CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS PART II:

WHY WE BELIEVE

CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS:

Remaining Schedule

4/27/21: Is the Bible God’s Word? / Is the Bible reliable?

5/4/21: Does Archeology support the Bible? / Are Miracles Possible?

5/11/21: Are science and faith at war?

5/18/21: Why does God allow suffering?

5/25/21: What about other religions? / Is Christian experience valid?

6/1/21: How to defend our faith with non-believers.

CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS:

1. Is Jesus Christ God?
2. Introduction: God has revealed what He is like, His name is Jesus
3. God must take the initiative to reveal Himself.
4. Without God taking the initiative we are left to opinions, conjecture, and prejudice at understanding what God is like
5. *Hebrews 1:1-2* tells us that God has communicated and revealed Himself at many times and in many ways through history.
6. Jesus of Nazareth split time in two and remains the most influential, controversial, polarizing, divisive figure in all human history.
7. Who did Jesus Claimed to Be?
8. *“Who do you say I am? Peter answered his question with, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:15-16*).
9. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God many times in the Gospels (Examples: *Matthew 26:63-64*, *John 5:18, John 10:33).*
10. Jesus as Son of Man and Son of God
11. Jesus claimed and demonstrated attributes and authority that only God has (Examples: Forgiving sins, Healings, Power of demons and nature, knowing people’s thoughts)

“Christianity is not a path but a person, not rules but a relationship.”

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1. Four Possibilities about who Jesus is considering His claims.
2. Jesus was a liar? Even those who deny his deity affirm him as a great moral teacher, but how could he be a great moral teacher if he lied about the most crucial part of his teaching-His identity.
3. Jesus was a lunatic? As we look to the life of Christ, we see no evidence of the abnormality and imbalance common in a deranged person. Rather we find someone who had the greatest composure under pressure.
4. Jesus was a legend? The legend theory is refuted by the Gospels and other letters of the New Testament being written and widely circulated within the lifetime of Christ’s contemporaries. Also, there are numerous references to the life, teachings, miracles, death and claims of Resurrection by several ancient first century non-Christian sources.
5. Jesus was Lord. Jesus of Nazareth displayed the credentials to demonstrate that He is who He claimed to be.
6. What were Jesus’ credentials?
7. Jesus’ moral character coincided with His claims. He lived a sinless life, and displayed character that even his enemies could not deny (*John 8:46*).
8. Jesus Christ had the perfect personality. In Christ we have the perfect blend of personality traits
9. Jesus demonstrated a power over natural forces. From stilling a storm to walking on water, Jesus showed power that only God could have, who is the author of these forces.
10. Jesus demonstrated the Creator’s power over sickness and disease. Christ made the lame walk, the deaf speak, and even raised the dead.
11. Jesus’s ultimate credential to authenticate His claims of deity was his physical resurrection from the dead. Five times in the Gospels Jesus predicted He would suffer, die, and rise again. If the resurrection miracle occurred, there should be no trouble believing in his other miracles.
12. Finally, we can experience the reality of the historical Jesus personally when we invite Him into our hearts and surrender our lives to Him.

“This Jesus of Nazareth without money or arms conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Muhammed, and Napoleon.”- John Schaff

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1. Did Christ really rise from the dead?
2. Foundation Stone of the Christian faith
3. The Case for Christianity rests on the reality of the resurrection
4. Both friends and enemies of Christianity recognize the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the foundation stone of the faith
5. Paul said that if Christ was not raised from the dead, the Christian faith is futile and useless.
6. Christianity has no objective validity or reality if Christ was not raised, but if he was, we have a living hope which goes beyond wishful thinking.
7. If Christ was raised, it provides answers to the most pivotal questions of our existence: Where do we come from? Why are we here? What is our future destiny?
8. If the resurrection of Christ occurred, we can conclude God exists, what He is like and that He cares for each of us individually.
9. Pieces of Data to be considered with answering the question of Christ’s resurrection.
10. The Fact of the Christian Church: It is worldwide in scope, yet it began in Jerusalem around 32 AD and the claims of Christ’s resurrection was the basis for the teaching, living, and significantly, their dying.
11. The Fact of the Christian Day: Something dramatic must have occurred to change the day of worship for believers from Saturday the day of the Sabbath, to Sunday, the first day of the week. It is clear from church tradition and Scripture that Christians gathered “on the first day of the week” early in Christian history.
12. The Fact of the Christian book, the New Testament: Written within the first century and within the lifetime of Christ’s contemporaries, the New Testament contain independent eyewitness accounts and testimonies to the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection was accepted as fact by the writers of the New Testament and the audience they were writing to.

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1. Account for the Empty Tomb
2. Explanations for the Empty Tomb: Two facets of the resurrection require explanation by believer and non-believer alike: The empty tomb and the appearances of Christ.
3. The earliest explanation was that the disciples stole the body. The story is obviously ridiculous and would never stand in court. Furthermore, every one of the disciples would face persecution, torture, and martyrdom (except for John) for their claims concerning the resurrection. People will die for their beliefs though they may be false, but people do not typically die for something they know is a lie.
4. A second hypothesis is that Jewish and or Roman authorities moved the body of Jesus. This thesis makes no sense given that they would have nothing to gain for moving the body of Jesus, and surely would have produced his corpse for display and parades in the streets of Jerusalem if they had it.
5. A third hypothesis is that women who went to embalm Jesus’ body went to the wrong tomb by mistake out of their grief. But this theory falls apart when we consider that even if that were true, would Jesus’ enemies make the same mistake? Would they not have gone to the correct tomb and produced Jesus’ body? Would the other disciples also go to the wrong disciples when they were told Jesus was risen?
6. A fourth hypothesis was the swoon theory, which is that Jesus did not actually die on the cross, he “swooned” from exhaustion, pain, and loss of blood. Then, according to this theory as Jesus’ body lay in the tomb, the cold helped ‘revive’ him and he walked out of the tomb. Aside from how ludicrous this theory is given everything Jesus physically endured to possibly survive crucifixion, is it plausible that Jesus would then survive 3 days in a tomb with no food or water and then somehow roll the large stone cover back and emerge?
7. The Appearances of Christ
8. The second piece of data we must consider regarding the resurrection of Christ are the ten distinct post resurrection appearances Jesus is said to have made, with a great variety in respect to time, place, and people. Each appearance was also characterized by different acts and words by Jesus.
9. Lies and legends cannot explain the empty tomb, nor does it adequately explain eyewitness testimony that is presented within the lifetime of Christ’s contemporaries. (Examples: *Luke 1, 1 Corinthians 15*)
10. Hallucinations cannot adequately explain the appearances of Christ as hallucinations are known to be subjective and individual. No two people have the same experience. In the case of the resurrection, Jesus is said to have appeared to more than five hundred people at the same time, and Paul said more than half of these people were still alive and could report on what they had seen and heard.
11. Some have attempted to propose Jesus rose spiritually rather than physically, but the testimony of the Apostles and the other eyewitnesses regarding the resurrection of Christ is that He was raised physically, not merely spiritually or metaphysically.
12. Persuaded by the Resurrection:
13. Something dramatic happened to transform the disciples of Jesus from cowards to martyrs and from skeptics of the resurrection to firm believers.
14. The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is far more convincing of an explanation than any other attempt to explain what happened on Easter morning.
15. Finally, the evidence for the resurrection of Christ is demonstrated by the millions of lives transformed by having a personal relationship with the risen and living Christ.

“Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say there is no historical incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ.”- Canon B. F. Westcott

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