says, "You can't know if there is a God," and a soft agnostic says, "I don't think there is a God."

I guess you would say I am a hard agnostic.

Can you ever be sure that you can be sure that there is no God? Or do you know for sure that you can't know anything for sure?

No, I can't say for sure that I can be sure there is no God.

So you are really a soft agnostic?

Yes, I guess that is true. I don't know if there is a God.

You sound to me like a man who is saying I have never seen any evidence that there is a God so I don't know if there is.

That's right, I have never been exposed to any evidence about God, life, life after death, or ultimate meaning in life.

We must start with two questions. Is there sufficient evidence for me to conclude that there is a God? And can I have a personal relationship with Him?

WHAT IS THE STARTING POINT TO KNOWING WHETHER JESUS IS GOD?

Suppose we gather a panel of religious experts. And, suppose someone on this panel of religious experts stood up and said, “I am God Almighty. I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I made you and if you are ever to experience true meaning in your life, you must know me in a personal way and have a relationship with me.” If this happened, we would at least have a place to start. We could look at the evidence of his life to determine the truthfulness or falseness of that statement. And that is exactly what we have in the person of Jesus Christ.

HOW DOES JESUS CHRIST DIFFER FROM OTHER RELIGIOUS FIGURES IN HISTORY?

During His earthly ministry two thousand years ago, Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.”¹ He said that He was the Maker of the heavens and the earth and that only through Him could humankind experience true peace and be given eternal life. He not only issued these dramatic declarations, He had the credentials to back them up. Therefore, Jesus’ claim to be God makes Him very unique.

***Jesus
is the
unique
one.***

It is important for us to understand that Jesus is unique among worldwide religious figures in His claim to be God. Buddha never claimed to be God. Moses never claimed to be God. Mohammed never claimed to be Allah. Yet Jesus Christ claimed to be the TRUE and LIVING God!²

***Jesus was
crucified
because He
claimed to be
God.***

The historical record shows that Jesus was not crucified because He raised the dead or because He made the blind to see and the lame to walk. Jesus was crucified because He claimed to be God. That makes the question of His deity of utmost importance. Buddha viewed

himself as a teacher in search of the truth. Jesus said, “I am the Truth.”³ Confucius never said he was holy.⁴ Jesus said, “Who convicts me of sin?”⁵ Mohammed is reported to have said that unless God threw his cloak of mercy over him, he had no hope. Jesus said, “If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”⁶ Jesus’ statements force the reader to make a choice. What you choose to do with Jesus Christ today is the most important decision you will ever make.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUR DECISION ABOUT JESUS CHRIST?

Your decision about Jesus Christ is more important than your ideology. It is more important than your career. And it is more important than the mate you choose. If Jesus is God, then you must decide what to do with that information. If Jesus is not God then we should have nothing to do with Him.

WHAT C.S. LEWIS SAYS ABOUT TAKING A POSITION ON JESUS CHRIST

C. S. Lewis, formerly a professor at Oxford University, was an atheist who later became a Christian. In his writings Lewis emphasized that one cannot be neutral with Jesus Christ. Lewis wrote:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on the level with a man who says He is a poached egg, or else He would be the devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.⁷

I hope that when you have finished reading this book, you will not continue to say that Jesus was just a good man. If you wish to be honest in the interest of intellectual integrity, you cannot assume neutral ground. Jesus is either God, or He is a liar or a lunatic. You may conclude that Jesus is not God and choose to dismiss Him, but as Professor Lewis said, please do not say He was just a good moral leader.

A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

“If Jesus Christ is as unique as this lesson indicates, is He qualified for us to believe that He is God?”

2 JESUS' FIRST QUESTION

KEY POINTS

1. *If the testimony of the world's great leaders and scholars about Jesus Christ is correct, He is the most unique person to ever live in this world.*
2. *If the Holy Bible is a reliable historical source in all that it affirms about Jesus Christ, it is the most powerful witness in the world for the deity of Christ.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- Who does the world say that Jesus Christ is?
 - Was Jesus just a legend?
 - Is the Holy Bible a reliable source?
 - Is the bibliographical test reliable?
 - Is the external test reliable?
-

One day Jesus asked some of His followers two questions: “Who do people say I am?”⁸ and “Who do you say I am?”⁹ These two questions are our starting point.

WHO DOES THE WORLD SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST IS?

If you have already investigated Jesus Christ, you probably agree with most thinking people that Jesus is the most unique personality the world has ever known. Jesus is not simply a great man among men; He is the greatest man who ever lived. The more you study His life, the more you are impressed. Even atheists and skeptics acknowledge the uniqueness of Jesus. Listen to what the skeptics of the world have said about Jesus and His unparalleled contribution in human history.

Renan, the French thinker and atheist, said, "Whatever may be the unexpected phenomena of the future, Jesus will not be surpassed."¹⁰

Rousseau, another French thinker, compared Jesus with Socrates, saying, "When Plato describes his imaginary righteous man loaded with all the punishments of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ.... The life and death of Jesus were those of a God."¹¹ He also said, "If Socrates lived and died like a sage, Jesus lived and died like a God."¹²

Napoleon said, "I know men, and I tell you, Jesus Christ was not a man."¹³ He went on to say, "Everything about Christ astonishes me. His spirit overwhelms me. There is no comparison between him and another. He stands single and alone."¹⁴

Lord George Gordon Byron, the English poet, who certainly did not embrace Christian principles and died at the age of twenty-six because he lived his life only for his selfish pleasure, is reported to have said this of Jesus: *If ever a man were God, or God were a man, Jesus was both.*

More recently **James Allen Francis** described the influence of Jesus of Nazareth this way: "I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all of the parliaments that ever have sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life."¹⁵

Therefore, Jesus Christ, according to the skeptics and people who knew His life, is considered the most unique person who ever lived. Remember our question: "Who does the world say that Jesus Christ is?" Some people say that Jesus was a legend, meaning He never really existed.

WAS JESUS JUST A LEGEND?

Those who consider Christ to be a legend do not do so on the basis of historical investigation! Even secular historical sources, such as **Cornelius Tacitus**, the Roman historian of the first century, refer to the person of Christ.

Flavius Josephus, the well-known first-century Jewish historian, speaks of the life and death of Jesus and how He went about claiming to be the Messiah and performing great works.¹⁶

Nineteenth century historian and theologian **Philip Schaff** said, “Truly, Jesus Christ, the Christ of the Gospels, the Christ of history, the crucified and risen Christ, the divine-human Christ is the most real, the most certain, the most blessed of all facts.”¹⁷

There is more secular evidence for the historical reliability of the four Gospels than for any other piece of classical literature.

Skeptic **H. G. Wells**, in *The Outline of History*, devotes over twenty pages to Jesus Christ, substantiating His life and death from a historical perspective. He emphasizes the fact that more secular evidence for the reliability of the four Gospels exists than any other piece of classical literature.

Dr. **F. F. Bruce**, professor of biblical criticism and exegesis at the University of Manchester, said: “If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond doubt.”¹⁸

In the Bible we have four different detailed accounts of the life of Christ. Of course many people question the Bible’s historical authenticity, but once again we must take care with remarks that are not based upon thorough investigation. As a matter of fact, there is more secular evidence for the historical reliability of the four Gospels than for any other piece of classical literature.

IS THE HOLY BIBLE A RELIABLE SOURCE?

In the book, *Skeptics Who Demanded a Verdict*, Professor Josh McDowell says, “When you study history you need to develop a historiography, a proper approach to evaluating historical documents.

There are three basic tests. One is the *bibliographical test*, another is the *internal evidence test*, and then the *external evidence test*.”¹⁹

The *bibliographical test* looks at the number of manuscript copies of the original, the length of time between the writing of the original, and the writing of the existing copies when none of the originals still exist.

The *external test* looks at other historical materials to determine if they confirm or deny statements within the manuscript, that is, archaeological evidence.

The *internal test* looks at internal consistencies and inconsistencies within the manuscript. This test will be considered in lesson three.

IS THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST RELIABLE?

This is how the bibliographical test works.

Caesar wrote his history of the Gallic Wars between 100 and 44 B.C. The earliest copy that we have is one produced 1,000 years after his death, and we have only ten copies of that document.

Plato wrote from about 427 to 347 B.C. The earliest copies of his writings that we have were produced around A.D. 900, nearly 1,200 years after the originals. We have only seven copies.

Aristotle lived and wrote between 384 and 322 B.C. We have only five copies of his manuscripts today, the earliest copy being produced around A.D. 1100, over 1,400 years after the originals.

Tacitus, the Roman historian, wrote in the first century. The only copy that we have of his writings is from around A.D. 1100, over 1,000 years after the original.

Thanks to bibliographical testing, experts confirm the authenticity of documents by Caesar, Plato, Aristotle, and Tacitus and the reliability of the authors. So let us apply the same test to biblical writings and to New Testament documents. The books of the New Testament (Bible) were probably written between A.D. 40 and A.D. 70. The earliest manuscript copies date from about A.D. 130, only 90 years after the originals. More than 24,000 copies of manuscripts, texts and quotes exist in many ancient languages.²⁰ Applying the bibliographical test of veracity to the New Testament, therefore, should make us think twice before we say that biblical literature cannot be trusted. When we apply the external and internal tests, we will see even more clearly why the Bible is a reliable document and definitely inspired by God.

Author	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,000 years	10 copies
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,200 years	7 copies
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 years	5 copies
Tacitus	A.D.100	A.D. 1100	1,000 years	1 copy

The New Testament Greek scholar **J. Harold Greenlee** adds: “Since scholars accept as generally trustworthy the writings of the ancient classics even though the earliest manuscripts were written so long after the original writings and the number of exact manuscripts is in many instances so small, it is clear that the reliability of the text of the New Testament is likewise assured.”²¹

Why should sixty-six books, written by some forty men over a period of 1,600 years, be put together in one book called the Holy Bible? Because one theme runs through them all. That theme is the salvation of sinful humankind by a loving God.²²

IS THE EXTERNAL TEST RELIABLE?

Remember our question: “Who do people say that Jesus Christ is?” I often find that the intellectual elite of society tend to say that spiritual and religious interests are only to help less educated people. They say it is the ignorant and unlearned people who are interested in how they can know God and are the only ones who need God.

Let me share what some of the leading intellects of our past and present have said about their pursuit to find God through the person of Christ.

Perhaps the most sophisticated of the German literary figures, **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**, the German poet and dramatist, called Jesus The Divine One, the Holy Man, and wrote, “If ever the Divine appeared on earth, it was in the person of Christ.”²³

Nobel Prize winner **Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn**, recognized by the world for his great literary achievements, talks openly about his faith in Jesus Christ and how, while he was in the Gulag, a Jewish doctor won him to Christ.

Russian writers, like **Leo Tolstoy** and others, have described the work of God's Spirit in utterly transforming their lives. Tolstoy lived much of his life as an atheist but toward the end of his life he explained that for 35 years of his life he was, in the proper acceptance of the word, a nihilist—not a revolutionary socialist, but a man who believed in nothing. He said that when he believed in the doctrine of Jesus, his whole life underwent a sudden transformation—life and death ceased to be evil. Instead of despair, he tasted joy and happiness that death could not take away.

Probably the greatest literary genius of all times, **William Shakespeare**, before his death reportedly said, "I commit my soul into the hands of God, my Creator, most assuredly believing in Jesus Christ, my Savior."

Professor **Ambrose Fleming**, voted England's most outstanding scientist and professor emeritus of electrical engineering at the University of London talked about his faith in Christ, and expressed his belief that nothing in all the Bible would cause a man of science problems with Jesus Christ.

Karl Barth, one of the leading theological intellects of the 20th century, also known as The Great Swiss Thinker was asked in a personal interview what was the most profound thought he had ever had. His reply was, "Jesus loves me. This I know."

It is reported that Professor **Charles Malek**, 13th President of the United Nations General Assembly, speaking of his faith in Christ said we must eliminate the division between Christ and the universe, between the intellect and faith.

Please consider the weakness of the argument that says Jesus was just a good moral man. Please do not accept a conclusion that He never existed and that He was just a myth. And, please do not think that it is only ignorant and unlearned people who are interested in who Christ is. If you do, you will not be fair to the pursuit of truth.

A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

"If the Holy Bible is a reliable historical source verified by bibliographical and external testing, does this add credibility to the claim that Jesus Christ is God?"

3 JESUS' SECOND QUESTION

KEY POINTS

1. *If the statements Jesus made about himself are true, He deserves to be recognized as the Savior of the world.*
2. *If Jesus has the ability to forgive sins, He possesses an authority that is reserved for God alone.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- Who do you say that Jesus Christ is?
- Is the internal test reliable?
- What did Jesus say about himself?

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST IS?

Let us go to the second question, “Who do YOU say that Jesus Christ is?” Before you answer that question, consider some facts that will help you make an intelligent decision.

We have to ask ourselves if there is sufficient evidence to warrant an intelligent belief in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Before you finish reading these lessons, you will need to answer the question, “Who is Jesus Christ?” Many times in my own experience I have encountered mental obstacles that had to be worked through before my faith could have the intelligent foundation that God desires. If God is there and not silent,

if Jesus Christ is the answer to the needs of the human heart, God wants me to understand with my mind His plan to bring humankind into a relationship with himself. Christianity is built upon the solid foundation of knowing and being able to substantiate the claims of Jesus Christ.

Jesus made some very unique claims about himself in the New Testament. The validity of His claims are part of the internal test that verifies the reliability of the Holy Bible.

Is there sufficient evidence to warrant an intelligent belief in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world?

IS THE INTERNAL TEST RELIABLE?

The source for the *internal test* is the Holy Bible, particularly the New Testament. The *internal test*, as stated in lesson two, looks at internal consistencies and inconsistencies within a manuscript. Some of the statements Jesus made will set the stage to look at the implications of one specific claim. This is no ordinary man we are considering.

WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT HIMSELF?

When Jesus made a blind man see, He said, “I am the light of the world.”²⁴

When He fed 5,000 people with two fish and five loaves of bread, He said, “I am the bread of Life.”²⁵

When He was appearing before the man who would execute Him and was asked if He was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus said, “Yes, it is as you say.”²⁶

Thomas, the disciple who doubted that Jesus had really risen from the dead, responded, “My Lord and my God” when he saw Jesus and felt the wounds in His hands and side.²⁷

Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”²⁸

“Jesus shows us what God is like and how He will meet our needs. In Jesus we see God’s love for us, His patience with us, and His provision for our salvation.”²⁹

When He raised a man from the dead, He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies.”³⁰

So Jesus' claims about himself and the uniqueness of His ministry and work are very clear.

One of the most important aspects of His claims is His right to forgive sins on earth, a claim that was reserved for God alone. The following is an account that addresses this claim:

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"³¹

Are you beginning to recognize that Jesus was more than just a good man or a great teacher? In fact, if His claim in this lesson is true, He deserves to be recognized as the Savior of the world.

A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

"If Jesus Christ has the authority and ability to forgive our sins, does this qualify Him to be accepted as the Savior of the world?"

4 JESUS SAID, “I AM THE WAY”

KEY POINTS

1. *If Jesus' claim to be the only way to God is true, all other suggested paths are invalid.*
2. *If there are many ways to reach God, there was no reason for Jesus to sacrifice himself for our sins.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- Are there many ways to God?
 - Just how precarious is humankind's position?
 - Is it possible to earn your way to God?
 - Is it possible to meet God's standards by doing good work?
 - Is there a bridge to God?
-

Now let us focus on one of the most profound statements that Jesus ever made, which, if true, is astounding. If this statement is true, you are confronted with the decision about how you choose to live life—either with Him or apart from Him. He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”³²

ARE THERE MANY WAYS TO GOD?

Jesus did not say, “I am a way.” He said, “I am the way.” A lot of people think that God is sitting on top of some mountain, and the people of the world have all these different ways to climb up this mountain and get to God who lives on top. They think that it really does not make any difference how they get to the top where God is because everyone is climbing to the same place to know God. Therefore, they conclude that any way they get to the top is fine, or any belief they choose will get them to God. Any path is legitimate because we are all climbing the same mountain, right? Not if you consider a principle of logic called the law of non-contradictions, which states, if “A” contradicts “B” or

Does the law of non-contradictions support the more-than-one-path-to-God theory?

“B” contradicts “A,” either one is right and the other is wrong, or they are both wrong. For example, if I say all pens write with black ink, and you say some pens write with blue ink, both of these statements cannot be true. Either I am right and you are wrong; or you are right and I am wrong; or we are both wrong.

The foundation of logic is the proposition, a thing is what it is, and is not what it is not. Aristotle put it formally as “A is not non-A at the same time and in the same relationship.” A tree is a tree and is not a non-tree. It is not a dog, a fish or a cloud. A tree is a tree. That statement is both reality and logic at the same time. This is the law of logic, known as the Law of Non-Contradiction.³³

Here is another example. The Muslim says, “Jesus was just a prophet; he was a good moral man, but he did not die on the cross, and he did not rise again on the third day. To get to God one must obey Mohammed.” The Christian agrees with Jesus who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The Christian believes that Jesus died on the cross and three days later rose again from the dead. Both of these positions cannot be true; either one is right and the other is wrong, or vice versa, or they are both wrong. Furthermore, Jesus said, “I am the way,” not “a way,” and that is an exclusive statement. If Jesus’ words are true, He eliminates all other paths up the mountain to God. If Jesus is the only way that we can come to God, then no one else—not even Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha, or self—is a way to God.

That statement did not come from human logic. Jesus said it. If any path to God exists other than through Jesus Christ, then Christ's death on the cross loses all meaning. If more than one path to God exists, He did not need to send His only Son Jesus Christ to die on a cross in your place.

Does that seem narrow? Exclusive? Rigid? Perhaps so, but God said it clearly and with no ambiguity because it is very important.

JUST HOW PRECARIOUS IS HUMANKIND'S POSITION?

There is another way to view Jesus' statement that He is "the way." When you consider that God is perfect, the overriding reaction is amazement that we can have a relationship with Him at all. When we consider the state of humankind, it is unbelievable that there is any way to have a relationship with this holy and righteous God.

Look at humankind's precarious position. We have violated the standards and laws of a perfectly holy, perfectly righteous, and just God. How? In the words of the Holy Bible, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."³⁴ If you know Greek you know the graphic definition of the word *sin*. It was an archery term. When an archer's arrow fell short of the target, a checker on the archery range called back, "Sin!" meaning he missed the mark or target.

God, who is perfect, must have perfect righteousness and perfect holiness in His presence. Those are His standards. We cannot hit that mark. And because we all fall short of that standard, we all are sinners. If we are honest, we must acknowledge that our lives are not perfect. We have lied, stolen, coveted, envied. We have been jealous, angry, and full of lust and greed. We have not been perfect in any relationship. We may compare our lives to someone else to feel better. Certainly we have not committed the crimes of Stalin or Hitler. But that comparison is a futile exercise. No matter who we are, the best of us have fallen short morally of the perfection of God's standards. And because of our sin we are completely separated from God who loves us.

When God says "yes," we say "no." When God says "no," we say "yes." Most people, if they are honest with themselves, will agree that something deep inside is wrong and missing. That emptiness and aloneness we have is because we are separated from the One who made us. He alone can give us peace, purpose, and joy for living.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO EARN YOUR WAY TO GOD?

Most people think in terms of earning their way to God on the points they get for doing good. Certainly that is how people think in some cultures. If we work hard, we get promoted. If we study hard in school, we make good marks. If we work hard at football practice, we make first team. We reason that we can reach God the same way. Because He is a good God, humankind must work hard at doing good things to get to Him. But that is where the logic breaks down. God is perfect goodness, and our good works can never raise us to His level.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO MEET GOD'S STANDARDS BY DOING GOOD WORKS?

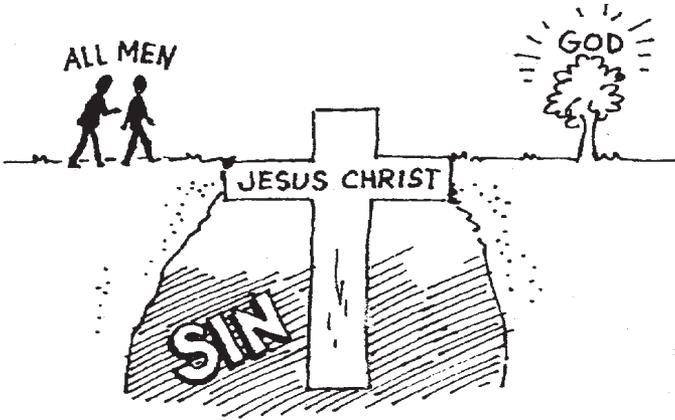
Here is a mental picture to illustrate this idea. Suppose God is in England and all the people in the world live in New York. God says, "If you want to have a relationship with me, you must swim the ocean from New York to England." So everyone dives in.

Some people can swim only one kilometer. Some, ten kilometers. Some strong athletes may get as far as 300 kilometers. An Olympic swimmer might even cover 500 kilometers. However, no one can swim all the way to England; it is impossible.

Like the different levels of swimmers, we can compare our goodness to that of those around us. We can say, "I never left my wife," or "I rarely cheat," or "I am not a murderer." But ultimately we are not ranked in comparison to others. We are judged against the perfection of God's goodness, and we fall short of the mark. We are guilty sinners according to the standards of the God who made us. Moreover, because of our sin, we can anticipate nothing but separation from God. Even though our goodness when compared to other humans may be like the Olympic swimmer, we will fall short (or drown) when trying to swim across an ocean or meet God's perfect standard of holiness and righteousness.

Now it stands to reason that if swimming from North America to England is impossible by our own power, we need something to carry us from one shore to the other.

IS THERE A BRIDGE TO GOD?



Jesus is the bridge that brings the holy God and sinful humankind together. That is why Jesus Christ died. That is why the cross of Christ is the focal point of human history. The drawing above illustrates this great truth.³⁵

The New Testament says: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.”³⁶

None of humankind’s ways lead to God. That is why reaching God requires more than a random path up a mountain. We can never offer God perfection—the mountain cannot be scaled. God said that He alone determined how people would come into His presence. Jesus said, “I am the way...I am the door,”³⁷ and entering the door takes you into God’s presence.

A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

“If Jesus’ claim to be the only way to God is true, why would anyone try to reach God some other way?”

5 THE TRUTH

KEY POINTS

1. *If Jesus is the truth, and if what He said about himself is true, you and I must make a decision about what we will do with the truth.*
2. *If Jesus claimed to be God, and if His claim is true, we should accept Him as our Savior and Lord.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- How does truth work?
- In relation to truth, are you walking on thin ice?
- Is Jesus a legend, liar, lunatic or Lord?
- Did Jesus claim to be God?

HOW DOES TRUTH WORK?

The second thing that Jesus said was, “I am the truth.”³⁸ That’s pretty narrow, is it not? But the truth, by definition, is very narrow. You may say, “That may be true for you, but it is not true for me.” But that is not the way truth works. If Lenin was the first Party Secretary of the Communist Party, that is not only true for you, it is also true for me and the rest of the world. If George Washington was the first President of the United States, that is not only true for me, it is also true for you and for

the rest of the world. Therefore, if Jesus Christ is “The Truth,” then it is true not only for me but for the world.

You may say that as long as you just believe something to be true, then it will be true for you. That is not rational. Believing something does not make it truth. Not believing something does not make it false. Our belief does not establish truth or destroy truth. The key is what the truth is.

IN RELATION TO TRUTH, ARE YOU WALKING ON THIN ICE?

Suppose there is only a thin sheet of ice over Moscow River, but I believe that the ice will hold me so I will be able to cross the river. I begin walking across the river with great faith in that ice. Nevertheless, I am believing a lie. No matter how strong my belief, if I walk on thin ice, it will break and I might drown. My faith in that ice will not establish that the ice will hold me up. Conversely, the person walking on thick river ice may have only a little faith but walk on the ice safely. It is not faith that creates the safety or a lack of it. The issue is whether my faith is in the truth or in a lie, the thick ice, or thin ice. If my faith, even though it is small, is in the thick ice, I will experience the reality of a safe walk. Moreover, even though I may have great faith in the thin ice, I will experience destruction. And so it is with Christ. If He alone is our way to a holy and righteous God and that is the truth of the universe and of God, all we need to do is trust in who He is and what He did. Then we will know God’s love and forgiveness for our lives.

IS JESUS A LEGEND, LIAR, LUNATIC OR LORD?

C. S. Lewis lived part of his life as an atheist, but he came to grips with Christianity based upon the case of Christ and the truth of His claims. He was a tutor of medieval and renaissance literature at Oxford University and later a professor at Cambridge University. Commenting on Jesus’ claim to be God, he said either that statement was true or it was false. If Jesus is God, then you have a decision to make about what you want to do with His claims. However, suppose Jesus claimed to be God and that statement was really false. There would then be two options: Jesus knew that it was false, or He did not know that it was false. Lewis then said that if Jesus claimed to be God and the statement was false, and Jesus

knew that it was false, Jesus was a liar. Not only was He a liar, He was a fool because He got himself killed for it. And not only was He a fool, He was a demon of hell because He told people to put their faith in Him for eternal life. Lewis concluded that to consider the greatest influence for good the world has ever known could live such a colossal lie was not a rational position to hold.³⁹

Commenting on the idea of Jesus being a liar and living a lie, the nineteenth-century Irish historian **W. Lecky**, who was certainly not a believer in revealed religion, nevertheless wrote of Jesus:

The character of Jesus has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of the philosophers and all the exhortations of the moralists.⁴⁰

However, we have another option. If Jesus' claim to be God was false, but He really thought that He was God, that claim would indicate He was mentally unbalanced, perhaps with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Yet none of Jesus' characteristics indicates schizophrenia.

Most psychiatrists tell us that if the world would just live by the teachings of Jesus, we would have no war or murder or hatred. That does not sound like schizophrenia. Psychiatrist **J. T. Fisher** summarized the problem well when he referred to Jesus Christ's sermon on the mount.

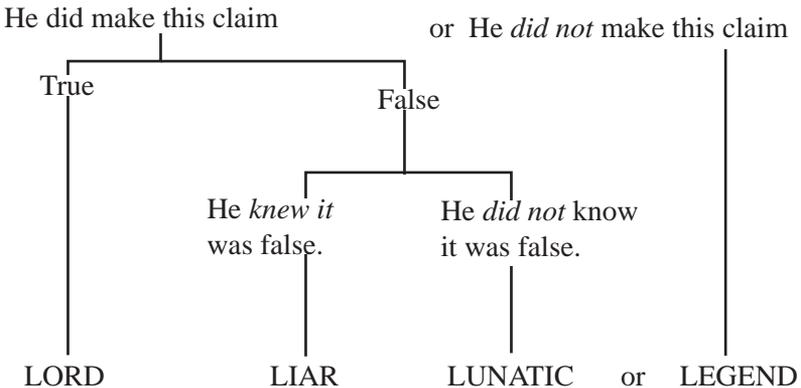
If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene, if you are to confine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage, if you are to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you are to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of a Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. For nearly 2000 years the Christian world has been holding in its hand the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health and contentment.⁴¹

John Warwick Montgomery is considered by many to be the foremost living apologist for biblical Christianity.⁴² He argues that one cannot very well have it both ways. If the teachings of Jesus Christ provide the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health, then He cannot be a lunatic who totally misunderstands the nature of His own personality. Therefore, Professor C.S. Lewis concluded that neither of these options is rational. In response to the claims of Jesus Christ there are only four alternatives.

Other than being a legend (which historically is not factual), there are three other possibilities concerning the person of Jesus Christ: either He is a liar, or He is a lunatic, or He is the Lord. The question at issue here is this; which is the most probable of these three options?

DID JESUS CLAIM TO BE GOD?

The following diagram refers to the question—did Jesus claim to be God? If He did make this claim, and if it is true, we should worship Him as our Lord and Savior. If He claimed to be God, but His claim is false and He knew it was false, He was a liar. If He made this claim and He did not know it was false, He was a lunatic. If He did not claim to be God, He was nothing more than a legend.



Lewis concluded that Jesus was not a legend, liar, or a lunatic. He is the Lord. The following statement needs to be repeated and considered

carefully. If Jesus is the truth, and if what He said about himself is true, you and I must make a decision about what we will do with the truth.

A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

“Based on the logical presentation of the scholars who are quoted in this lesson, what is your opinion? Is Jesus a legend, a liar, a lunatic, or Lord?”

6 THE LIFE

KEY POINTS

1. *If Jesus Christ DID NOT rise from the dead, He is not the Truth and He is not the Way.*
2. *If Jesus Christ DID rise from the dead, He is truly the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- What if Christ did not rise from the dead?
 - Did Christ rise from the dead?
 - What about scientific evidence?
 - What about historical evidence?
 - Is testimony regarding the resurrection reliable?
 - Is the evidence provided by former skeptics valid?
 - Are you guilty of closed thinking?
-

The last part of His statement is the key to the first two claims. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth.” And then He said, “And I am the life.”⁴³ This is the most important aspect of Jesus’ claims. His claim to be “life” implies that He must live for eternity if He is to give us eternal life. This claim had to do with His resurrection, the most important aspect for the credibility of Christianity. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, He is not the truth and He is not the way. The whole basis for the credibility of the life of Christ is found in the Resurrection.

WHAT IF CHRIST DID NOT RISE FROM THE DEAD?

If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, thus conquering death, Christians are the biggest fools in the world. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, I am communicating nothing but lies to you. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, your faith and my faith and the world's faith is useless and in vain. The whole focus of the life of Christ related to substantiating His claims was His statement that He must be rejected and "must be killed and after three days rise again."⁴⁴

Historian **Philip Schaff**, who wrote *History of The Christian Church*, said the ultimate test question to Christianity is the resurrection. "It is either the greatest miracle or the greatest delusion which history records."⁴⁵

The most powerful sign that Jesus is who He claims to be is His resurrection from the dead. This is a question with huge implications: did it happen?⁴⁶

DID CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?

We are left with a question: Did Christ rise from the dead? If so, what proof exists to reach that conclusion with intellectual integrity?

WHAT ABOUT SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE?

Evidence leading to proof is usually gathered in one of two ways. First is the scientific method—an experiment conducted in a controlled environment, usually a laboratory. This means exact circumstances must be recreated and the experiment repeated. Scientists form hypotheses from the data gathered.

WHAT ABOUT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE?

What evidence exists to prove that Christ rose from the dead?

Historical events, on the other hand, occur at one moment in time and may not be duplicated. Since we cannot use the scientific method to prove that Julius Caesar existed, we then apply another method of proof, the legal historical method. It is used in courts of law

to prove guilt or innocence. It is also used to verify the reliability of reported historical events. To safeguard our intellectual integrity, we should not be afraid to apply this method to our study of Jesus Christ. It helps us substantiate His claims that He is the Savior of the world and the personal Savior and Lord of those who receive Him. After all, His life, death, and resurrection are reported in many historical documents.

Professor **Wolfgang Pannenberg** of the University of Munich argues that whether the resurrection of Jesus took place or not is an inescapable historical question. Therefore, the question must be decided on the level of historical argument. For Pannenberg “the resurrection of Jesus is a publicly accessible, objective event in history.”⁴⁷ If our knowledge of the past is always based upon evidence and testimony from the past, then the next logical question related to that premise is whether the testimony is reliable.

IS TESTIMONY REGARDING THE RESURRECTION RELIABLE?

When testimony is being evaluated, it must be open to both verification and falsification for those evaluating it. If someone says it is raining outside, that statement is open to verification or falsification. Therefore, when we deal with the testimony regarding the resurrection, we must apply those same principles used in a court of law in examining the reliability of any historical evidence. Listen to what some legal experts whose thinking is guided by these principles have to say about the evidence related to the resurrection.

Professor **Thomas Arnold**, for fourteen years the Lord Master of Rugby University, author of *The History of Rome*, and holder of the Chair of Modern History at Oxford University, was well acquainted with evaluating evidence to determine historical fact. After carefully sifting the historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ, this great scholar said:

I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proven by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.⁴⁸

John Copeley, a professor at Cambridge University who rose to the highest office in the judgeship in England was recognized as one of the greatest legal minds in British history. He said, “I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never been broken down yet.”⁴⁹

After investigating the evidence of the Resurrection, **Lord Darling**, former Chief Justice of England said, “There exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring a verdict that the resurrection story is true.”⁵⁰

IS THE EVIDENCE PROVIDED BY FORMER SKEPTICS VALID?

Many skeptics throughout history started out to disprove the Resurrection, but came to faith in Christ when confronted with the evidence. One was Professor **Simon Greenleaf**. He was professor of law and head of the law department at Harvard University, one of the finest universities in the United States. He wrote a book entitled, *The Principles of Legal Evidence*. Three of his students challenged Professor Greenleaf to take his book, apply it to the resurrection of Christ, and investigate the reliability of the evidence of Jesus rising from the dead. Professor Greenleaf accepted their challenge. After his study he said, “There’s no better documented historical evidence than that for the resurrection of Christ.” Greenleaf concluded that according to the jurisdiction of legal evidence the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the best supported event in all of history.⁵¹

Two other skeptics were professors at Oxford University. One was **Lord Lyttleton** and the other was Dr. **Gilbert West**. They wanted to destroy the myth of Christianity. They knew that they must disprove first the resurrection of Christ and, second, the changed lives of the disciples. Dr. West intended to show the fallacy of the resurrection and Lord Lyttleton was to explain away the radical conversion of Saul of Tarsus who had tried to destroy first-century Christians. One year later both men had become Christians. West went on to write a book entitled, *Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, and Lyttleton wrote, *The Conversion of St. Paul*.⁵²

Frank Morrison, a British lawyer who set out to write a book repudiating the resurrection of Christ, did write a book. However, it was not the book he had meant to write. As he examined the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, this skeptical lawyer found it so overwhelming that he was forced to accept it and became a believer. The book he did write, *Who Moved The Stone?*, sets forth the evidence for the resurrection of Christ.

Lew Wallace also set out to write a book disproving the deity of Christ and His resurrection. Instead he, defended it in his famous book, *Ben Hur*. After six years of impartial investigation he said, “I have come to the deliberate conclusion that Jesus Christ was the Messiah of the Jews, the Saviour of the world, and my personal Saviour.”⁵³

ARE YOU GUILTY OF CLOSED THINKING?

It needs to be said that some people, no matter what the evidence presented, would refuse to believe it. Many people reject the claims of God and the person of Christ based not upon intellectual investigation but upon philosophical presuppositions. Author Dallas Willard says, “If a person doesn’t want to know God—well, God has created the world and the human mind in such a way that he doesn’t have to.”⁵⁴ On the university campus one can often

If a person does not want to know God—well, God has created the world and human mind in such a way that he does not have to.

find people who say they do not believe in the resurrection because they do not believe in God, or in the supernatural, or in miracles. Instead they adhere to a closed system of thought. The philosophers Spinoza and Hume said that even if presented the evidence for the resurrection, they would not believe it. Why? Not because of a lack of evidence but because they already believed that there is no God, no supernatural, and no miracles.

What governs your thinking—intellectual integrity or philosophical myopia?

It is not necessary to add that such thinking is not intellectual integrity, but philosophical myopia (meaning tunnel vision or narrow-minded thinking). Even if all evidence says $2+2 = 4$, the closed mind argues, I choose to believe it can only be three.

Therefore, the appeal is to earnest seekers, those with genuine desire to know God. The appeal is to your intellectual integrity, like that of earlier skeptics who set out to objectively disprove God.

Here is a quote from the Book of Acts in the New Testament, which Sir William Ramsey, the well-known archaeologist, called one of the most accurate histories of the first century:

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.⁵⁵

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the Life.”⁵⁶ When He rose from the dead, He proved it. The Life of God is now available for all who will receive it through Jesus Christ.

A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

“If the historical evidence about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is reliable and valid, do you agree that this qualifies Him to make the claim, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’ ”?

7 THREE SPECIFIC FACTS

KEY POINTS

1. *If Jesus Christ DID NOT rise from the dead, He was just an ordinary man and there is no reason for anyone to believe in Him.*
2. *If Jesus Christ died for our sins and if He DID rise from the dead, His resurrected life can fill the spiritual emptiness in every human being.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- What are the facts related to Jesus' death?
 - What is the natural option?
 - What is the supernatural option?
-

There are three specific facts upon which both Christians and non-Christians agree. These three evidences are:

FIRST, Jesus Christ was crucified.

SECOND, there was an empty tomb.

THIRD, there was an Easter proclamation: He is risen!

WHAT ARE THE FACTS RELATED TO JESUS' DEATH?

Jesus was crucified on the cross around A.D. 29. He was taken down from the cross and was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Historical

documents state that a large stone weighing between one and two tons was placed at the front of the tomb. On that stone was placed the Roman seal, which had a psychological effect, much as if the Secret Service put its seal on a door. It says, “you break that seal, and we will break you.” A Roman guard was then placed in front of the tomb to make sure nothing happened to the body. Alexander Metherell states, “The Romans weren’t about to risk their own death by allowing him to walk away alive.”⁵⁷ That Roman guard consisted of between four and sixteen well-trained military men. Yet the tomb was empty three days later.

Some skeptics, attempting to explain the empty tomb, present theories that actually require more faith to believe than the Resurrection itself.

One theory set forth by Venturini, is called the **swoon theory**. It suggests that Jesus did not really die on the cross, He was only unconscious. He was taken down off the cross, and when He was put in the tomb, the dampness of the tomb revived His body. He moved the large stone, tiptoed around the guards, appeared to His disciples as a triumphant God, and then went off and died somewhere. Even most skeptics do not embrace this, but some use it to try to reinforce their positions that Christ did not rise from the dead. Alexander Metherell, M.D., Ph.D. is quoted as saying, “He (Jesus) couldn’t possibly have faked his death, because you can’t fake the inability to breathe for long. Besides, the spear thrust into his heart would have settled the issue once and for all.”⁵⁸

Another theory says the women who discovered the empty tomb went to the **wrong tomb**. If the women went to the wrong tomb, that means the Roman guards also went to the wrong tomb. That means the Jewish leaders went to the wrong tomb. Otherwise, Jesus’ body would have been found in the right tomb.

The alternative to these and similar theories is that the **tomb was actually empty** and the disciples proclaimed, “He is risen! Jesus Christ is alive! He forgives sins and gives eternal life to those who believe.” If this was a lie, the Jewish officials had only to go to the tomb, get the body, and display it in the middle of Jerusalem, saying, “There is your risen Savior,” and the Christian movement and resurrection proclamation would have been over. But they were unable to produce the body. The tomb was empty!

John Warwick Montgomery, Christian apologist and former dean of Simon Greenleaf School of Law, writes, “It passes the bounds of

credibility that the early Christians could have manufactured such a tale and then preached it among those who might easily have refuted it simply by producing the body of Jesus.”⁵⁹

Paul Althaus of the University of Erlangen in Germany adds, “The resurrection could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned.”⁶⁰

The empty tomb can be explained as either natural or supernatural. If God truly raised Christ supernaturally from the dead, I can rightly and truthfully call you to repent of your sins and trust Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, for that is the logical response.

WHAT IS THE NATURAL OPTION?

If someone removed the body, the natural option, then who? The Roman soldiers? No, the Roman soldiers were placed there to keep the body in the tomb. The Jewish officials? No, they would have just brought it out and declared, “There’s your risen Savior,” to refute the disciples’ claims. In fact, for the Jewish leaders to have stolen the body of Jesus would have been against their own best interests.⁶¹

Perhaps the disciples removed the body and spread the lie that Jesus was God and rose from the dead. However, evidence found by those who investigated suggests the opposite. First, the disciples did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead. Jesus had told them over and over that He would die and three days later rise from the grave, but they did not understand Him. Once Jesus died, the disciples were fearful people, hiding, running for their lives. Their leader was dead, and their dreams were shattered. They did not seem to remember what He had told them about His resurrection.⁶²

Yet, within several days after the resurrection this same group became bold, courageous, and visionary. What caused such a great change? It was not because they had seen an empty tomb—it was because they had seen Christ alive, risen from the dead.

What would the disciples gain by fabricating a story about Christ’s resurrection? Prestige? Wealth? Power? Position? Let me tell you what

What would the disciples gain by fabricating a story about Christ’s resurrection?

they gained. According to tradition all but one died martyrs' deaths. Some were decapitated. Some were crucified. Some were stoned to death or beaten to death; all because they claimed Jesus is alive and offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Here is a list of what the twelve apostles and early Christian leaders gained by holding on to the declaration that Christ has risen:⁶³

THE APOSTLES

- Andrew—crucified on a cross
- Bartholomew (Nathanael)—beaten, crucified, then beheaded
- James son of Alphaeus—thrown from a pinnacle of the temple and beaten to death
- James (son of Zebedee)—beheaded
- John—natural causes
- Matthias (replacement for Judas Iscariot)—stoned and beheaded
- Matthew (Levi)—run through with a spear
- Peter—crucified head down
- Simon (the Zealot)—crucified
- Thomas—thrust through with a spear
- Thaddaeus (Judas son of James)—killed by arrows
- Philip—crucified and stoned to death⁶⁴

OTHER EARLY CHRISTIAN LEADERS

- Barnabas—stoned to death
- James, brother of Jesus—stoned to death
- Luke—hanged on an olive tree
- Mark—dragged through the streets by his feet and then burned to death
- Paul—beheaded

If this story of the resurrection were a lie, early Christians would have known it was a lie. For them to live a lie is certainly inconsistent with what we know about their moral lives.

THREE SPECIFIC FACTS

Historian **Harold Mattingly** emphasized the truth that the apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul sealed their witness with their blood. **Tectallin** wrote that no man would be willing to die unless he knew he had the truth.

It is true that a lot of people have died for a lie, but only when they believed it to be the truth. It is not normal for people to die for a lie that they know is a lie. If the disciples did lie, they were deliberately deceiving the whole world. This certainly is not in line with their teachings and writings in Scripture or with the moral conduct they were telling people to live by. They taught honesty, integrity, and truthfulness.

Edward Gibbon in his book, *The History of the Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire*, lists five reasons for the spread of Christianity in the first century, one of which is “the pure and austere morals of the Christians.”⁶⁵ The whole message of Christ is to love one another, to be kind, and to speak the truth. Could they have been living a colossal lie? No, I believe they had seen the risen Christ, their lives were radically changed, and they went to the world to tell the Good News of Christ’s love for each person. They told of His death as their substitute, of His resurrection that conquered death, and that He was and is now alive. He stands ready to give life because He is the Way and the Truth for all who trust in Him.

Paul Little asks in his book, *Know Why You Believe*, are these men, who helped transform the moral structure of society consummate liars or deluded madmen? These alternatives are harder to believe than the fact of the resurrection, and there is no shred of evidence to support them.⁶⁶

WHAT IS THE SUPERNATURAL OPTION?

The other option to explain His resurrection is supernatural: God raised Him from the grave and He lives today. I believe this is not only the truth but rational truth.

Jesus said that He was the only way to a relationship with God and the only truth that could set people free. He is the only path up the mountain. Only through Him can humankind become whole and know the true and living God. Only through Jesus Christ does humanity gain life. Jesus said He was “the life,” conquering death on our behalf.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF JOHN MAISEL

During my university years, a statement by Blaise Pascal deeply impressed me. Pascal was a brilliant seventeenth-century French mathematician. He dazzled Europe with sophisticated mathematical equations when he was only sixteen years old. By age thirty-one, Pascal had come to the conclusion that there is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person that can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, who is made known through Jesus Christ.

There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person.

That statement by Pascal made an impact on me. I recognized that vacuum in my life. I was asking questions such as, “Who am I?” “Where am I going?” “What am I doing here?” Moreover, no matter what I accomplished in life, I had a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness. I was trying to find answers. I gave myself to athletic pursuit. However, no matter what I accomplished, my life was still void of meaning. I gave myself to intellectual pursuits, but no matter what I accomplished there at the university, I had a sense that there was something missing in my life. You see, my friend, God has made you and me in such a way that we will never have a sense of completeness, fullness, and meaning until we come to know Him in a personal way.

God has made us to simultaneously function in three ways: physically, mentally, and spiritually. He has made us physical beings. He has given us our mental capacity. He has also given us a spiritual capacity. Yet most of us go through life as only two thirds of a person. We develop ourselves physically and mentally, but not spiritually. We will never be complete until we come to know God personally, and that is through the person of Jesus Christ. That is the only way that the spiritual emptiness within us will ever be filled.

THREE SPECIFIC FACTS

TWO QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

“If God truly raised Jesus Christ from the dead, are you willing to repent of your sins and trust Him as your personal Savior and Lord?”

“If you realize there is a God-shaped vacuum in your life, are you ready to ask Jesus Christ to fill it?”

8^A CRUCIAL QUESTION

KEY POINTS

1. *If God put the debt we owe for our sins on Jesus Christ, and He offers us the gift of eternal life, we have an obligation to receive His gift.*
2. *If it is true that God wants to have a personal relationship with us, we should make the decision to accept His invitation.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- How can a person know Jesus Christ personally?
- How can a person receive God's gift?
- What is true faith?

The emphasis of this lesson deals with the most crucial question of the course. I want you to understand how to know Jesus Christ personally.

HOW CAN A PERSON KNOW JESUS CHRIST PERSONALLY?

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GOD LOVES YOU

First, you must understand that God loves you. We are told that God

loves the world so much that He gave us Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”⁶⁷

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU NEED HIM

If we want to approach God, *we must acknowledge that we need Him*. We must acknowledge that because of our rebellion, there is a chasm between us and God. The chasm is called sin. It separates us from God.

REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY

This brings up the *next* point: Jesus said, “But *unless you repent* [or turn from your former ways] *you too will all perish*.”⁶⁸ Repentance simply means a change of mind; a change of mind that will influence your behavior and lifestyle. All of life you have moved in a direction away from God. God desires to have a relationship with you. He wants you to turn around and move toward Him. We do this by acknowledging before God that we are sinners and that we wish to change our thinking about Him.

JESUS DIED FOR YOU

Finally, you must understand that Jesus died on the cross for you. To illustrate the sin issue, let us say you and I each have a debt of sin. A debt means we have an obligation to pay. We have sinned against God. We have offended and harmed our fellow human beings. We have been selfish and rebellious. We have chosen to go our own way, rather than God’s way. We have an obligation to God to pay for our sins, but there is nothing we can do to pay such a great debt. I cannot pay your debt because I have my own debt. You cannot pay my debt because you have your own debt.

***You need someone
who has the
capacity to pay
your debt.***

It is as if you owe someone ten million rubles (or dollars), and you earn only one ruble a day. There is no way that you can pay that debt. You need someone who has the capacity to pay your debt because the results of sin have a consequence, which is eternal separation from God. The good news is that the debt has already been paid for us. The Bible says, “Christ died for our sins.”⁶⁹ It also says, “For the wages [results] of sin is death,

but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁷⁰

A STORY FROM RUSSIAN HISTORY

When Nicholas II was Czar of Russia, a father enlisted his son in the military with the hope of instilling discipline and direction in his life. Among other things, the young fellow had a weakness for gambling, and the atmosphere of army life seemed to hurt rather than help.

His army job was bookkeeping. As his gambling debts grew, he borrowed money from the outpost treasury to pay his debts. He kept losing instead of winning and sank deeper and deeper into debt. One night, contemplating his situation, he added up his debts. When he saw the immense total, he wrote across the ledger, “So great a debt, who can pay?” He sat back in his chair; gun in hand, to reflect a few moments. As he contemplated his life and his death, he fell asleep. Czar Nicholas II was inspecting the outpost that night. When he entered the bookkeeper’s shack, he saw the sleeping man, the loaded gun, and the revealing ledger.

When the soldier awoke, he stared at the ledger and read the words, “So great a debt, who can pay?” Underneath were the words, “Paid in full, Czar Nicholas II!” You see, Czar Nicholas II had the resources to pay the debt. A debt is what you owe someone. A penalty is what you receive when you break a law that results in a debt you can’t pay.

A SUBSTITUTE FOR OUR SINS

■
The greatest violations in the universe carry with them the greatest consequences.
■

If someone breaks the speeding law in an auto, he receives a penalty, that of having to pay so many rubles (or dollars) for breaking the law. That is his penalty; it is his debt to society. If he kills someone, he receives a more painful penalty, that of death. He will be executed for breaking the law and committing murder. As you can see, the greater the law broken the greater the penalty. The reason there is eternal separation from God (the wages of sin being death) is because of the severity of the law broken; that of not living according to the standards of a perfectly holy and righteous God. The greatest violations in the universe carry with them the greatest consequences.

That is why God the Son became a man and lived a perfect life. He had no sin. He had no debt. So God put on Jesus Christ the debt we owe for our sins, and Christ in His love for us paid our debt by dying in our place. Now God can forgive you and give you a new life if you choose to receive Christ. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”⁷¹

Suppose your friend was dying of cancer, and because you loved and cared so much for your friend you asked the doctor to do a transfusion that would take the cancer cells out of his body and put them in your body. What would happen? He would live, and you would die. Why? Because that which was causing his death was placed in you and you would die in his place and he would live. That is what Christ did for you at the cross.

***God put on Jesus
Christ the debt we
owe for our sins.***

The Bible says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”⁷²

HOW CAN A PERSON RECEIVE GOD’S GIFT?

A DECISION TO BE MADE

Accepting your sinfulness and Christ’s death for your sins, and understanding it intellectually, does not bring you into a relationship with God. So a decision is necessary. The Bible says: “But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God.”⁷³ Each person must individually receive Christ in order to become a member of God’s family.

A GIFT FROM GOD

What we accept from God is a gift because there is nothing we can give Him in return. We cannot say, “Here are my good works. I want to cover my debt with my good works; they should get me into heaven.” The Bible says, “For it is by grace [unmerited kindness] you have been saved [made a child of God], through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”⁷⁴ The Bible also says, “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in

Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁷⁵

A GIFT TO BE RECEIVED

Suppose a friend says I have a pen that I wish to give you as a gift. You may say it is a beautiful pen, and you may want to have the pen. What must you do to have it? You must accept it. You may believe in the pen and personally have great intellectual information about the pen. But the pen is not yours until you accept it.

Of course, you can stay where you are right now, separated from God. Regarding that decision, He says, “the wages of sin is death.” Then He adds, “But the gift of God is eternal life.” The gift is free, but you must accept it to make it yours.

HOW TO RECEIVE THE GIFT

How do you receive the gift? You accept it by reaching out and taking it from the giver. For example, it is as if I were to knock at the door of your home. You might choose to remain seated and say, “That’s John, and I don’t want to see him.” I would finally go away. Or you might choose to come to the door and say, “John, I don’t like you and don’t want to see you. Good-bye.” And I would leave. Or you could choose to open the door and say, “John, good to see you, come in. Join me in my home.” At your invitation I would come into your home. You made a decision to receive me into your home.

What we accept from God is a gift because there is nothing we can give Him in return.

That is exactly the picture Jesus Christ describes of His relationship with you. He says, “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come and eat with him, and he with me.”⁷⁶ This decision is by faith. It is trust in the truth of God. This faith in Jesus Christ involves three things.

- First, you must have knowledge of the fact of what God did through Jesus Christ because of His love for you.
- Second, you must believe that fact and accept it as true.
- Third, and most important, to have true faith you must put your personal TRUST in the facts and rely on Christ’s work on the cross to be the sufficient payment for your sins.

WHAT IS TRUE FAITH?

- Knowledge of the Facts
- Belief of the Truth
- Personal Trust

Look at it like this. Suppose you *KNOW* all about an elevator, and you *BELIEVE* in it. You believe that it will get you from the first floor to the fifth floor. However, you do not experience it until you get on the elevator, until you *TRUST* in the elevator by depending on it.

***Faith in Jesus
Christ is not a leap
in the dark; it is a
step into the light.***

Jesus Christ is alive today. He paid a fantastic price so that you and I could have a relationship with God. He loves you, and He offers you forgiveness as a free gift. All you need to do is to thank Him for dying in your place, trust Him, and make the decision to receive Him. You must make the choice by opening the door of your heart and life to Him who knocks and wants to come in.

Would you like to come to know Jesus Christ today? Faith in Christ is an intelligent faith; it has a rational basis. It is not a leap into the dark; it is a step into the light. Jesus Christ is alive. It takes a little faith to bring you and God's love together. You do not have to understand everything. But once you say, "Yes, Jesus, thank you for dying for me; I ask you to come into my life," then Christ is free to come into your life. Then you will begin to experience what these lessons are all about. The Bible summarizes the good news about Jesus Christ in this way.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.⁷⁷

LET'S REVIEW

GOD'S POSITION

What is God like? God is both loving and perfect.

OUR CONDITION.

What are we like? We are sinful and separated from God.

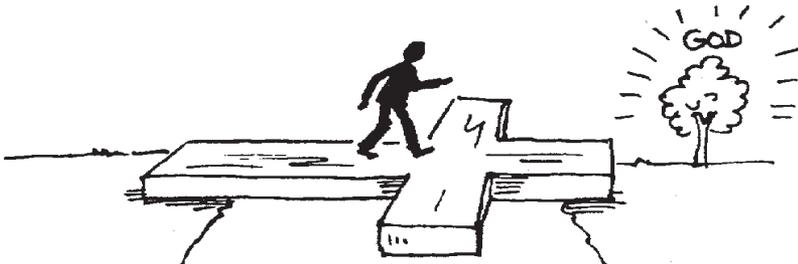
GOD'S PROVISION.

What did God do about our sin problem? He gave His son Jesus Christ to die on the cross as a satisfactory payment for our sins. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God."⁷⁸

RECEIVE CHRIST

**THE WAGES
OF SIN IS
DEATH . . .**

**. . . BUT THE
GIFT OF GOD IS
ETERNAL LIFE**



**A LIFE SEPARATED
FROM GOD**

NO ESCAPE FROM SIN
HOPELESSNESS
EMPTINESS
LACK OF PURPOSE
UNSURE OF ETERNAL DESTINY

**A LIFE IN HARMONY
WITH GOD**

FORGIVENESS
ETERNAL LIFE
CHILD OF GOD
ABUNDANT LIFE
PEACE

God has made it possible to come to Him through prayer. Such a prayer makes it possible for you to become a member of God's family and be given total forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. Read the following prayer slowly if you are ready to trust Christ as your Savior. Make it your own prayer to God.

MY PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

Father God, I admit that I am a sinner and understand that my sin separates me from you. I believe that Jesus, being God, paid the penalty for all my sins when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for me. I ask you to forgive me of my sins. I repent of my ways and

A CRUCIAL QUESTION

want to change the direction of my life. Lord Jesus, I open the door of my life. I ask You to come into my life as Savior and Lord. I trust You alone for the forgiveness of my sins and the free gift of eternal life. In Jesus name, Amen.

The words of this prayer are not what save you and make you a child of God. It is your trust in Christ that saves. This prayer helps you express that trust.

If you have now prayed this prayer, I want you to read in the Bible the third chapter of the Gospel of John and then read the rest of John's Gospel.

Please complete the Response Page at the end of this book and send your comments and questions to the address provided. Tell us your thoughts as you read this book and prayed the prayer to receive Christ as your Savior. We have additional information to send you that will help you grow in your relationship with Jesus.

A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

“Would you like to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord today?”

If your answer is yes, please read “My Prayer for Forgiveness” several times until you can accept the facts by faith that God loves you and wants to have a personal relationship with you.

9 YOUR DECISION

KEY POINTS

1. *If you asked Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior, you have received the gift of God.*
2. *If Jesus is your Savior, you have now been given the gift of eternal life.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- What happens now?
 - How can I be sure?
 - What are the facts?
-

If you prayed the prayer inviting Jesus into your life, you can be confident that you are a child of God and part of His eternal family. The following comments will help you as you consider the decision you have made.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

RECEIVE CHRIST

The Bible says, “To all who received Him, to those who believe in His name He gave the right to become children of God.”⁷⁹ To become a member of God’s family, you must receive Jesus Christ into your life. You must understand that you are receiving a gift.

THE GIFT OF GOD

The Bible says, “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”⁸⁰ As you can clearly see, when you receive Christ you are receiving the gift that God offers. It is not based upon your works. This is so that no one can boast. After you have become a member of God’s family by receiving Christ as your personal Savior, good works and a changed life will result, but good works did not bring about that relationship.

YOUR CHOICE

Receiving God’s gift is simple. Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door [of your life] and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and will eat with him, and he with Me.”⁸¹ Jesus is saying that He will come into your life in the same way that you would open the door and invite someone into your house. This is what the Bible calls being “born again,” which means that you are born into and become a part of God’s family.

HOW CAN I BE SURE?

HOW TO BE SURE

The Bible says, “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”⁸²

QUESTION

Did you receive Jesus? Yes? Then the fact is you have eternal life. “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus said, ‘Whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.’”⁸³ This clearly says that if you trust Christ for payment of your sins and receive Him into your life, you will not face judgment.

REVIEW

Go back and look at each action in the verse you just read.

CONFIRM YOUR RESPONSE

“Whoever *hears* My Word....And *believes* Him who sent Me.”

Did you read and hear His word?

Do you believe what God said?

Do you trust Christ as your Savior?

If your reply is “yes,” and you *believe* God sent Jesus to be your Savior, then you have “eternal life.”

When do you have eternal life? Now or later? No, right now.

“And *will not* be condemned...” It does not say, “might not be condemned.”

“He *has crossed* over from death to life.”

This means, “You do not have to worry about it.” In other words, you now have eternal life on the truthfulness of Jesus’ promise to you.

So when does our eternal life start? For all of us, eternal life begins the moment we believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And please note: these statements are based upon the fact of God’s Word, not on how you may feel.

DO NOT DEPEND ON YOUR FEELINGS

The promise of God’s Word, the Bible—not our feelings—is our authority. The follower of Christ lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God himself and His Word.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

The fact is, if you have received Christ, He has come into your life whether you feel it or not. Your faith must rest upon the assurance of God’s Word no matter what your feelings might say. When you received Christ by faith it was an act of your will. Moreover, the moment you did, many things happened.

1. **Christ came into your life.** “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”⁸⁴
2. **Your sins were forgiven.** “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”⁸⁵

YOUR DECISION

3. **You became a child of God.** “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”⁸⁶
4. **You received eternal life.** “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”⁸⁷
5. **You began the great adventure for which God created you.**
“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”⁸⁸

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY OF GOD!

(Please read the instructions for the Answer Pages and Response Page on page 75. We look forward to hearing from you soon.)

APPENDIX 1

ATHEISM

Following is an attempt to address the question of atheism with some additional information. People who hold an atheistic view really put themselves in a very difficult position. When you think through the issues, making the statement that there is no God is not a very rational position to assume.

First, when that statement is made, it violates a basic philosophical presupposition that says a finite person cannot draw an infinite or absolute conclusion. Atheism by definition is a nothingbutism, and nothingbutisms are always illogical. One cannot logically say there is nothing but something because then there would be nothing to compare it to for identification. So for an atheist to claim there is nothing but matter is meaningless. If that were so, one would be unable to identify it.

Let us look in more detail at the difficulty that the atheist puts himself or herself in when he or she tries to answer the question about the existence of the universe. Does this universe really exist? Does this building really exist? Do these chairs exist? Does anything really exist? If something does exist—where did it come from? There are really only two conclusions to that question. Either something or someone must be eternal, or something not eternal came from nothing.

The following are the only options the atheist has:

THAT WHICH IS ETERNAL IS THE UNIVERSE

The universe is not eternal and cannot be eternal. The second law of thermodynamics tells us so. The universe is like a giant machine that was supplied with a given amount of energy. The universe is expending that energy, and will grow old, and will one day die. In a sense, all things grow older and die. Cars do not get newer each year; they get older. Buildings do not get more beautiful each year; they get older and eventually fall into ruin. This is how the second law of thermodynamics works. It applies even to the universe.

The second law of thermodynamics is a fundamental law of contemporary physics. This law says that in a closed system the available energy will become less and less until “all the energy in the universe will eventually be lost in irreclaimable form.”⁸⁹ This is called a growth in entropy (disorder) that finally results in heat death. The second law of thermodynamics predicts that the universe will experience heat death in a finite period of time.

For the atheist, however, the universe is an eternal system: there is no God, and the universe is all there is. Think about it. Atheists assume the universe has simply always existed. But infinite time embraces any finite period of time. If atheists are right, the universe would already have reached the point of heat death. This has obviously not happened, because there is enough energy left to power this discussion. We conclude, therefore, that atheists have accepted an incorrect assumption.

Gordon Van Wylen—The fact that the universe has not experienced heat death has certain implications: (1) the universe is not old enough for heat death to occur, and (2) the universe had a beginning. Moreover, the order and structure of the universe suggest there was an intelligent creator. Gordon Van Wylen, Dean of Engineering at the University of Michigan, addresses this issue in his widely used text, *Thermodynamics*. Van Wylen, speaking of himself, says, “The author has found that the Second Law [of thermodynamics] tends to increase his conviction that there is a creator who has the answer for the destiny of man and the universe.”⁹⁰

THE UNIVERSE IS NOT ETERNAL

The second choice the atheist has if the first is not true is to say that the universe is not eternal. If he or she is being honest with the laws of physics, regarding the question, “where did the universe come from?” the next position is that, “the universe created itself.” However, that is illogical and absurd. For something to create itself without existing prior cannot be true. One of the basic laws of science is nothing can come from nothing. The atheist must say, the universe is not eternal, and if this non-eternal universe exists, he or she cannot conclude that it created itself from nothing. As we said, nothing can come from nothing, so it did not create itself.

EVERYTHING MUST BE AN ILLUSION

The next perspective could be, everything must be an illusion. In other words, we are not really here. This building is not real. It is an illusion. However, we know that this cannot be true. Because we can set specific times and make predictions with comets, with sunrise, and sunsets, most atheists conclude that this is not true.

THIS NON-ETERNAL UNIVERSE WAS CREATED

The only other option that the atheist has is that something or someone who is eternal created this non-eternal universe. That something that is eternal is someone—God. That is the Christian view and it is a rational view.

To the follower of Christ, that WHO is eternal, and is an infinite personal God who created this universe and everything in it, including human beings. Two key factors that we can appeal to are: (1) the arguments of cause and effect, and (2) the idea that for every design there must be a designer.

Cause and effect—For every effect, there has to be an equal and a greater cause. As I look at this natural universe there is nothing to explain this effect of the universe. There is nothing in the universe that is of sufficient cause to cause this effect. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the ultimate cause must be outside the universe.

Design and designer—I look at design and assume a designer. You know a watch did not just happen. You cannot take the pieces of a watch and put them in a box, shake them up and out comes a watch. A watchmaker made a watch. I look at the effect of a building. Wind did not create a building. There was design behind a building. All of scientific investigation is based upon order and design.

When the Russian cosmonaut went into space and said, “I see no God here” that is like going into an art gallery and seeing a beautiful picture and saying, “I see no artist.” The painting of Mona Lisa did not paint itself. There was a master artist—Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa.

LET US ASSUME THERE IS A GOD

Because I am a human being, I think, I feel, I make choices, and I know that I am an effect. It is reasonable to assume that God is both infinite and personal, because I am finite and personal. He created me like himself, in His image with the ability to think, feel, and make choices.

HOW CAN I KNOW THAT THIS “ABSOLUTE” WE CALL GOD IS PERSONAL?

Is it more reasonable to think that the absolute is personal or impersonal? Notice that we have used our minds in reasoning to the absolute. Would it not be strange if it required rational minds and personalities to engage in this argumentation, and when we finally arrived at God, He is non-rational? It would be more reasonable to assume that the reason we are able to get there rationally is that He is a rational being himself.

Further, in our experience the impersonal does not give rise to the personal. You do not have birdhouses giving rise to birds. The personal gives rise to the impersonal. Human beings build bridges; bridges do not turn into people. Therefore, it is more reasonable to assume that the Source of the universe is personal and rational than that the Source of the universe is impersonal and irrational. Life did not evolve from non-life. If I am an effect, then, there must be a cause that is greater than someone like me.

The atheist has a big problem in understanding any type of moral values. If he or she concludes there is nothing eternal, then there are no absolutes. Therefore, who determines what is right and what is wrong? It is like the Russian writer Dostoyevski who said, “If there is no God, then everything is permitted.” If there is no absolute God in authority, then who determines the value of anything? The atheist has no answer for the question, where did the laws of logic come from? Therefore, he or she can never defend his or her position from logic because logic must have an ultimate source of appeal.

DOES LIFE MAKE SENSE WITHOUT GOD?

If there is no God, life is absurd. Humankind's values would be changing, hence moral truth would be relative, but that is impossible. Human utopia and education are also meaningless because mankind faces death and with it extinction. The universe also faces death, so life holds no ultimate significance. The contributions of scientists to human knowledge, the advances in medicine, the effort of the diplomats to secure peace in the world, the sacrifices of good people everywhere all come to nothing. Humanity without God is essentially nothing more than a swarm of flies or a herd of pigs. If humankind ends in nothing, it is nothing.

IS IT REASONABLE TO ELIMINATE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD?

The existence of God cannot be deemed impossible because the cause and effect argument cannot be invalidated. Of course, God cannot be self-caused. However, there is an alternative other than an unending line of causes—namely an eternal God. An eternal God could be a cause, yet need no cause. In addition, since the universe is not eternal and all causes are greater than their effects, the cause of the universe must ultimately be eternal.

APPENDIX 2

CAN WE PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD WITHOUT A BIBLE?

An adequate case for the existence of God can be made without reference to any Bible or holy book. Simple observation and logical thinking can construct a case for God.

In brief, the existence of God follows these three steps:

1. Every effect has a cause.
2. The universe is an effect. Therefore,
3. The universe has a cause, which we call God.

PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Here is a longer, twenty-step proof for the existence of God:

1. Every effect has a cause, which is greater (that is, more complex) than itself.
2. The universe is an effect which must have a cause that is greater (more complex) than itself.
3. The universe exists.

Therefore,

4. The cause of the universe exists.
5. The universe contains the personal and the moral. (We humans are personal and moral.)

Therefore,

6. A personal moral cause for the universe exists. So the cause can now be called "He" not IC.
7. The universe does not create something from nothing (by observation), yet it is something. (See 3 above.)
8. Therefore, the universe had to be created from nothing (or from something that was ultimately created from nothing).

Therefore,

9. The personal moral existing cause for the universe can create (i.e., a personal moral Creator exists).
10. Creator-Cause who would in turn have a Creator-Cause and so forth. This leads to an infinite regress of causes....CN-C3-C2-C1-U
11. But that would mean that at least one finite Creator-Cause would be either:
 - a. Self-caused or
 - b. Uncaused

That is impossible because (a) a being cannot precede itself to cause itself and, (b) nothing finite is uncaused (by observation).

Therefore,

12. All the causes cannot be finite (non-ultimate) causes.

Therefore,

13. The personal moral existing Creator-Cause is infinite (i.e., ultimate).
14. The infinite cause must be eternal because eternity is infinity applied to time (and no meaningful statement can be made about space without reference to time).
15. An infinite eternal Cause could not change (since anything He would change into, He would already be).

Therefore,

16. The Creator-Cause must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-perfect (otherwise He could change).

Therefore,

17. A personal, moral, infinite, eternal, immutable (unchanging), all-knowing, all-powerful, all-perfect Creator-Cause exists.
18. Such a Being is worthy of worship.
19. A Being worthy of worship can be called God.

Therefore,

20. GOD EXISTS.

CONCLUSION

Atheism must be rejected as a reasonable worldview.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

“As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene...Jesus is too colossal for the pen of phrasemongers, however artful. No man can dispose of Christianity with a *bon mot*....No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word.”

Albert Einstein, “*The Saturday Evening Post*,” 26 October 1929.

ENDNOTES

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- ² Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2000), 480. <http://www.shakinandshinin.org/JesusQuotes.html> (accessed September 14, 2004).
- ³ John 14:6
- ⁴ Confucius said, "This is the Tao. I do not know if anyone has ever kept it." Confucius, *Analects of Confucius*, Part 14, verse 30, <http://classics.mit.edu/Confucius/analects.3.3.html> (accessed August 6, 2004).
- ⁵ John 8:46
- ⁶ John 8:24
- ⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillian Publishing Co., Inc., 1952), pp. 55, 56.
- ⁸ Matthew 16:13
- ⁹ Matthew 16:15
- ¹⁰ Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (New York: Carolton Publishers, 1863) p. 376. http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/ernest_renan/life_of_jesus.html (accessed July 29, 2004).
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- ¹³ Hiram E. Casey, ed., *Law, Love and Religion of Napoleon Bonaparte in His Own Words*, (New York: Carlton Press, 1961), p. 64. <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/sg2359.htm> (accessed September 9, 2004)
- ¹⁴ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch02.htm (accessed September 30, 2004)

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- ¹⁵ James Allen Francis, *One Solitary Life* (Washington D.C. Congressional record, Vol. 115, 1969) 13,150. <http://www.tpub.com/religion/missions/jesus/index.htm> (accessed August 17, 2004).
- ¹⁶ Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), pp. 164, 165.
- ¹⁷ Schaff, http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch02.htm (accessed September 30, 2004).
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- ⁷² 2 Corinthians 5:21
- ⁷³ John 1:12
- ⁷⁴ Ephesians 2:8,9
- ⁷⁵ Romans 6:23
- ⁷⁶ Revelation 3:20
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- ⁷⁸ Romans 3:23
- ⁷⁹ John 1:12
- ⁸⁰ Ephesians 2:8, 9
- ⁸¹ Revelation 3:20
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NOTE

Other subjects are also available, such as:

- *The Great Questions of Life*
- *Your New Life*
- *When You Pray*
- *Who Jesus Is*

You may obtain these subjects from the local office address on page 2.

INSTRUCTIONS

After you have completed the Answer Pages and Response Page, please remove them from your book and send them to us with the names and addresses of your friends who would also like to receive *Is Jesus God?*

We look forward to receiving your response. May the joy and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1. Study the lessons well and carefully review them. Then answer the questions. (Remove these and any other pages from the book with responses or addresses you wish to send to us.)
2. When you have marked all your answers, please remove the ANSWER PAGES from this book and send them to the address found on page 2.
3. Do not return the lessons. They are for you to keep.
4. Write the address given on page 2 clearly on an envelope. Be sure to put your return address and postage on the envelope. Then insert the selected pages and send them to the address provided.
5. If you do not receive a reply within one month, it means that we have not received your letter. Please write to us again.

ANSWER PAGES

The following questions are called *multiple-choice questions*. Each question has three or four potential answers, but only one is correct. Mark the correct answer on these ANSWER PAGES. Please mark the letter preceding the answer of your choice in black ink or pencil.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. How certain can a person with finite understanding be when making an absolute statement about the nature of infinity?
 - a. Very uncertain about the nature of infinity
 - b. Somewhat uncertain about the nature of infinity
 - c. Somewhat certain about the nature of infinity
 - d. Very certain about the nature of infinity
2. Jesus was crucified for what primary reason?
 - a. Because He claimed He was God.
 - b. Because He could not prove He was innocent of the charges against Him.
 - c. Because He called the religious leaders hypocrites and they hated Him for it.
3. What kind of evidence verifies the reliability of the four Gospels?
 - a. There is too little external evidence to verify the reliability of the four Gospels.
 - b. There is more secular evidence for the historical reliability of the four gospels than any other piece of classical literature in existence today.
 - c. All reliable evidence has been destroyed.
4. If there is sufficient evidence to warrant an intelligent belief in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, which evidence is most commonly accepted as proof?
 - a. All the Old and New Testament prophecies that relate to Him and no one else in the world.
 - b. The confession of Jesus himself—He publicly said He was the Son of God.
 - c. The historical records of His contemporaries and others living in the first century A.D.
 - d. All of the above.

5. What evidence proves that Christ rose from the dead?
 - a. The tomb was empty even though it had been sealed and guarded by the Romans.
 - b. Jesus showed His wounded hands and feet to the disciples (especially to Thomas who doubted He was alive) after the resurrection.
 - c. Jesus showed himself to the disciples for 40 days after the resurrection.
 - d. All of the above
6. What would the disciples have to gain by fabricating a story about Christ's resurrection?
 - a. They could try to cover up a scandal because they really did believe Jesus was God's Son, their Messiah.
 - b. Nothing.
 - c. They could avoid persecution by sounding more realistic.
7. If there is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, how can it be filled?
 - a. By believing there is a God
 - b. By believing the gospel is true
 - c. By repenting of one's sins, believing and receiving Christ Jesus into one's life as an act of faith in His death on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins
8. If you have a debt that is impossible to pay, what do you need?
 - a. Good works (payments) to prove you regret the debt you created.
 - b. A person or source that can completely pay the debt you owe.
 - c. A lawyer to represent you to your creditors.
9. What did God do about the debt we owe for our sins?
 - a. He put the full debt and punishment for us on His Son.
 - b. He has no plan that will take away or forgive our sins.
 - c. He can not forgive us for our sin no matter what we do.
10. Now that you have studied this book, who do you believe Jesus is?
 - a. Legend
 - b. Liar
 - c. Lunatic
 - d. Lord



RESPONSE PAGE

YOUR NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

Thank you so much for studying these lessons called *Is Jesus God?* If you have enjoyed studying this subject please write about the blessings you have received on the following lines.

We would also request that you tell us how you feel about Jesus Christ. Have you come to believe in Him as your Master, Lord and Savior? If you have trusted him to take your sins away, please tell us about it.



DEAR FRIEND,

After you complete the nine lessons of *Is Jesus God?*, we are planning to send you more lessons about God's plan for your life.

If you will send us the names of your friends who you think might enjoy receiving *Is Jesus God?*, we will send them a copy also.

May the blessings of God be yours.

Thank you.

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF YOUR FRIENDS

FULL NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

AGE.....

GRADE LEVEL OR PROFESSION

FULL NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

AGE.....

GRADE LEVEL OR PROFESSION

FULL NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

AGE.....

GRADE LEVEL OR PROFESSION

