

THE ABC'S OF DEFENDING YOUR FAITH

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• US Religious Identity 2021 (Pew Forum)

1. Christian 63% (88% in 1972)
2. "None" 29% (7% in 1972) - Atheist 4% - Agnostic 5% - No religious affiliation 20%
3. All other religions 1-2% each

• Archaeology--no discovery contradicts¹ (much from 1000 B.C. on)

1. Jericho's evidence of existence & destruction
2. Solomon 2nd most noted historical figure
3. Augustus' deeds written on his temple wall, mentioning the census of Luke 2:1
4. Stone mentioning Pontius Pilate
5. Ossuary of Caiaphas, the High Priest

• Bible

1. Continuity--written over 1500 years by over 40 authors with 1 message (we're sinners & God has a Savior)
2. Delivery--books added through time
 - *Prophet seen as God's messenger; words written down, collected, & used (Da 9:2)*
3. Reliability of OT--Dead Sea Scrolls (oldest Hebrew version--100 BC)
 - *Isaiah 95% same as modern Hebrew OT; 5% is pen slips & misspelling*
4. Reliability of NT--compared to ancient literature (others accepted as trustworthy)
 - *More copies (24,633 vs. 643 of The Iliad)*
 - *Closer to original (250 years vs. 500 for The Iliad)*
 - *Fewer doubts (40 lines vs. 764 for The Iliad)*
5. Inerrancy (w/o contradiction)
 - *Variations in manuscripts are spelling or word changes*
 - *Variations in manuscripts have no doctrine change or contradiction*
6. Consistency--Jesus' OT was same as ours
 - *Used different order of books & divisions*
7. Prophecy--odds of fulfilling 8 of 61 Messianic prophecies--1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000

• Christ Jesus

1. Son of God (Mk 14:61-64)
2. Equality with Father (Jn 5:23, 24; 8:19; 10:30-33; 14:1; 14:9)
3. "I Am..." (Ex 3:14; Jn 6:35; 8:12; 8:57-58; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5)
4. Worshiped (Jn 9:35-39; 20:27-29; see Ac 10:25, 26; Re 19:10)
5. Lord, Liar, Lunatic (Mt 16:13-17; Jn 6:68-69)
 - *Lord--He is God; Liar--about being God, but then not a good man;*
 - *Lunatic--thinks He's God, but no craziness in biblical or historical record*

• Do religions vs. Done religion

1. All religions--you "do" something for salvation
2. Christianity--salvation is "done" by Christ

• Empty tomb--Resurrection

1. Abraham, Mohammed, Buddha did not
2. Even unbelievers knew of events (Ac 2:22; 26:25-26)

• Futile empty tomb theories

1. Swoon--Jesus fainted on cross, revived in tomb & appeared "alive" (Blood & water from side proves death)
2. Theft--disciples stole Jesus' body & said He was alive (Guards bribed; should have died for sleeping on job)
3. Hallucination--disciples thought they saw Jesus alive (Thomas touched Him)
4. Fraud--disciples lied about all events (Why die for lie?)

• Geography

1. 92% of OT, 98% of NT sites found
2. Pool of Siloam where Jesus healed a blind man
3. Jacob's Well, where Jesus met a Samaritan woman
4. Calvary
5. Jesus' tomb

¹ Renowned archaeologist Nelson Glueck said, "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible." (Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*)

• Historical records

1. An indictment appears in the Talmud for Yeshu Hannotzri, or “Jesus the Nazarene.” It says, “He shall be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and lured Israel into apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf. Anyone who knows where he is, let him declare it to the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.” (The Mishnah tractate, *Sanhedrin* 43a)
2. “At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. *They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have reported wonders.* And the tribe of the Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day.” (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18:63)
3. “Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun—unreasonably as it seems to me (unreasonably, of course, because a solar eclipse could not have taken place at the time of the full moon, and it was at the season of the Paschal full moon that Christ died)...Phlegon records that, in the time of Tiberius Caesar, at full moon, there was a full eclipse of the sun from the sixth hour to the ninth--manifestly that one of which we speak.” (Julius Africanus, *Chronography*, 18.1)
4. “Christus, the founder of the name (Christians), was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also.” (Tacitus, *Annals* XV,44)
5. “The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites and was crucified on that account...You see, these misguided creatures start with general conviction that they are immortal from all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which is so common among them; and then it was impressed upon them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.” (Lucian, *The Death of Peregrine*, 11-13)
6. “As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Christus, he expelled them from Rome.” (Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25.4)
7. “Punishment by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.” (Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 26.2)
8. Pliny the Younger wrote that he had found some people falsely accused of being Christian. Upon investigation, they summarily “cursed Christ--none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do.” However, the real Christians were simply “guilty” of the following: “They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so.” (Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* X, 96)
9. Miami University history professor Edwin Yamauchi summarizes these non-Christian sources from the first and second centuries, recording that Jesus was a teacher from Nazareth and lived a wise and virtuous life. He had enemies who admitted that he did unusual feats they called “sorcery.” He was crucified in Palestine under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius Caesar at Passover time, being considered the Jewish King. He was believed by his disciples to have been resurrected three days later. He had a small band of disciples that multiplied rapidly, spreading as far as Rome. These disciples denied polytheism, lived moral lives, and worshiped Him as God. (Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p. 136.)

• In the end...

1. What happens if Christians are wrong?
 - *Reincarnation? Nothingness? Rewards for my goodness?*
2. What happens if other religions are wrong?
 - *Hell*

• What do we believe?

1. Christianity isn't true because we believe it
2. We believe Christianity because it is true