

Second Annual Apologetics Seminar

# MAKING THE CASE FOR THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE

Bringing Jesus to My Unbelieving Neighbor

**Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn.  
Thursday, June 27, 2019**

**All Sessions in Trinity Chapel**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 2:00–2:10 p.m. | <b>Welcome</b>   |
| 2:10–3:10 p.m. | <b>“When Your Neighbor Doesn’t Believe in Truth—Combining Apologetics and Evangelism”</b> (Pastor David Thompson)                    |
| 3:25–4:25 p.m. | <b>“Is the Old Testament Reliable? The Evidence Within the Text”</b><br>(Dr. Ryan MacPherson)  |
| 4:40–5:40 p.m. | <b>“Is the Old Testament Reliable? The Evidence Beyond Text”</b><br>(Prof. Allen Quist)  |
| 5:45–6:45 p.m. | <b>Supper</b> (Old Main; \$15/person, advanced reservation required)   |
| 7:00–8:10 p.m. | <b>Keynote: “How to Make the Case for the Truth of the New Testament”</b> (Dr. Michael Berg)   |
| 8:15–9:00 p.m. | <b>Q and A: “How Can We Use Biblical Apologetics for Evangelism?”</b> (a panel of the four presenters, with live audience questions) |

*Sponsored jointly by the ELS Committee on Apologetics  
and the Bethany Lutheran College History Department.*

**Video Archive:** [www.blc.edu/apologetics2019](http://www.blc.edu/apologetics2019)

*Before you leave, please return the evaluation survey to assist our future planning. Thank you.*

## About the Speakers

**Rev. David Thompson** received his M. Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Minnesota. He has been pastor of several congregations of the ELS, Professor/Dean of Students at Bethany Lutheran College, Executive Director of EdWatch (researching worldviews in schools), Director of the Biblical Worldview Conferences, and Chaplain/ Director at Bethany's Retreat and Conference Center. He is author of the book, *What in the World Is Going On? Identifying Hollow and Deceptive Worldviews* (NPH). Pastor Thompson currently serves St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Lombard, Illinois. He and his wife, Jenna, have six children and eight grandchildren.

**Dr. Ryan C. MacPherson** is the chair of the History Department at Bethany Lutheran College and the author of several books, including *Rediscovering the American Republic* (2 vols.), *The Culture of Life*, and *Debating Evolution before Darwinism*. As an adjunct professor for the M.A. in Theological Studies program at Martin Luther College, he teaches courses in Creation Apologetics and Bioethics. He lives with his wife Marie and their six homeschooled children in Mankato, Minnesota. He also serves as President of the Hausvater Project, which mentors Christian parents.

**Prof. Allen Quist** was professor of religion, philosophy, psychology, and political science at Bethany. He served as a Minnesota State Representative for three terms and was the Republican-endorsed candidate for Governor in 1994. He has also been a life-long farmer. He is a frequent speaker and author of numerous articles and books, including *The Reason I Believe: The Basics of Christian Apologetics*. He and his wife, Julie, have 10 children and 47 grandchildren.

**Rev. Dr. Michael Berg** is an assistant professor of theology at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wis. He is married to Amanda, a kindergarten teacher at St. Philip's Lutheran School in Milwaukee. Together they have three daughters. Before moving to Milwaukee in 2017, the Bergs spent twelve years in Wood Lake, Minn., where Michael served as pastor of St. John's Lutheran. Dr. Berg is a graduate of Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He is also a graduate and a fellow of the International Academy of Apologetics, Human Rights, and Evangelism in Strasbourg, France. In 2018 he earned a Doctor of Ministry from the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University completing a doctrinal project entitled "Masks of God: Vocation as the Proper Setting for Human Flourishing."

## About the Sponsors

### ELS

**The Evangelical Lutheran Synod** is an American Lutheran church body of 130 congregations in full fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). The ELS is also a member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC), which currently consists of 24 church bodies throughout the world in fellowship with one another. Following Jesus' command to bring the Gospel "to all nations," the ELS operates missions in seven countries around the world: Peru, Chile, India, Korea, Ukraine, Czech Republic and Latvia. See [www.els.org/about](http://www.els.org/about).

The 2017 Synod Convention resolved to establish a **Committee on Apologetics** "to study the feasibility of establishing a center for Christian outreach that would emphasize three areas: the discernment of worldviews, compassionate apologetics, and cross-cultural evangelism" (2017 Synod Report, p. 118). The synod's resolution suggested, among other possibilities, "an annual workshop on worldview, apologetics, and/or evangelism at Bethany Lutheran College scheduled in coordination with the synod convention." Today's conference has been organized pursuant to that aim. Internet resources are in development at [www.els.org/apologetics-resources](http://www.els.org/apologetics-resources).

### BLC

**Bethany Lutheran College** is a Christian liberal arts college owned and operated by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and committed to the teachings of the Bible as expressed in the statements of faith known as the Lutheran Confessions. The college provides Christian higher education in a challenging academic environment where personal mentoring guides students to pursue knowledge, truth, and discernment for productive and fulfilling lives. Bethany Lutheran College engages students with the saving knowledge of Christ and assists them in developing their God-given talents and abilities for meaningful lives of service in the family, church, and society. A program of study grounded in the liberal arts and taught through the discerning lens of a Christian worldview equips students with knowledge, understanding, and adaptable skills. See [www.blc.edu/about-us](http://www.blc.edu/about-us).

Bethany's **History Department** guides students in exploring the people, ideas, and events that have shaped America and the world. Most importantly, history sheds light on the religious life of all people and our faculty strive to provide a Christian perspective on historical events. See [www.blc.edu/history-major](http://www.blc.edu/history-major).

## ***Coming in 2020 ...***

*at Bethany Lutheran College*

- **Tuesday, March 17, 2020—Apologetics for College Students**
- **June 2020—Apologetics Youth Camp**
- **June 2020—Third Annual Apologetics Seminar**

*For further information: [www.blc.edu/apologetics](http://www.blc.edu/apologetics)*

## ***How You Can Support Apologetics ...***

In addition to sponsoring an annual apologetics conference, the ELS Committee on Apologetics is also developing plans for a youth camp, an apologetics website, and traveling workshops.

An anonymous donor has pledged a \$10,000 Matching-Fund Challenge Grant. This will match all gifts received during FY 2019–2020, dollar for dollar, up to \$10,000.

To participate in this matching-funds opportunity, please make your check payable to:

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We thank you for your support.

# When Your Neighbor Doesn't Believe in Truth— Combining Apologetics and Evangelism

David C. Thompson (Pastor, St. Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lombard, Ill.)

Second Annual ELS Apologetics Conference  
Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., June 27, 2019

## Preliminaries:

1. What is truth? The kind of truth we are talking about
  2. Two sources of truth
  3. Two kinds of neighbors who don't believe in truth
  4. Areas where truth is commonly denied
  5. How we got here
  6. The silver lining
- I. What *not* to do:
- A) "The Bible says..." approach
  - B) "If we can just get him to come to church..." approach
  - C) The "hit and run" approach
  - D) \_\_\_\_\_
  - E) \_\_\_\_\_
- II. What *to* do:
- A) Answer their questions, if you can
  - B) Challenge their assumptions, if you can
  - C) Challenge them biblically:
    - 1) Help them understand these are testimonies of witnesses
    - 2) Point them to the claims of Christ
    - 3) Point them to miracles of Christ
    - 4) Point them to the fulfillment of prophecy by Christ
    - 5) Point them to the resurrection of Christ
    - 6) Point them to the cross of Christ – its reality and its meaning

**Luke 1:** Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup>just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup>it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup>that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

**Acts 1:** I wrote my first book, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began doing and teaching <sup>2</sup>until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. <sup>3</sup>After he had suffered, he presented himself alive to the apostles with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and told them things about the kingdom of God.

**John 19:** <sup>31</sup>Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. <sup>32</sup>So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. <sup>33</sup>But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup>But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. <sup>35</sup>He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.

**John 20:** <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup>but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**John 21:** <sup>24</sup>This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. <sup>25</sup>Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

**Acts 2:** <sup>29</sup>Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.<sup>30</sup> Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, <sup>31</sup>he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. <sup>32</sup>This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

**Acts 3:** <sup>14</sup>But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup>and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

**Acts 5:** <sup>31</sup>God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup>And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

**Acts 10:** <sup>37</sup>You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: <sup>38</sup>how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup>And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup>but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup>not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

**Acts 13:** <sup>28</sup>And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. <sup>29</sup>And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. <sup>30</sup>But God raised him from the dead, <sup>31</sup>and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.

**Acts 22:** <sup>14</sup>And Ananias said to Saul, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; <sup>15</sup>for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.’

**Acts 26:** <sup>15</sup>And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup>But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you’

**2 Pet. 1:** <sup>15</sup>And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. <sup>16</sup>For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” <sup>18</sup>we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

**1 John 1:** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup>the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— <sup>3</sup>that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

**Acts 26:** <sup>24</sup>And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” <sup>25</sup>But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. <sup>26</sup>For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. <sup>27</sup>King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” <sup>28</sup>And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” <sup>29</sup>And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”

**1 Cor. 15:** <sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup>Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. . . . <sup>14</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>15</sup>We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. <sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead . . . <sup>30</sup>Why do we live in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup>Day by day I face death, as surely as I boast about you, brothers, in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>32</sup>If I fought wild animals in Ephesus with human motives, what good did it do me? If the dead are not raised, then “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

# Is The Old Testament Reliable?

## The Evidence Within the Text

Ryan C. MacPherson, Ph.D., Second Annual ELS Apologetics Conference  
Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., June 27, 2019

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### INTRODUCTION

**Some people doubt that the OT is *reliable*.**

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- A. Unbelievers **ridicule** Christians for believing the Bible—especially the Old Testament:
  - 1. **Chronology:** Young-earth creation is absurd! The Abraham-Moses-David stories are myths!
  - 2. **Genocide:** The God of the OT is capricious, vindictive, and violently destructive!
  - 3. **Women:** They were treated as second-class citizens or, worse, as slaves!
- B. Believers often are **embarrassed** by what people say about the OT
  - 1. Few churches dare to teach everything the OT teaches.
  - 2. Few Christians are prepared to defend themselves against skeptics or scoffers who attack the OT.
- C. Nevertheless, the OT is **reliable**:
  - 1. **Preservation:** We can reliably know what the OT **says**.
  - 2. **Interpretation:** We can reliably know what the OT **means**.
  - 3. **Application:** We can reliably know that the OT **fits reality** in a manner that blesses us.
- D. We can demonstrate the reliability of the OT by:
  - 1. **Internal Evidence:** Evidence “within the text”—Hebrew manuscripts and faithful translations.
  - 2. **External Evidence:** Evidence “beyond the text”—archaeology, ancient history, etc.
- E. **THESIS:** *In the case of the OT, the internal evidence is so strong that the reliability of the OT stands firm even apart from external evidence!*
- F. **Where the Rubber Meets the Road:** If we learn how to defend the OT’s 3-fold reliability (Preservation-Interpretation-Application), we’ll be ready to reply to the critics who heap ridicule on believers.
- G. **Why It Really Matters:** Who is Jesus? ... the OT’s Messiah is the NT’s Risen Savior!

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### I. PRESERVATION

**We can reliably know what the OT *says*.**

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- A. The most amazing fact about the Hebrew Bible (Christian OT) is that it exists at all! (No other substantial document from the ancient Near East has survived with anywhere near the degree of preservation as the OT. Nor were any of those documents as comprehensive in their scope.)
  - 1. The OT provides the only “extant” (still existing) continuous history from Creation to Nebuchadnezzar; all other Near Eastern texts are fragmentary, and even if they were preserved letter-for-letter, most of them would amount to little more than “bullet point” highlights (e.g., Assyrian Eponym List).
  - 2. The preservation of the OT marks the fulfillment of prophecy: “‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant,’ says the Lord, ‘For I am with you; for I will make a complete end of all the nations to which I have driven you, but I will not make a complete end of you.’” (Jer 46:28)
  - 3. God ordained that the Jews would preserve His Word:
    - a. “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” (Dt 12:32) Faithful priests taught the Book of the Torah of the Lord (2 Chr 17:9).
    - b. Israel’s kings were to write for themselves a personal copy of the Torah and read it daily, careful not to turn aside from it either to the right or to the left. (Dt 17:18–20) Wicked kings failed to do this, but Hilkiah the Priest rediscovered the Torah in the days of King Josiah. (2 Kgs 22)
    - c. The NT affirms: “To the Jews were committed the oracles of God.” (Ro 3:2)
    - d. The Talmud explains: Jewish scribes were carefully trained—they did *not* play the “telephone” game to transmit the text.

- B. The Hebrew Bible utilizes a unique combination of rare techniques for textual preservation. The **Masoretes** (ca. A.D. 500 to ca. A.D. 900):
1. Marked every word of the OT with “pointing” to preserve the vowels, accents, musical tones, and grammatical sense—committing to writing an oral culture stretching back to the time of Ezra.
  2. Counted every letter of every word, noted every peculiar detail, wrote key letters in larger script, added marginal notes to indicate statistical patterns, and affirmed unusual spellings.
- C. The Hebrew Bible has been preserved in the **Masoretic Text (MT)** with unparalleled reliability:
1. The Medieval vowel pointings in the MT match the sounds expressed by:
    - a. the Greek vowels included in the Septuaginta (ca. 250 B.C.); and,
    - b. some 180 distinct proper names appearing in various inscriptions stretching back to 2000 B.C. (the era of Abraham and perhaps of Job, likely the oldest book of the Bible)—so unless you are a “conspiracy theorist” (180 fake archaeological discoveries?), you’ll have to admit that the Masoretes *preserved* rather than *invented* the ancient form of the text!
    - c. Even before the Masoretes added the vowel pointings, Hebrew *without* vowels often is easier to read than English *with* vowels!
  2. The **Dead Sea Scrolls** (discovered ca. A.D. 1950, dated to ca. 200 B.C.):
    - a. Include 200+ OT manuscripts, representing every OT book except Esther.
    - b. Often match the MT with near perfection (differing as to occasional spellings), while sometimes also representing other textual traditions, such as paraphrased translations that we find also in contemporary Greek manuscripts, e.g., the Septuaginta (ca. 250 B.C.).
    - c. Provide early examples of “partial pointing” for pronunciation aids, indicating the long-standing oral practice that the Masoretes later committed fully to writing.
  3. Jesus and the Apostles regarded the Hebrew text of the OT as reliably preserved.
    - a. “Assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one **jot** or one **tittle** will by no means pass from the Torah till all is fulfilled.” (Mt 5:18)
      - i. **Jot:** a.k.a. yod, is the tiniest Hebrew letter: ך
      - ii. **Tittle:** brief strokes distinguishing ד (=D) from ר (=R); cf. “minding your *p*’s and *q*’s” or “dotting your *i*’s and crossing your *t*’s.”
    - b. Each word matters: “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods” ’?” (Jn 10:34)
    - c. Each letter matters: “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.” (Gal 3:16) In Hebrew: “your seed” (*singular*), אֶתְּךָ (Gen 12:7); not “your seeds” (*plural*), אֶתְּכֶם.—distinguished by ך (yod).
- D. Textual critics grossly overstate the “problems” of the MT:
1. Was it an “omission” to say Cain spoke to Abel, without quoting what Cain said (Gen 4:8)?  
*No. Surely a conversation may be mentioned without any words being quoted.*
  2. Was it a “scribal error” to say Saul was “a year old” when he became king (1 Sm 13:1)?  
*No. Note that the literal idiom (“a son of a year”) could be referring to the fact that God’s Spirit recently had come upon him, giving him a new heart, hence, a new birth (1 Sm 10:9).*
  3. Did the scribe in 1 Chr. 1:22 mistakenly rename עֹבַל (Obal) of Gen 10:28 as עֵיבַל (Ebal)?  
*No. This shift in spelling readily may be explained as a shift in pronunciation between the time Moses wrote Genesis (ca. 1500 B.C.) and Ezra (likely) wrote 1 Chronicles (ca. 500 B.C.). As a close analogy, note that verbs that begin with the letter ך (yod) in later Hebrew shift back toward ך (vav) in the Hiphil conjugation, reminiscent of the more ancient form.*
  4. No supposed “textual difficulties” would change the six-day creation account, the fall into sin, the global flood, the call of Abram, the exodus, David’s dynasty, the Assyrian empire, or ... Messianic prophecies.
- E. **Conclusion:** The MT reliably preserves the OT. We know, precisely, what the OT *says*.

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\* The first two examples are presented as “mistakes ... textual error[s]” and “unintentional (erroneous) omissions” by the esteemed Dead Sea Scroll scholar Emanuel Tov, who concedes that the third example may simply represent developmental “stages of textual transmission.” *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012 ), 10–16, 221. For each of the three examples, the italicized statements are my own critique of Tov.



## II. INTERPRETATION

## We can reliably know what the OT means.

A. **Vocabulary:** The OT is its own lexicon: 8,700 distinct words used a total of 420,000 times.

1. A stock of 3-letter root words provides **strong clues** to the meanings of nouns, verbs, and adjectives.
2. 1,900 words occur at least 10 times each (together comprising about 90% of the OT), allowing the context in one passage to define the term for other passages in which the context is not sufficient.
3. 6,800 words occur fewer than 10 times, but:
  - a. 3,000 of those rare words are proper names, so no translation is needed anyway:

וַשְׁתִּי	vash-TEE	Vashti (root: “best,” Persian)	10 times
הוֹשֵׁעַ	hoh-SHEY-uh	Hosea (root: “Salvation”)	2 times
מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק	mal-kee-TZEH-dek	Melchizedek	2 times
מֶלֶךְ צֶדֶק	MEH-lek TZEH-dek	King (of) Righteousness	2523, 118 times

- b. Other rare words share a common root with words that have well-known meanings. רָחַץ (*r-va-yah*) occurs only 2x, “my cup overflows” (Ps 23:5, lit. “my cup is an abundance”) and “to a place of abundance” (Ps 66:12), but the related root רָחַץ (*ra-vah*) occurs 15 times: “soak, fill, satisfy,” etc.
- c. The OT books in general, and especially those books that contain most of the rare words (Psalms, Isaiah, and Job), frequently employ the poetic device of “**parallelism**”: saying the same thing twice but in different words—hence a rarer word is defined in context by its parallel synonym.

“Then I shall	<u>rejoice</u>	over Jerusalem	45 times
and I shall	<u>take delight</u>	in My people	27 times
but there shall no longer be heard in her [i.e. Jerusalem]			
or the voice	of <u>weeping</u>		32 times
or the voice	of <u>crying</u> .” (Isa 65:19)		19 times
“Oh that my words were	<u>written!</u>		225 times
Oh that they were	<u>inscribed</u>	in a book!	11 times
Oh that with	an <u>iron pen</u> and <u>lead</u>		4, 9 times
they were	<u>engraved</u>	in the rock forever!” (Job 19:23–24)	17 times

4. The “Evidence Within the Text” *defines* each word’s meaning; “Evidence Beyond the Text” (Hebrew inscriptions, Babylonian records, plus early Greek and Latin translations) *affirms* those meanings.
5. Any remaining “puzzles” are incidental to the main message of the text; we *reliably* know the meaning.

B. **Grammar:** The Hebrew OT contains unique grammatical features that communicate clear meaning.

1. **Stems:** “to give birth” (active) -> “to be born” (passive) -> “to be a midwife” (intensive) -> “to be birthed” (intensive passive) -> “to beget” (causative) -> “to be begotten” (passive causative)
2. **Vav-Consecutive**, the tell-tale sign of historical narratives:
  - a. 1–2 Kings (affirmed by *liberal* scholars as historical): nearly every verse begins with vav (ו, “and”) plus a “consecutive” verb. (“This happened, **and then** this happened, **and next** that happened.”)
  - b. Song of Songs (poetic allegory; not historical): of all 117 verses, *zero* begin with vav-consecutive!
  - c. Genesis 1–2: a poetic allegory like Song of Songs? Nope! Historical narrative, like 1–2 Kings!

C. **Cantillation:** The MT is punctuated to indicate: (a) accents; (b) music; and, (c) semantic precision.

1. Every verse of every book (not just Psalms) is marked for chanting, suggesting which words to emphasize and when to pause in order to convey the proper meaning.
2. “You shall anoint [וַיִּמְשֹׁךְ] them, as you anointed [וַיִּמְשֹׁךְ] their father, that they may minister to Me as priests.” (Ex 40:15—accenting the final vs. the next-to-last syllable to signal a tense shift)
3. **Conjunctive** vs. **disjunctive** accents: “And those who died in the plague were ...” (Nu 25:9)
  - a. *not*: “four || and twenty—thousand [20,004].”
  - b. *but*: “four—and—twenty || thousand [24,000].”

D. **Poetic Structure:**

1. **Parallelisms:** Help to *define* rare vocabulary (as noted above) and to *emphasize* the main point.

2. **Chiasm:** Hebrew is like a sandwich—the meat is in the middle! Consider Gen 3:

A: Adam is accused. (v. 11)  
B: Eve is accused. (vv. 12–13a)  
C: Satan is accused. (v. 13b)  
C': Satan is judged. (v. 14)  
**THE SAVIOR IS PROMISED. (v. 15)**  
B': Eve is judged. (v. 16)  
A': Adam is judged. (vv. 17–19)

(Similarly, a grand chiasm in Gen 6–9 stretches from “A” to “P,” centering in 8:1 upon “God remembered Noah.” God’s grace is in the *literary* center of the *historic* account of the flood!)

**E. “Hermeneutics” (Methods of Interpretation):**

1. When later OT writers quote earlier OT texts, they consistently follow the **grammatical-historical method** (taking words at face value and interpreting them in a realistic, factual sense).
2. Sometimes, later OT writers also interpret earlier OT texts in terms of **allegory** or **typology**.
3. Later OT writers, Jesus, the Apostles, and similarly the Jewish Talmud treat grammar/history as primary, and regard allegory or typology as supporting (never contradicting) that primary meaning.
4. **Thus, Historical Prevails over “Mere” Allegorical:** The allegorical-typological method is *never* used to the *exclusion* of the grammatical-historical method, but rather (“with prudence,” Melancthon):
  - a. Typology *amplifies* the historical meaning with deeper significance (Jonah as a “type” of Jesus).
  - b. Typology *focuses* attention on the central narrative thread in salvation history: Messiah ... Jesus!

F. **Conclusion:** The OT text itself tells us to read the OT as a *prophetic history* of Messiah’s coming, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of ... whom? Jesus of Nazareth!

### III. APPLICATION

### **We can reliably know that the OT *fits reality*.**

- A. Jesus and the apostles were not embarrassed by the OT, and neither should we be embarrassed by it.
- B. Some Christians today feel embarrassed by the OT not merely because unbelievers heap ridicule upon them, but because believers have not faithfully read their Bibles in order to know how to answer the attacks of skeptics and scoffers.
1. **Expose “Straw Man” Arguments:** Many “objections” to the OT are based on false caricatures—inaccurately describe the OT, then ridicule that inaccuracy as if this somehow discredits the real OT?
  2. **Respond with Truth:** Read the text yourself. Read the text with others. The text defends the text!
- C. Examples:
1. **Creation Myth? No. Creation History—in Six 24-Hour Days:**
    - a. The **Vav-Consecutive** grammar (see above) instructs us to read the text as history, not legend.
    - b. **Context** and **parallelisms** instruct us to define “day” as “evening and morning” cycles of 24 hrs.
    - c. The **cantillation** (chanting) marks treat “and there was evening and there was morning” as a unitary concept (conjunctive accents), hence, together comprising “one day.”
    - d. The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (the \$323 / 2094-page, “gold standard” in today’s scholarship) defines יוֹם (yom) as “24-hour day” in specific reference to (*yep!*) Gen 1:5.
  2. **Genocide? No. Context** reveals that God’s judgment against Canaanite tribes was *not* arbitrary, but:
    - a. **Reasonable:** Consider Job 34:33. God did not single out one race in favor of another, but rather promised to bless all people through Abraham’s family (Gen 12:3b) and permitted many foreigners to share in the Promised Land blessings with the Jews: Rahab of Jericho, the Gibeonites, Ruth the Moabitess, Naaman the Syrian, etc., according to the principle of protecting Abraham’s messianic lineage, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you” (Gen 12:3a).
    - b. **Patient:** God did not destroy the Amorites in Abraham’s day, but bore patiently with their iniquity (Gen 15:16). By Moses’s time, the Canaanites’ iniquity had grown so perverse—bestiality, child sacrifice, etc.—that the land itself was ready to “vomit” them out (Lev 18:24–25). The Canaanites’ wickedness (Dt 9:4), especially child sacrifice (Dt 18:19–12, 12:31), deserved harsh judgment.
    - c. **Just:** God judged not only Gentiles, but also Jews, for “persistent unfaithfulness” (Ez 14:13).

- d. **Merciful:** God's hand in history, causing kingdoms to rise and to fall, sets the stage for Messiah's coming (Dan 7–12), to the benefit of Jew and Gentile alike (Isa 56:1–8; Jer 16:19–21; Zech 2:11).
3. **Abuse of Women?** No. OT granted women **higher legal standing** than in other cultures, even now.
  - a. **Equality:** “Male and female He created them,” (Gen 1:27); grant both “your male servant” and “your female servant” rest on the Sabbath (Ex 20:10); “do not covet your neighbor's ... manservant nor maidservant” (v. 17); purity regulations apply equally to “both male and female” (Nu 5:3); “every man should set free his male and female slave” (Jer 34:9).
  - b. **Liberty:** Hebrew women were autonomous agents free to select whom to marry (Nu 36:6), protected from wanton divorce (Dt 24:1–4), capable of owning land (Nu 27:8), and trusted to manage home-based businesses (Pr 31). Slavery was regulated as a short-term indentured service, with masters obligated to provide for females' well being or else set them free (Ex 21:1–11); so-called “slaves” (better translated: “indentured servant”) could even inherit a master's property (Gen 15:2).
  - c. **Protection:** A man accused of raping a woman in a deserted field was to be summarily convicted and sentenced to death, but she would enjoy an inviolable presumption of innocence (Dt 22:25–27). A childless widow could not be cast out of the tribe, but was entitled to marry her deceased husband's brother (Dt 25:5–10). Widows received special privileges—such as gleaning in the fields—and special consideration in the eyes of the law to ensure justice (Dt. 16:14, 24:17, 19–21; 26:12–13). If a man attacked a pregnant woman, the death penalty was applied, both for her sake and for the child's sake, “life for life” (Ex 21:22–25).
4. **What More Could a Passionate Defender of Human Rights Want?**
  - a. The OT teaches that all people are created in God's image (Gen 1) and worthy of protection as to body, spouse, property, and honor (Ex 20).
  - b. The OT teaches that all races have descended from Noah's family (Gen 9), that through Abraham's lineage all the families of the earth shall be forever blessed (Gen 12), and that foreigners may celebrate the highest of Jewish festivals—the Passover—on equal standing with Jews (Nu 9:14).
  - c. The OT teaches that women are to be highly valued: their lives are to be protected (Ex 21: 22–25), their sexuality is to be guarded (Dt 22:25–27), and their offspring is to be cared for (Mal 3:5).
  - d. The OT teaches that sexuality is a precious gift through which God brings children into the world, and the OT safeguards both sexual intimacy and procreation within marriage—forbidding fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality (Lev 18)—behaviors that by their twisted nature lead to desertion, disease, and death.
  - e. The OT calls upon all people to defend and provide for the widow (Ex 22:2; Dt 24:19), the orphan (Dt 10:18), and those “who cannot speak up for themselves” (Pr 31:8).
  - f. The most commonly quoted OT passage by America's presidents: “And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic 6:8)
  - g. Or, as the Greatest Rabbi, Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth put it, “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.” (Lk 6:31, interpreting Lev 19:18)

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## CONCLUSION

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- A. The Old Testament is **reliable**:
  1. **Preservation:** We can reliably know what the OT *says*.
  2. **Interpretation:** We can reliably know what the OT *means*.
  3. **Application:** We can reliably know that the OT *fits reality*.
- B. Neither Jesus nor His apostles felt *embarrassed* about the OT—nor should we. Far from being a book of legends that foster genocide, misogyny, and intolerance, the OT is the only ancient religious text reporting our true origin, revealing our utter failure, and pointing us back to our Creator-God whom we've grossly offended but who also sends Messiah to reconcile us, to each other and to Him.
- C. The Hebrew Scriptures properly are to be called the “Old Testament,” a companion volume to the “New Testament”—in both cases, the central message is:

<b>Messiah's defeat of sin and death through resurrection—foretold (OT) and fulfilled (NT) in Jesus.</b>
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# Is the Old Testament Reliable? The Evidence Beyond Text

Prof. Allen Quist

Second Annual ELS Apologetics Conference

Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., June 27, 2019

## Introduction

- A. I have personal involvement in this topic, and my experience is typical, not the exception.
- B. Opinion polls show that only 1/3 of Americans believe that the Bible is historically true.
- C. One criterion for truth, a standard that Bible scholars and secular historians share, is confirmation by external sources: examples are Peter's speech in Acts 2:22, and Paul's appeal in Acts 26:26.
- D. My task today is to explain some of the non-Biblical information that confirms the Bible's truthfulness. I will focus on three major historical events described in the books of Genesis and Exodus: They are Creation, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Red Sea crossing.

## I. Creation

- A. Genesis says that God created the world in six days and did so a few thousand years ago. Skeptics say the world came about naturally 13.5 billion years ago. Which is it?
- B. Paul said that: "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made" (Romans 1:20). King David said much the same in Psalm 19:1-4. Can what Paul and David said be demonstrated to be true?
- C. We begin with the testimony of Antony Flew (1923–2010). In 2007 Flew published: *There is a God: How The World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*. Flew's position was . . .
- D. How did life begin? Ernst Haeckel said the cell was a "homogeneous globule of protoplasm." But we now know is that the cell is amazingly complex.
- E. Every organism contains DNA—an information storing device about which Bill Gates has said, "DNA is like a software program only much more complicated than any we have ever created."<sup>1</sup>
- F. The biggest issue is information. Professor Warner R. Loewenstein, Formerly Professor of Physiology and Biophysics at Columbia University and Director of its Cell Physics Laboratory, said that a single-celled amoeba requires one billion bits of information.<sup>2</sup>
- G. The 20th century focused on the question of the origin of species. The question of the 21st century is the origin of information. On that question, Darwinism has nothing to offer. Evolution is not only false, it is now irrelevant because on the big question of our time—the origin of information—evolution has nothing to offer.

## II. Sodom and Gomorrah

- A. Two generations ago skeptics argued that these cities never existed, the reason being that there was no record of them outside of Genesis. This skepticism was dashed, however, when trade records involving Sodom and Gomorrah were discovered by excavations in the ancient city of Ebla, Syria, in 1974.<sup>3</sup>
- B. A ten-year scientific study of these cities was completed in the fall of 2018. The study concluded that the cities were destroyed in an instant by a catastrophic explosion—a massive fireball—that is thought to have occurred in about 1700 BC, roughly the time of Abraham. How hot was it?<sup>4</sup>

1 "Stephen Meyer: DNA and information," January 19, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7c9PaZzsQeg>.

2 Werner R. Loewenstein, Former Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Cell Physics Laboratory at Columbia University and Director of the Laboratory of Cell Communication, *The Touchstone of Life: Molecular Information, Cell Communication, and the Foundations of life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 16.

3 Marina Sohma, <https://www.ancient-origins.net/artifacts-ancient-writings/justice-myths-and-biblical-evidence-wealth-information-held-ebbla-clay-021163>.

4 Lead scientist, Philip Silvia, reported their findings in November of 2018 to the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

- C. All five cities of the plain, along with the plain itself, were destroyed in an instant. The heat may have equaled the heat at the surface of the sun—clay was melted into glass and plants, buildings, animals, and an estimated 45,000 to 60,000 people were vaporized in an instant by a massive fireball.
- D. The most likely explanation, said the team, is a meteor explosion similar to one that occurred 110 years ago in Siberia which destroyed 700 square miles of forest and left no crater. It was 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima during World War II.<sup>5</sup>
- E. Notice the urgency expressed by the angels to Lot:

With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished.” When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them. As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, “Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!” (Genesis 19:15-17)

### III. Crossing the Red Sea.



Nuweiba Beach



choral-covered chariot wheel and axel



<sup>5</sup> Adam Aliyahu Berkowitz, “Scientists admit Biblical account of Sodom is Accurate,” *Breaking Israel News*, November 23, 2018, <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/117449/scientists-confirm-sodom-gomorraah/>, accessed April 24, 2019.





# Making the Case for the Truth of the New Testament

**Dr. Michael Berg**

Second Annual ELS Apologetics Conference

Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., June 27, 2019

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason (apologia) for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (1 Peter 3:15)

## A Claim on Truth

“If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” (1 Cor. 15)

## Advantages of Resurrection (Historical/Evidential) Apologetics

- Already at Christ!
- The Historicity of Christianity separates it from other religions/philosophies
- Breaks the circular logic

## The Resurrection Claim

- There are three groups that had access: Romans, Jewish Leaders, Disciples
- There are eyewitness accounts of the resurrection.
- Followers of Christ were willing to die rather than deny the resurrection.
- Followers of Christ gained nothing for their claim of the resurrection.
- There is no evidence/reason that this many people would lie about this.
- There is no evidence that this many people would all be crazy.
- There is no evidence/reason why the three groups able to fake a resurrection would.
- ***Therefore Jesus rose from the dead.***
  
- Jesus claimed to be true God.
- There is no evidence or reason that Jesus would lie about this.
- There is no evidence that Jesus is crazy.
- There is no evidence that Jesus was a bad man.
- Jesus proved his divinity by rising from the dead.
- ***Therefore Jesus is who he claimed to be, that is, true God.***
  
- Jesus is divine.
- We are not divine.
- ***Therefore we ought to believe what he says.***
  
- Jesus says that the Old Testament is the inerrant Word of God.
- Jesus says that he sent his Spirit to give the apostles total recall.
- ***Therefore we ought to accept the Bible as the inerrant Word of God.***

## Dating the New Testament Texts

- The Crucifixion and Resurrection
  - Reign of Tiberius (14-37 AD): His 15th Year began in the fall of 27 AD (Lk 3:1)
  - Three Passovers: 28, 29, 30 AD (Jn 2:13, 6:4, 11:55)
  - By this counting the crucifixion occurred in 30 AD (Some say 33 AD)
- The Dating of Acts, then Luke, then Mark?
  - Martyrdom of James (Josephus puts this at 62 AD)
  - Neronian Persecution (64-68 AD) – Paul & Peter’s Martyrdoms?
  - Fall of Jerusalem (70 AD)
  - One would think that Luke would mention these events.
  - Even with later dates the autographs are within “earshot” of the Passion of Christ

## Three Tests

- 1) The Biographical Test: Did the text get to us in an authentic and accurate form?
  - How big is the gap between the autographs and earliest manuscripts?
  - How many manuscripts do we have access to right now?
- 2) The Internal Test: Did the documents themselves claim to be what we think they are?
  - The New Testament writers claimed to be eyewitnesses or talked to eyewitnesses.
  - The New Testament writers “welcomed” criticism and claimed inspiration.
  - Coherence: Does it make sense and correspond to reality?
  - Means: Did the writers have the means to record the events?
  - Motive: Were the motives of the authors nefarious?
  - Opportunity: Did the writers have access to the events and/or eye-witnesses?
- 3) The External Test: Are there extra-biblical sources which confirm or deny these claims?
  - Tacitus (b. 56 AD), first rate historian
    - Founder of Christianity was Jesus
    - Jesus was executed under Tiberius (14-47 AD) and Pilate (26-36 AD)
    - The religion started in Judea and spread rapidly
  - Pliny the Younger (b. 61/62 AD), Governor of Bithynia & Pontus (109-111 AD)
    - Writes to Trajan complaining about the Christians
    - Christians are regularly put on trial and often executed if they do not “repent” (they are given ample chances to deny Christ)
    - Early morning worship
    - Implications that Christ is worshipped as God
    - Mentions deaconesses from the slave class
    - Complains that the temples are empty which is affecting the local economy
  - Josephus (b. 37/38 AD), Jewish military commander turned historian
    - Mentions John the Baptist
    - Recounts the stoning of James, “brother of Jesus,” in 61/62 AD

## Two Gaps

- 1) The time between the events and the autographs
  - Both oral and written testimony were used but this was an “oral” society
  - Can we remember events in the past?
  - They thought Jesus would return quite quickly! (Ac 1:1-11)
  - The Spirit is sent to remind the apostles of everything Jesus said (Jn 14:25-26)

- 2) The time between the autographs and the first extant manuscripts
  - Were there people to corroborate and/or discredit reports about Jesus Christ?
  - Our own “collective memory”
  - A Chain of Custody

## Canonicity

- The Vetting Process
  - Terms:
    - Canon: Reed...Measuring Rod...Rule
    - Homologoumena: “Agreed Upon” = Gospels, Acts, Paulines, 1 Pt, & 1 Jn
    - Antilegomena: “Spoken Against” = Hb, Jms, 2 Pt, 2-3 Jn, Jd, & Rv
  - The last two terms were used by Origen (3rd Cent.) and Eusebius (4th Cent.) in an historical manner, that is, describing the vetting process.
- Stage One (100-170 AD)
  - Evidence that the 27 books exist
  - Evidence that all types (Gospels, Paulines, Catholic Epistles) shape doctrine The orthodox Jesus is confessed
  - Place of authority “It is written...”, that is, on par with the Old Testament
  - Read liturgically (in the church service)
  - Heretical preachers used these writings for their own interpretations
- Stage Two (170-220 AD)
  - Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, & Tertullian of Carthage (in various locations) have a similar “canon”. All 27 NT books are mentioned but not by all three.
  - The Muratorian Fragment, a 7th Cent. Latin translation of a Greek text (170-400 AD), lists 22 Books and evidence of a vetting process.
- Stage Three (220-400 AD)
  - Origen of Alexandria (184-252 AD) uses all 27 but mentions debate. He also knows which ones are accepted in various locations.
  - Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 265 AD) disputes Revelation but doesn’t question its authority.
  - Cyprian of Carthage (210-258 AD) cites 20 NT books.
  - Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386 AD) recommends all but Revelation.
  - Athanasius (296-373 AD) “reminds” his people of the 27 books.
  - The “antilegomena” are gaining acceptance.
  - The canon is not declared but is being recognized.
  - Refutation of Forgery Theories
  - All Greco/Roman literature was preserved by Christian scholars in the West. It seems that they would, if conspirators, change these stories to fit their worldview or not preserve them at all. It should also be mentioned that it would be very difficult for scribes centuries later to imitate styles of Latin (Silver versus Gold).
- Many small, seemingly insignificant, details are used by the Gospel writers such as names, places, geographical details, which match up with what we know now to be true of the time and place. Later forgers would not have had access to these details nor would they desire to use a lot of details in their forgeries. N.B. This is not the case with the Gnostic Gospels.
- Consider that there are four historical accounts of Christ (the same number we have for the most famous person of the time, Tiberius).
- The Christian “movement” spread remarkably quickly making conspiracy difficult.
- An a priori against inspired Scripture leads to the assumption of a dishonest and manipulative force in a fairly large section of Christianity.



- Some Other Things to Think about:
  - Canon shapes community
  - Not heresy first then orthodoxy (Walter Bauer)
  - Apostolic credentials as important (maybe more) than canon
  - The covenantal nature of Scripture
  - Public reading
  - Internal Claims: 2 Pt 3:16, 1 Tm 5:18 & Lk 10:7
  - External Claims: 1 Clement, The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas, Ignatius, Papias, Polycarp

## Prophecy

- Eliminate events which could have been “staged” or are vague
- What are the odds of these prophecies coming true in one man in one place and time?
- 25 events at 1 in 4 odds = one in a thousand trillion
- Consider the Great scroll of Isaiah found in 1947 in Qumran Cave 1

## Miracles

- Proof of Divinity or Compassion?
- God wants to deal with us with Word
- He wants to be known as the man on the cross

## Jesus of Nazareth

- The New Testament is an encounter with Christ
- You have to do something with this Jesus character
- Legend, Liar, Lunatic, or Lord?

## Conclusion: Going Forward

- A Ministry of Caring
- There are no homeruns in apologetics only rocks in shoes
- (Plausibility, Probability, Certainty)
- Could it all be made up? Could it all be coincidence?
- Sure... but you don't live your life like that!
- The balance between not letting anybody get away with straw men AND loving patience
- Whatever God demands, he provides in Christ (Doubting Thomas)

## Some Easy Further Reading

- *Can We Trust the Gospels* (Peter Williams)
- *The Text of the New Testament* (Bruce Metzger)
- *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (FF Bruce)
- *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (FF Bruce)
- *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* (Andreas Köstenberger & Michael Kruger)
- *Four Portraits, One Jesus* (Mark Strauss)