



"A Firm Foundation For Faith" (Easter 2009)

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Intro:

1. "Finding The Father's Love" available
2. Wedding Vows Joke
3. II Peter 1:16-21
4. Luke 24:24, 44

Most of the world's major religions fall into one of three categories: theism, pantheism, and atheism.

* A theist is someone who believes in a personal God who created the universe but is not part of the universe. Major theistic religions are Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

* A pantheist is someone who believes in an impersonal God that literally is the universe. Pantheists believe that God is everything that exists (the grass, sky, tree, book, me.). Major pantheist religions are of the Eastern variety such as Hinduism, some forms of Buddhism, and many forms of "New Age."

* An atheist is of course someone who doesn't believe in any type of God. Religious humanists fall into this category.

* An agnostic is someone who is unsure about the question of God.

* Buddhism doctrine is summed up in Four Noble Truths: 1. Life is basically suffering, or dissatisfaction; 2. The origin of suffering lies in craving or grasping; 3. The cessation of suffering is possible through the cessation of craving; 4. The way to cease craving & attain escape from continual rebirth is by following Buddhist practice, known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

* Hinduism salvation is also escape from the endless round of rebirth.

* Islam rejects the notion of redemption; salvation depends on a man's actions and attitudes...

* Judaism also teaches that behavior and attitudes determine eternal existence.

* Christian Science teaches that one sacrifice, however great, is insufficient to pay the debt of sin, and that the blood Jesus shed on the cross was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin as when it was flowing in his veins. To get rid of sin through Christian Science, you simply deny it's reality.

* Unity teaches that the forgiveness of sin erasure of mortal thoughts. Sin, sickness, poverty, old age, & death are not real, and they have no power over me. There is nothing in all the universe for man to fear.

* Unification Church teaches the restoration of original goodness, and God is using all the religions of the world to accomplish this goal.

How do I know that what I believe is true? Or, if I am an agnostic, how do I find out what is true?

Refer again to II Peter 1:16-21

THE TESTIMONY OF EYEWITNESSES

* Mary Magdalene (John 20; Mark 16); The women returning from the tomb (Matt.28); Two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24; Mark 16); Ten gathered in the upper room (Luke 24; Jn.20); The Eleven (Jn.20; Mark 16); More than 500 at one time (I Cor. 15:6); Peter (I Cor. 15:5); James (I Cor. 15:7); Saul of Tarsus (I Cor. 15:8); Some disciples (Jn.21:1-23); The ascension (Acts 1).

* But these were all followers of Jesus. Why wouldn't they say that He is risen?

THE EYEWITNESSES' WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER (& sometimes die) FOR THEIR FAITH.

* Immediately someone might object, pointing out that many people are willing to die for what they believe. But the more important question is –“Is what you are willing to die for the truth?” If you knew that what you believed was not true, would you be willing to die for something false?

* Some say Jesus never really died on the cross, and so what these eyewitnesses of the resurrection saw was really Jesus, but a Jesus who never died.

- The disciples certainly believed he was dead. They were filled with hopelessness and bewilderment after the cross.
- The centurion assured Pilate that he was dead (Mark 15:44-45).
- One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side, and blood and water came out, indicating that the red and white blood corpuscles has separated, an indisputable medical sign of death.
- Writing in the March 21, 1986 edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association, three medical doctors, including a pathologist from The Mayo Clinic, concluded: “Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right rib, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumptions that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.”

- It is highly unlikely that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would have mistakenly embalmed a living Jesus (Jn.19:40).

- Even if everyone was wrong about Jesus being dead when he was placed in the tomb, how would a badly injured and bleeding man still be alive thirty-six hours later? And even if he did survive that cold, damp tomb, how did three days later unwrap himself (from 75 lbs of embalming cloth!), move a two ton rock that covered his tomb, get by the elite Roman guards, then convince the scared, scattered skeptical crowds that he had triumphed over death? When they saw him in that kind of condition, instead of being convinced of His resurrection, they might have said something like this – “You may be alive, but you’re certainly not risen. Let’s get you to a doctor!”

* Note: the overwhelming evidence suggests that Jesus really died.

* Some say that the disciples stole Jesus’ dead body from the tomb and created the greatest hoax of history.

- Matt.28: 12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13 telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'

- They would have had to get by The Roman Guard, a four to sixteen man security force where four men at a time were placed in front of what they were guarding, while the other twelve slept in a semi circle in front of them with their heads pointed in. Every four hours they rotated shifts.

- Acts 12: 4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

* If the disciples stole the body, it means they were then willing to put themselves and their families through threats from the supreme court, beatings, imprisonment, and even death, all for a hoax. There is really very weak evidence (actually none at all) that the disciples stole the body.

- Matt.27: 62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'

64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how."

66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

* Some say the Roman or Jewish authorities stole the body

- When the disciples began to proclaim the resurrection, why didn’t the authorities simply produce the body? Instead, they arrested, threatened, flogged, imprisoned, and finally killed many of Jesus’ disciples.

* Note: The evidence suggests that, if the disciples had stolen the body, when persecution began, they would have produced it pretty quickly.

THE WORD OF THE PROPHETS

* Luke 24: 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."
25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"
27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

* Luke 24: 44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

* Micah 5: 2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

* Psalm 41: 9 Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

* Zechariah 11: 12 I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver.
13 And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"--the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.

* Psalm 22:16 .they have pierced my hands and my feet.
- Before a Roman cross was ever invented!

* Psalm 22: 18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

* Isa.53: 12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

* Isaiah 53: 9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death...

* Matthew 12: 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

* Note: What are the chances that eight prophecies would be fulfilled in the life of one individual? The "Law of Compound Probabilities" tells us that the chance is one in 10 to the 28th power. In other words, if you covered the state of Texas two feet deep in silver dollars, and mark just one of those silver dollars with a red mark, then tell your friend to walk through the entire state – through the panhandle down to the Gulf, through Dallas, Houston, Corpus Christi, from north to south, east to west, and choose one silver dollar. The statistical probability that he will choose the one with the red mark is 1 in 10 to the 28th power.

* There are over 300 prophecies concerning Jesus in the OT. The probability of one individual perfectly fulfilling all three hundred is beyond the ability to illustrate

CONCLUSION

* John 20: 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

* I Peter 1: 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.