

# IS JESUS GOD?

## FOREWORD

This lecture was given to the faculty and students at Moscow State University in the USSR in 1990. My audience was made up, for the most part, of atheistic, unchurched faculty and students that had no knowledge of Christian faith or references to any biblical understanding. My purpose was to give a clear understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and His claims and purposes, and to explain clearly how a person could find a relationship with the true and living God through Christ. As a result of this lecture, a large part of the audience acknowledged that they wished to pray with me 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.”

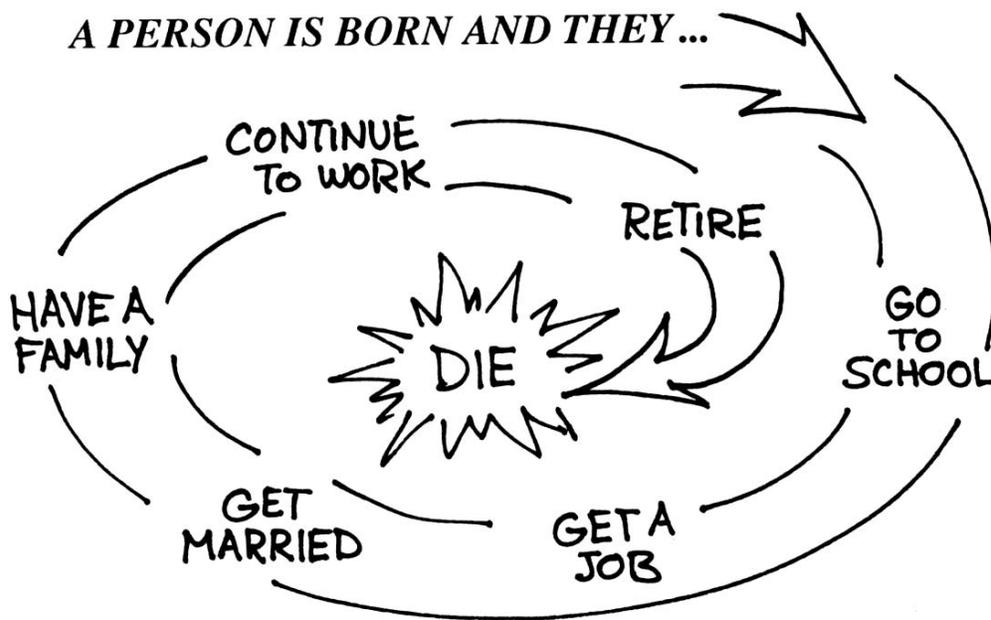
Another professor of physics said to me, “The only time I have ever thought of God is when I took the atheistic examinations to become a professor. For some unknown reason I came to your lecture and now know that only God can fill the emptiness of my life.” I hope if you are searching to find abundant life and forgiveness that this will be your experience as you read this booklet, even though you may not be an atheist or an unchurched person.

I would like to express my gratitude to Jane Pratt for her many hours before her computer typing and retyping this lecture taken from a tape, also Jan Rodger, Carolyn Prince and Ed and Catherine Headington for their kind editing expertise in helping to make a talking lecture readable in booklet form.

God bless,

*John M. Maisel*

## INTRODUCTION



*Is this all there is to life?*

There must be something more to life than this, but where do we go from here?

What is our purpose? What is our destiny? How can I be fulfilled and have the emptiness of my life filled with true meaning?

The following lecture given will answer each of these questions, and give a more clear understanding of how true meaning in life is found in Jesus Christ alone.

## IS JESUS GOD?

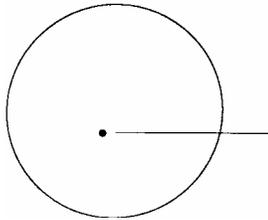
The big question in the world today is, *WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?* This is why I have chosen to break down our lecture tonight into two questions:

*One: IS JESUS GOD?*

*Two: HOW CAN I KNOW HIM PERSONALLY?*

I have chosen these questions because we do not have time to start at the very beginning to ask, "Is there a God?" and "How can I know God exists?" Even if we did, if I presented a rational basis for the existence of a personal, infinite God, eventually we would have to ask, "Who is Jesus Christ?"

If we gathered religious experts from all over the world from different faiths and different backgrounds and we asked them, "Who is God?" we would have many different definitions.



Some would say God is personal. Some would say that God is impersonal. But if we believe that truth is not relative, 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 an infinite being, person, or God. Because of our limited and finite minds, mankind has developed many different opinions.

Even when a person says there is no God, that person violates a basic philosophical principle. He 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 mankind possesses. Albert Einstein, the Nobel Prize Winner in physics, has said that mankind grasps less than one percent of total knowledge. If we have only one percent of total knowledge, would it not be possible for God to exist in the other ninety-nine percent?

GODS KNOWLEDGE

MANS 1%

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

**PROFESSOR:** 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?"

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

PROFESSOR: Are you a hard agnostic or a soft agnostic?

MAN: What do you mean?

PROFESSOR: 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."

MAN: I guess you would say I am a hard agnostic.

PROFESSOR: 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?

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

PROFESSOR: So you are really a soft agnostic?

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

PROFESSOR: 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.

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

And that is where we must start, with the question, Is there sufficient evidence for me to conclude that there is a God, and that I can have a personal relationship with Him?

Now back to our panel of religious experts. Suppose someone on this religious panel of experts that we have gathered 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.

During His earthly ministry two thousand years ago, Jesus said, "I am God." He said that He was the Maker of the heavens and the earth and that only through Him could mankind experience true peace and be given eternal life. He not only issued this dramatic declaration, He had the credentials to back up those claims. The very uniqueness of Jesus is His claim to deity. Let me stop right here to say 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 Jehovah.***

***Mohammed never claimed to be Allah.***

***Yet Jesus Christ claimed to be the TRUE and LIVING God!***

The 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 simply said, "I am a teacher in search of the truth."

Jesus said, "I *am* the Truth."

Confucius said, "I never claimed to be holy."

Jesus said, "Who convicts me of sin?"

Mohammed said, "Unless God throws his cloak of mercy over me, I have no hope."

Jesus said, "Unless you believe in me, you will die in your sins."

***Jesus' statements force the listener or reader to a choice. What you choose to do with Jesus Christ today is the most important decision you will ever make.***

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 he is not God then we should have nothing to do with him.

**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.*

I hope that when you have finished reading this, 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. 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.

## **JESUS' TWO QUESTIONS**

One day Jesus asked some of His followers two questions: "Who does the world say that I am?" and "Who do you say that I am?"

Those two questions are our starting point. First, 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's the greatest man who has 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, has said, "Whatever surprises the future may bring, one thing is certain, Jesus will never be surpassed."

**Rousseau**, another French thinker, compared Jesus with Socrates, saying, "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage-the life and death of Jesus were those of a God."

**Napoleon** said, "I know men, and Jesus Christ was no mere man."

Lord 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, said this of Jesus: "If ever a man were God, or God were a man, Jesus was both."

More recently one writer described His influence in this way: "I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched and all the navies that 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, Jesus of Nazareth."

So 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 or a myth, that He never really existed.

Historian Phillip Schaff says, "The certainty of Jesus Christ is as certain as my own identity."

**Dr. F. F. Bruce** has said, "Some people play with the myth, legend, ideal of Christ; those who do so, 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, speak in detail of 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.

**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.

Of course, in the Bible we have four different detailed accounts of the life of Christ. I realize that 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.

## THE BIBLE AS A RELIABLE SOURCE

In *The Evidence for Classical Literature*, Professor Barnes lists three standard tests used to determine the reliability of historical documents:

A bibliographical test, an internal test, and an external test.

**The Bibliographical Test** looks at the number of manuscript copies of the original and the length of time between the writing of the original and the writing of the existing copies when none of the originals still exists.

**The Internal Test** looks at internal consistencies and inconsistencies within the manuscript.

The External Test looks at other historical materials to determine if they confirm or deny statements within the manuscript, i.e., archaeological evidence.

Here 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. And 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.

| <u>AUTHOR</u> | <u>WHEN WRITTEN</u> | <u>EARLIEST COPY</u> | <u>TIME SPAN</u> | <u>NO. OF COPIES</u> |
|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Caesar        | 100-44 B.C.         | A.D. 900             | 1,000 years      | 10                   |
| Plato         | 427-347 B.C.        | A.D. 900             | 1200 years       | 7                    |
| Aristotle     | 384-322 B.C.        | A.D. 1100            | 1,400 years      | 5                    |
| Tacitus       | A.D.100             | A.D. 1100            | 1,000 years      | 1                    |

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, to New Testament documents. The books of the New Testament (Bible) were written from about A.D. 40 to A.D. 90. The earliest manuscript copies date from about A.D. 130 to only 40-50 years after the originals. More than 13,000 copies exist. 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 internal and external

tests, one will see even more clearly why the Bible is a reliable document and definitely inspired by God.

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.”

Remember our question: “***Who does the world say that Jesus Christ is?***” I often find that the intelligentsia tend to say that spiritual and religious interests are only to help the less educated people, that only ignorant and unlearned people are interested in how they can know God and are the only ones who need God.

Let me just 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.”

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.

Writers like ***Leo Tolstoy*** and others of your country (the U.S.S.R.), have described the work of God’s Spirit in utterly transforming their lives.

***Leo Tolstoy***, the famous Russian writer, lived much of his life as an atheist but made this statement toward the end of his life: “For 35 years of my life I was, in the proper acceptance of the word, a nihilist—not a revolutionary socialist, but a man who believed in nothing. Five years ago my faith came to me. I believed in the doctrine of Jesus, and my whole life underwent a sudden transformation—life and death ceased to be evil. Instead of despair, I tasted joy and happiness that death could not take away.”

Probably the greatest literary genius of all times, ***William Shakespeare***, before his death 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, said as he talked about his faith in Christ, “There’s nothing in all the Bible that would cause a man of science problems with Jesus Christ.”

Today in the Soviet Union ***Dr. DmitryA. Kuznetsov***, a biochemist who has three earned doctorates, has won the Lenin Komsomol Prize in Science. He was in the United States in 1989

and spoke of his faith in Christ. He has also written an article in the Soviet Union on science without atheism.

**Karl Barth**, one of the leading intellects of this century and known as “The Great Swiss Thinker,” was asked what was the most profound thought he had ever had. His reply was, ‘Jesus loves me. This I know.’”

**Professor Charles Malek**, former Secretary General of the United Nations, speaking of his faith in Christ said, “We must eliminate the division between Christ and the universe, between the intellect and faith.” He has told me personally of his commitment to Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord.

***So please do not say that Jesus was just a good moral man, and 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. I do not think you will be fair to the pursuit of truth if you do.***

## **“WHO DO YOU SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST IS?”**

Let’s go to the second question, “*Who do YOU say that Jesus Christ is?*” Before you can answer that question, you need some evidence and 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. You see, my heart cannot do something that my mind rejects. So before we are through this evening, you will have to answer the question, “Who is Jesus Christ?” with your heart. Many times in my own experience I have encountered some 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 man into a relationship with Himself. Christianity is built upon the solid foundation of knowing and being able to substantiate the claims of Jesus Christ.

## **SOME OF HIS UNIQUE CLAIMS**

Allow me to review some of the statements of Jesus as we set the stage to look at the implications of one specific claim. This is no ordinary man we are considering.

When Jesus made a blind man see, He said, “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5).

When He fed 5,000 people with two fish and five loaves of bread, He said, “I am the bread of Life” (John 6:35).

When He was appearing before the man who would have executed Him and was asked if He was the Christ, the Son of God,” Jesus said, “Yes, it is as you say”(Matthew 26:63-64).

Thomas, the disciple who had doubted that Jesus really had risen from the dead, responded, “My Lord and my God” when he saw Jesus and felt the wounds in His hands and side. (John 20:28) Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). And after He had 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” (John 11:25). So Jesus’ claims of being the Savior of the world and the uniqueness of His ministry and work are very clear. Probably 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. Listen to one of the accounts 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” (Mark 2:1-12)!

Now let’s focus on one of the most profound statements that Jesus ever made and, if true, is truly 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” (John 14:6).

## THE WAY

He 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 up to the top where God is because everyone is climbing to get to the same place where they can know God. And so they conclude that any way that 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 “B” contradicts “A,” then 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.

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 He is the Savior of the world. 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* way, the only way that I can come to God, then no one else—not even Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha, or self is a way to God.

I did not come to you with that statement. Jesus said it. If there exists any other path to God other than through Jesus Christ, then Christ’s death on the cross loses all meaning. If there exists more than one path to God, 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. 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. That there is any way to this holy and righteous God is what is unbelievable to me when I consider the state of man.

Look at mankind’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 Bible, we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s standards (Romans 3:23). Those of you who know Greek, know the graphic origin of the word *sin*. Originally *sin* was an archery term. When an archer fell short of the target, a checker on the archery range called back, “Sin,” meaning he missed the mark or target.

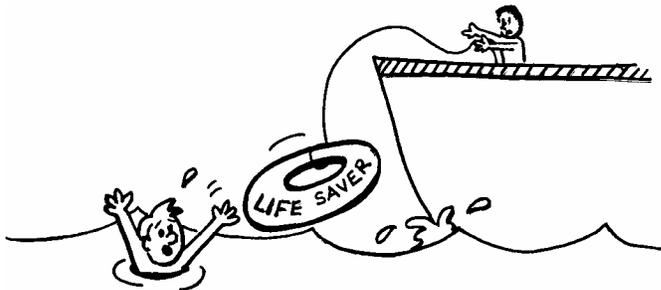
God who is perfect must have perfect righteousness and perfect holiness in His presence. Those are His standards. That is the mark we must hit. And because we all fall short of that standard, we all are sinners. If we are honest, we must acknowledge that our lives are not perfect. We have lied, stolen, coveted, envied; we have been jealous, angry, 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 is a futile exercise. No matter who we are, the best of us morally have fallen short 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. And He alone can give us peace, purpose and joy for living.

Let me put it another way. Most people think in terms of earning our way to God on the points we get for doing good. Certainly that is how people think in the North American culture. If I work hard, I get promoted. If I study hard in school, I make good marks. If I work hard at soccer practice, I make first team. We reason that we can reach God the same way. Because He is a good God, mankind 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.

Here is a mental picture of what I am saying. Suppose God is in New York City and all the people in the world live in England. God says, “If you want to have a relationship with me, you must swim the ocean from England to New York.” 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. But no one can swim all the way to New York; 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’m no 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 cannot swim the distance. We are sinners according to the standards of the God who made us. And 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 to New York or meet God’s perfect standard of holiness and righteousness.

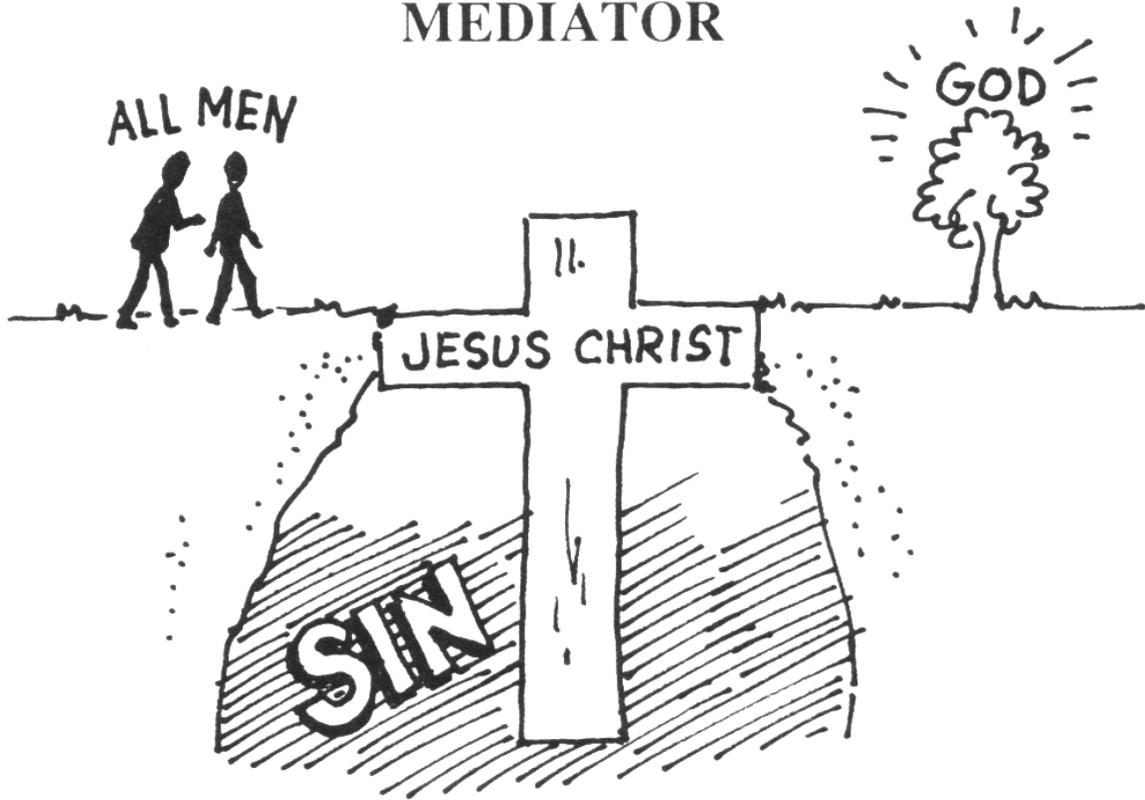
Now it stands to reason that if swimming from England to North America’s shores is impossible by my own power, I do not need swimming lessons. Instead, I need another way to cross. A lifeboat or a bridge.

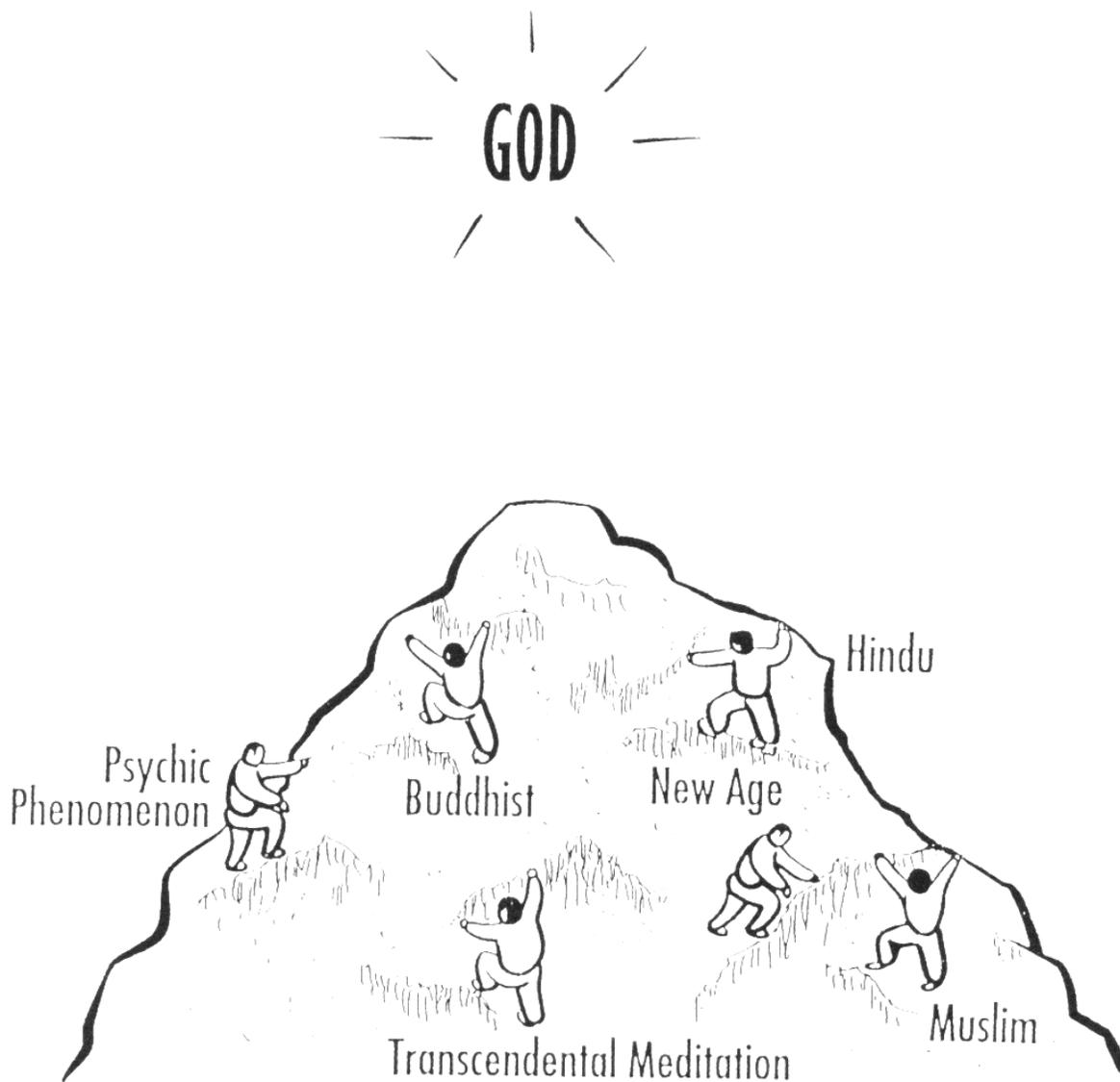


Well, Jesus said He is *the* bridge that brings a holy God and a sinful mankind together. That is why Jesus Christ died. That is why the cross of Christ is the focal point of human history. The New Testament says in I Timothy:

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.

# ONE MEDIATOR





**None of these 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 house. Jesus said, I am the way. I am the door, and entering the door takes you into God's house.

## THE TRUTH

The second thing that Jesus said was, “I am the truth.” That’s pretty narrow, isn’t it? But the truth by definition is very narrow. You may say, “That may be true for you, but it’s 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, but it is true for me and the rest of the world. If George Washington was the first President of my country, that is not only true for me, but it is 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. But that is not rational either. Just believing something does not make it truth. And just not believing something does not make it a lie. My belief does not establish truth or destroy truth. The key is what the truth *is*.

Suppose that 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. But I am believing a lie. No matter how strong my belief, if I walk out there on thin ice, it will break and I will drown. My faith in that ice will not establish what I believe to be true, that the ice will hold me up. Conversely, the person who walks on thick ice that covers the river may have only a little faith but be able to 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. And even though I may have great faith in the thin ice, I will experience the reality of destruction. And so it is with Christ. If He alone is my way to a holy and righteous God and that is the truth of the universe and of God, all I need to do is to trust in who He is and what He did to know God’s love and forgiveness for my life.

I mentioned earlier that C. S. Lewis lived many of his years as an atheist, but he came to grips with Christianity based upon the case of Christ and the truth of His claims. For many years he was professor of medieval and renaissance literature at Oxford University and later at Cambridge University. Commenting on Jesus’ claim to be God, he said that either that statement was true or it was false. If Jesus is God and that is true, then you have a decision to make about what you want to do with His claims. But Professor Lewis said, suppose that 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 that the greatest influence for good the world has ever known could live such a colossal lie was not a rational position to hold.

Commenting on the idea of Jesus being a liar and living a lie, the nineteenth-century 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.”

But remember we have another option. If Jesus' claim to be God was false but he really thought that he was God, that would make him mentally unbalanced 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:

*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.*

As **John Warwick Montgomery** has so pointedly observed, “But one cannot very well have it both ways. If Jesus' teachings provide ‘the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health,’ then the teacher cannot be a lunatic who totally misunderstands the nature of his own personality.”

So Professor Lewis concluded that neither one of these options is a rational option. In response to the claims of Jesus Christ we have only four alternatives:

***He is a Legend.***

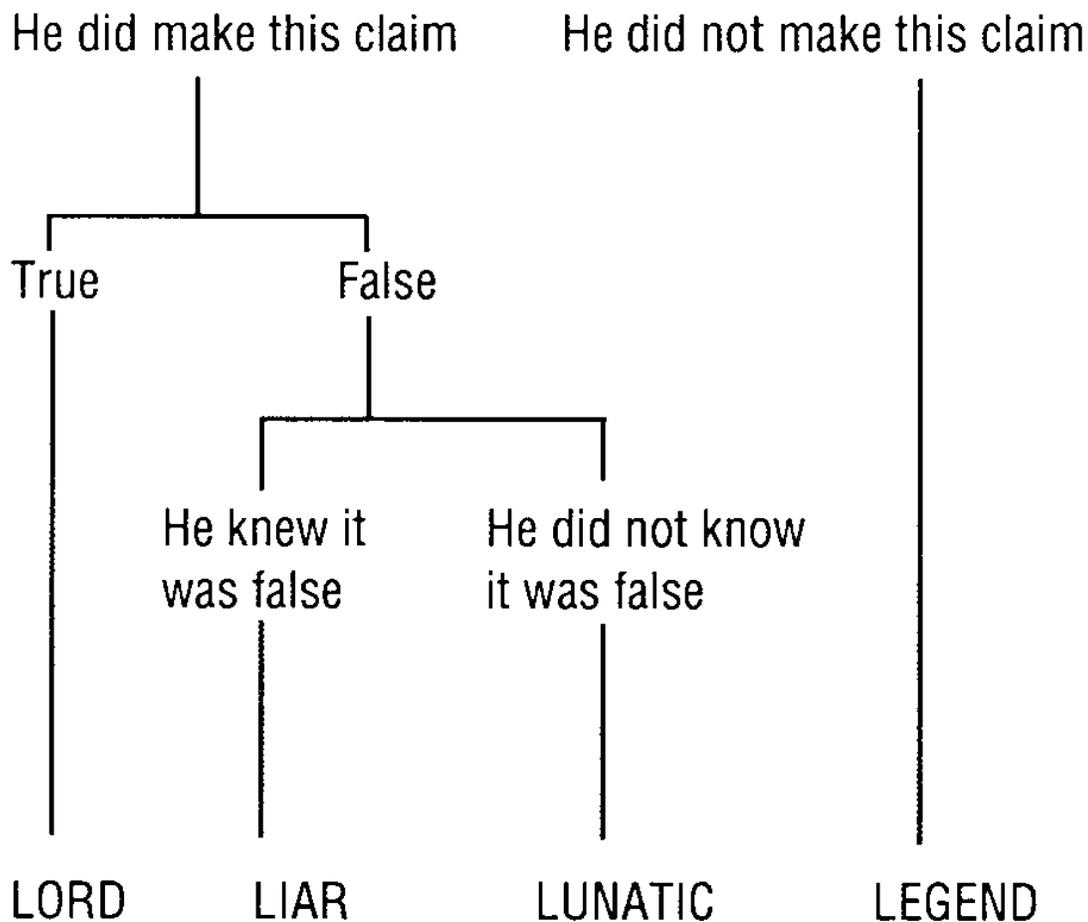
***He is a Liar.***

***He is a Lunatic.***

***He is the Lord.***

Outside of the legend (which historically is not factual), there are only three 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?

## CLAIMS TO BE GOD



Lewis concluded that Jesus was not a liar or a lunatic, but He is the Lord, as the diagram shows.

## THE LIFE

The next issue of His statement is the key to the other two claims, I believe.

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth." And then He said, "And I am the life." This is the most important aspect of Jesus' claims. Jesus' claim to be "life" implies that He must live for eternity if He is to give me eternal life or life everlasting. This claim had to do with His resurrection, the most important aspect of 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.

If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead and conquer 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” (Mark 8:31).

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

**Dr. William Lyon Phelps** of Yale University has also said, “The test question for the life of Christ is the resurrection.”

Even well-known atheist **H. L. Mencken** said, “There is no way to reconcile theology and science.” But he added, “If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, that makes Christianity possible.”

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

Evidence leading to proof usually is 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 may be recreated and the experiment repeated. Scientists form hypotheses from the data gathered.

Historical events, on the other hand, occur at one moment in time and may not be duplicated. We cannot use the scientific method to prove that Julius Caesar existed. So we 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, to help us to substantiate the claims He has made of being the Savior of the world and the personal Savior and Lord of them who receive Him. After all, His life, death and His resurrection are reported in historical documents.

**Professor Wolfhart Pannenberg** of the University of Munich says, “Whether the resurrection of Jesus took place or not is a historical question, and the historical question at this point is inescapable. And so the question has to be decided on the level of historical argument.”

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 I say it is snowing outside, that statement is open to verification or falsification. So when I begin to deal with the testimony regarding the resurrection, those same

principles must be applied as in a court of law or the examination of 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.”

**John Capeley**, a professor at Cambridge University who rose to the highest office in the judgeship in England and was recognized as one of the greatest legal minds in British history, has 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.”

**Lord Darling**, who was another chief justice of England said, “No intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the Resurrection Story is true.”

I have a friend who graduated first in his university class, a brilliant thinker. Somebody once asked him why he embraced Christianity. My friend replied, “For the simple reason that I cannot refute the resurrection.”

I wish everyone would try to refute the resurrection of Christ because that would mean that each would conduct his own investigation. I think of some skeptics in history who started out to disprove the resurrection but when confronted with the evidence came to faith in Christ.

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 had written a book, *The Principles of Legal Evidence*, and three of his students challenged Professor Greenleaf to take his book and 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.” And he added, “I am convinced that you can convince any jury in England or America that Christ rose from the dead.”

I think of two others who 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. In the book that they wrote about their investigation of the evidence for the resurrection, they stated, “Reject not until you have investigated.”

**Frank Morrison**, a British lawyer who set out to write a book repudiating the resurrection of Christ, did write a book, but 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 and ended, instead, defending it in his famous book, *Ben Hur*.

## CLOSED THINKING

I think I need to say that there are some of you who, 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. Often on the university campus one can find that a person says he does not believe in the resurrection because he does not believe in God, or in the supernatural, or in miracles. Instead he adheres 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 in it. Why? Not because of a lack of evidence, but because they already believed that there is no God, no supernatural, no miracles.

I need not add that such thinking is not intellectual integrity, but philosophical myopia. “Even if all evidence says  $2+2 = 4$ ,” the closed mind argues, “I choose to believe it can only be three.”

So my appeal is to earnest seekers, those with genuine desire to know God. I appeal to your intellectual integrity, like that of earlier skeptics who set out objectively to 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. (Acts 1:1-3)*

## THREE ISSUES

There are three specific evidences 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!***

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.

And on that stone was placed the Roman seal, which had a psychological effect, much as if the KGB put their seal on a door. They say, you break that seal, and we will break you. A Roman guard then was placed in front of the tomb to make sure nothing happened to the body. 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 is called the “Swoon Theory,” set forth by *Venturini*. It suggests that Jesus did not really die on the cross; 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 that, but some use it to try to reinforce their positions that Christ did not rise from the dead.

Another theory says the women 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 the empty tomb and the disciples proclaiming, “He is risen! Jesus Christ is alive! He forgives sins and gives eternal life to those who believe.” If this had been 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.”

*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.”

The explanation for the empty tomb can be that it was either natural or supernatural. If Christ truly was raised supernaturally from the dead by God, 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. But if the explanation is natural, someone had to remove the body. But who? The Roman soldiers? No, the Roman soldiers were placed there to keep the body in the tomb. The

Jewish officials? No, they would just have brought it out and declared, “There’s your ‘risen’ Savior,” to refute the disciples’ claims.

Perhaps the disciples removed the body and perpetrated the lie that Jesus was God and rose from the dead. But 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 eleven fearful men, hiding, running for their lives. Their leader was dead and their dreams were shattered.

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 from the dead.

What would the disciples have to gain by fabricating a story about Christ’s resurrection? Prestige? Wealth? Power? Position? Let me tell you what they gained. 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 was alive and offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Here is a list of what the eleven apostles and early Christian leaders gained by holding on to the declaration that Christ has risen:

Andrew—crucified on a cross.

Barnabas—stoned to death by Jews.

Bartholomew—beaten to death with clubs.

James, brother of Jesus—stoned.

James the Less—thrown from a pinnacle of the temple and beaten.

John—natural causes.

Jude—crucified.

Luke—hanged on an olive tree.

Mark—dragged through the streets by his feet and then burned to death.

Matthias—stoned and beheaded.

Matthew—killed by sword.

Paul—beheaded.

Peter—scourged and crucified upside down.

Philip—scourged and crucified.

Simon—crucified.

Thomas—thrust through with a spear.

James, son of Zebedee—killed by the sword.

Thaddaeus—killed by arrows.

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

In his history text, *Harold Mattingly* writes, “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. People do not die for a lie that they know is a lie. If the disciples did lie, they were deliberately deceiving the whole world, but 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 Rise 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, honest, sincere and truthful behavior of the disciples.” 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, 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 to 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.”

As I stated earlier, the other option of explanation for His resurrection is supernatural: God raised Him from the grave and He lives today. That I believe to be 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 men free. He is the only path up the mountain. Only through Him can man become whole and know the true and living God. And only through Jesus Christ does man gain life—Jesus said He was “the life” conquering death on your and my behalf.

During my university years, a statement by *Blaise Pascal* deeply impressed me. As you know, Pascal was a brilliant seventeenth-century French mathematician, a prodigy who dazzled Europe with sophisticated mathematical equations when he was yet only sixteen years old. By age thirty-one, Pascal had penned the now-classic truism: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person. And it can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ."

That statement by Pascal made an impact on my life. 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?" And no matter what I accomplished in life, I had a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness. I was trying to find answers. I gave my life to athletic pursuit. But no matter what I accomplished, my life was still void of meaning. I gave my life to intellectual pursuits, but no matter what I accomplished there at the university, I had a sense that there was something missing in me.

You see, my friend, God has made you and me in such a way that we will never have a sense of completeness and fullness and meaning until we come to know Him in a personal way. God has made us in three parts. He has made us physical beings and 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 void or emptiness within us will ever be filled.

In my closing remarks may I stress the most important aspect of this lecture. If you remember anything from this talk, I would like you to remember how you can know Jesus Christ personally. First, you must understand that God loves you. We are told that God loves the world so much that He gave us Jesus Christ (John 3:16). God loves us so much that He provided a way for us to reach him. But to reach Him—and this is the second point we must acknowledge that we need Him. We must acknowledge that because of our rebellion, there is a chasm between us and Him. That brings up the third point: Jesus said, in Luke 13:3, "But unless you repent [or turn from your former ways] you too will all perish." Repentance simply means a change of mind. 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.

Then you must understand that Jesus died on the cross for you. To illustrate the sin issue let's say you and I each have a debt of sin. A debt means I have an obligation I owe. We have an impossible debt to God that we cannot pay back to Him. I cannot pay your debt because I have my own debt. You cannot pay my debt because you have your own debt. In Romans 6:23, the Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death." In other words a wage is something I earn—I work so I receive the wage of so many rubles. What I have earned (the wage I receive) for my sins is— DEATH—eternal separation from God.

It is as if you owe someone ten million rubles (**in dollars**), and you make only one ruble a day. There is no way that you can pay off that debt. You need someone who has the

capacity to pay your debt because the wages of sin have a consequence, that of eternal separation from God.

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 dozed off.

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 I owe someone. A penalty is what *I* receive when I can't pay my debtor when *I* break a law. If I break the speeding law in my auto, I receive a penalty, that of having to pay so many rubles (or dollars) for breaking the law. That is my penalty, it is my debt to society. If I kill someone I receive a more painful penalty—that of death. I 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 my 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 what God did with the debt we owe for our sins was to put it on Jesus Christ, and Christ in His love for us paid our debt by dying in our place. God now can forgive you and give you a new life if you choose to receive Christ. Roman 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

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. II Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

But just accepting your sinfulness and Christ's death, and understanding it intellectually, does not bring you into a relationship with God. You must make a decision. The Bible says (John

1:12): “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.” So each person individually must receive Christ in order to become a member of God’s family.

What we accept from God is a gift because there is nothing we can give God 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” (Ephesians 2:8,9). The Bible also says that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Suppose I say 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 take** 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 do you receive the gift? You must make a decision, a choice to reach out and take the gift. 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, I don’t want to see him.” I finally would 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.” And at your invitation I would come into your home. You made a decision to receive me into your home.

That is exactly the picture Jesus Christ paints 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” (Revelation 3:20).

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. But **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.

## TRUE FAITH

*Knowledge of the Facts*

*Belief of the Truth*

*Personal Trust*

Look at it like this. Suppose that I KNOW all about an elevator, and I BELIEVE in it. I believe that it will get me from the first floor to the fifth floor. But I don't experience the elevator until I get on the elevator, until I TRUST in the elevator by depending on it.

***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, to trust Him, and to 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? I have presented, I hope, that the Christian faith is an intelligent faith, that it has a rational basis. It is not a leap into the dark; it is a step into the light. And I have told you that Jesus Christ is alive. It takes a little faith to bring you and God's love for you together. You don't 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 I have been talking about. I stayed many years just on the intellectual level before I ever understood how to receive Christ. But today I can testify to you of God's love and forgiveness that can be found in Christ.

The Bible summarizes the gospel in I Corinthians 15:3-5, "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."

## **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 the problem? He gave His son Jesus Christ to die on the cross as a satisfactory payment for our sins.

***All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.***

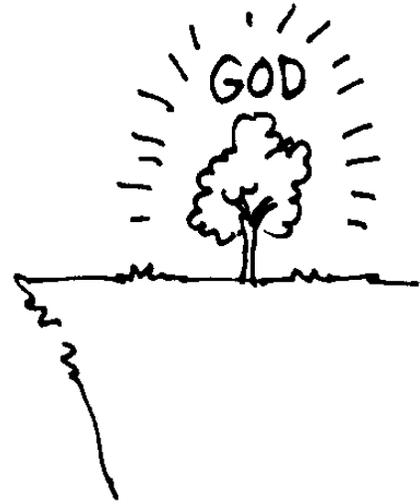
Romans 3:23



A LIFE WHICH HAS  
SIN /  
SEPARATION FROM GOD  
EMPTINESS /  
UNSURE OF ETERNAL  
DESTINY /  
MEANINGLESSNESS  
GUILT



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A LIFE WHICH HAS  
FORGIVENESS  
/ PEACE  
ETERNAL LIFE  
CHILD OF GOD  
PURPOSE

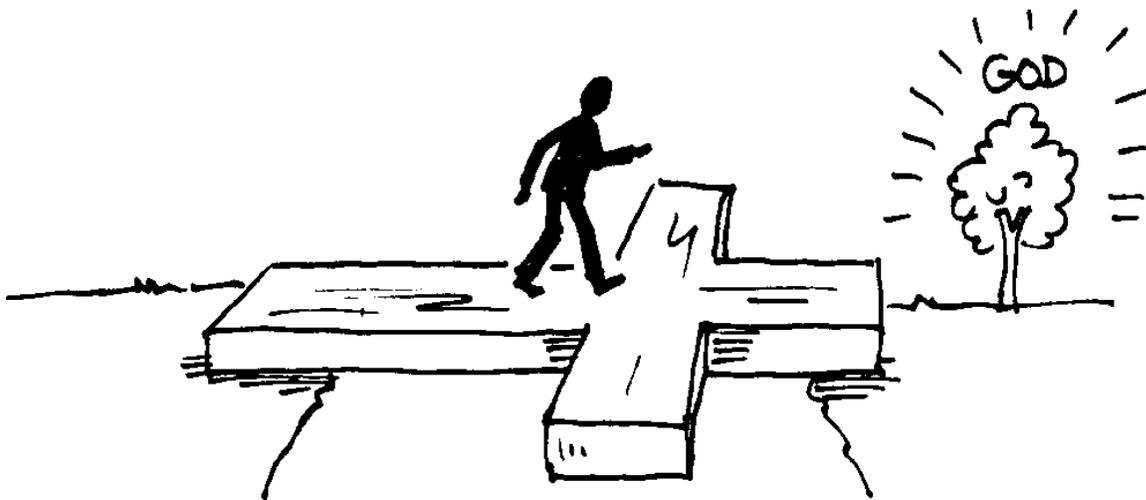


*THE CHOICE IS YOURS.*

**RECEIVE CHRIST**

THE WAGES  
OF SIN IS  
DEATH . . .

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



**A LIFE SEPARATED  
FROM GOD**  
SIN  
EMPTINESS  
LACK OF PURPOSE  
UNSURE OF ETERNAL  
DESTINY

**A LIFE IN HARMONY  
WITH GOD**  
FORGIVENESS  
ETERNAL LIFE  
CHILD OF GOD  
ABUNDANT LIFE  
PEACE

I would like to close by leading you in a prayer. You may want to pray this prayer with me if you are ready to trust Christ as your Savior. Some readers may still be on their journeys to learn more about Jesus Christ. But some of you know that God has done something in your heart, and though you may not understand completely, you know what I have shared is true.

This is a prayer that would allow you to become a member of God's family and be given total forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. Read it slowly.

*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 want to change the direction of my life. And now Lord Jesus, I open the door of my life and 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. Amen.*

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

**NOW GO BACK AND PRAY THAT PRAYER  
TO GOD—JUST BETWEEN YOU AND HIM.**



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.

My name and address are on the back of this booklet, and I encourage you to write me. Just tell me your thoughts as you read this booklet and prayed the prayer of salvation. You may also have questions. We have additional information to send you that will help you grow in your relationship with Christ. The following information is to clarify for you what has just happened in your life if you have prayed that prayer to receive Christ.

**CONCLUSION**

If you prayed the prayer asking Jesus into your life, you can be confident that you are a child of God and part of His eternal family. I would like to add a few comments now that may help you as you consider the decision you have made.

### ***RECEIVE CHRIST***

1. Jesus said in John 1:12 “that as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” 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***

2. Ephesians 2:8, 9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast”. 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 changed life will result -- but good works cannot bring about that relationship.

### ***YOUR CHOICE***

3. Receiving God’s gift is simple. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door [of your life] and knock: if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with Me.” 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 TO BE SURE***

4. The Bible (in I John 5:11, 12,) says, “And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

### ***QUESTION: Did you receive the Son?***

Yes? Then the fact is, you have eternal life. “Truly, truly, I say to you,” Jesus said, (as recorded in John 5:24), “he who hears My Word, and believes in Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” This clearly says that if you trust Christ for payment of your sins and received Him into your life, you will not face judgment.

Go back and look at each verb in the two verses just quoted:

"He who hears My Word . . ."

Did you do that? If you reply yes, then...

“And *believes* Him who sent Me...”

You believe what God said and trust Christ as your Savior.

“Has everlasting life...”

Does that mean later? No, right now.

“And does not come into judgment...”

It does not say, “might not.”

“But has passed out of death into life.”

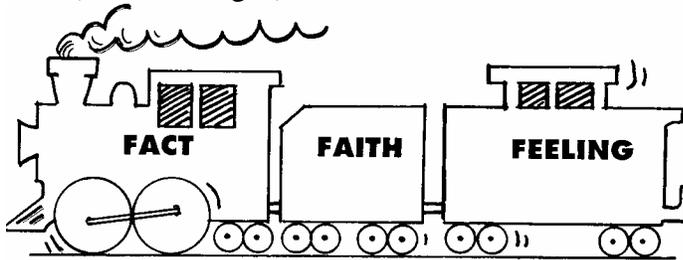
That says, “You do not have to worry about it.”

In other words, you now have everlasting 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. And please note: these statements are based upon the fact of God’s Word, not on how you may feel.

## DO NOT DEPEND UPON FEELINGS

The promise of God’s Word, the Bible—not our feelings—is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship between fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word), and feelings (the result of our faith and obedience) (John 14:21).



The train will run with or without the caboose. It would be useless to attempt to pull the train by the caboose. In the same way, we, as Christians, are not to depend on feelings or emotions, but instead we are to place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word.

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. The moment you received Christ by faith was an act of your will; and 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.” Revelation 3:20

“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27

**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.” Colossians 1:13, 14

**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...” John 1:12

**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.” John 5:24

**5. *You began the great adventure for which God created you.***

Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” II Corinthians 5:17

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## **APPENDIX**

### **ATHEISM**

First of all let me try to address the question of atheism. The person who holds an atheistic position, really puts himself in a very difficult position when you really think through the issues, making the statement that there is no God, is not a very rational position to assume. First of all, when that statement is made, it violates a basic philosophical presupposition, and that says that a finite person cannot draw an infinite or absolute conclusion. I have discussed this briefly in the front of this booklet and hopefully pointed out the reasoning of why it's not rational. Atheism by definition, is a nothingbutisms, 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. For example, if I say there is nothing but a table in the room, then the table is the room and any table as we know it would be unidentifiable. So for an atheist to claim there is nothing but matter is meaningless. If that were so, he would be unable to identify it. Let's look in more detail at the difficulty that the atheists puts himself in by his position when trying to answer the question of the existence of the universe. In other words, the "if" proposition, about anything that really exist? Does this universe really exist? Does this building really exist? Do these chairs exist? If something does exist—where did it come from? You really only have two conclusions to that question. *Does anything really exist? Either something must be eternal, or something not eternal came from nothing.*

### **THE FOLLOWING ARE THE ONLY OPTIONS THE ATHEIST HAS:**

1) That which is eternal is the universe. But that's not true, because the second law of thermodynamics says that the universe is not eternal. The universe is like a giant clock that has been wound up, and it's now winding down. Cars don't get newer each year, they get older. Buildings don't get more beautiful each year they get older and eventually fall down. As the law of thermodynamics says, the universe can't be eternal, because in time it will wind down. Here is how the Second Law of Thermodynamics helps to prove the existence of something being eternal.

This follows from one of the most fundamental laws of contemporary physics and engineering. The Second Law of Thermodynamics says that in a closed system the available energy will become less and less until finally you have no available energy at all. This is called a growth in entropy that finally results in heat death. All right? It is a generalized law of the universe. Now, for the atheist the universe has got to be such a system because there is no God outside. The universe is all there is. It is such a closed system. But according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics it only takes a finite amount of time to reach heat death. Think about it. For the atheist the universe is all there is so it has always been around. It's been an infinite period of time. But an infinite period of time will embrace any finite period, so the universe would already have reached heat death if the atheists were right. Now, it evidently hasn't because there's enough energy left to discuss the question. So, we conclude that the atheist is wrong in his assumptions. One of two things must be the case, maybe both: the universe was created a finite amount of time ago and hasn't yet had enough time to reach heat death: God created it. And/or there is a cosmic gas station attendant out there somewhere feeding in energy: That's known as continuous creation by the theologians. But you've got to have creation. The Second Law of Thermodynamics insists on it. Go to Gordon Van Wylen's textbook on Thermodynamics published by Wiley and Son in Philadelphia, the scientific and technical publisher, Gordon Van Wylen was head of engineering at the University of Michigan. This is the most widely-used text in Thermodynamics. Van Wylen says, "Many authors and myself must believe in God. We have no choice. The Second Law of Thermodynamics insists upon this."

2) The second choice the atheist has if the first is not true, is to say that the universe is not eternal. If he is being honest with the laws of physics, where did the universe come from? His next position is that, "the universe created itself." And that's a logical absurdity. For something to create itself without existing prior, cannot be true. One of the basic laws of science is, nothing comes from nothing. The atheist must say, the universe is not eternal, and if this non eternal universe exists, he can't conclude that it created itself from nothing. As we said, nothing comes from nothing, so it didn't create itself.

3) The next perspective could be, everything must be an illusion. In other words, I'm not really here. This building is not real. It's an illusion. But we know that that's not true. Because we can set specific times and make predictions with comets, with sunrise, and sunsets. Most atheists do not conclude that this is true.

4) The only other option that the atheist has is that this non-eternal universe was created by something that is eternal. That something, that is eternal, is someone— God. That is the Christian view and is a rational view.

To the Christian, that "who" is eternal, and is an infinite personal God who created this universe and He created human beings. And two key factors that we can appeal to are, the arguments of cause and the effect, and the idea that for every design there must be a designer

For every effect, there has to be an equal and a greater cause. As I look at this natural universe, and there's nothing to explain this effect of the universe, from what I see. There's nothing in the universe that is of sufficient cause, to cause this effect. And so it's reasonable to assume that the ultimate cause must be outside the universe.

I look at design, and assume a designer. You know this watch just didn't happen. You can't take the pieces of this watch and put it in a box, and shake it up and out comes a watch. There is a watch maker that made this watch. I look at the effect of this building. And wind didn't create this building. There was design behind this 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's like going into an art gallery and seeing a beautiful picture and saying, "I see no artist." The painting of Mona Lisa didn't paint the Mona Lisa. There was a master artist—Leonardo Da Vinci that painted the Mona Lisa.

Let's assume that there is a God. And because I'm a human being, I think, I feel, I make choices and I know that I am an effect. That it is reasonable to assume that this God, is both infinite and personal, because I am finite and personal. He created me like He is, in His image with the ability to think, feel and make choices. How can I know that this "absolute" we call God is personal?

Well, is it more reasonable to think that the absolute is personal or impersonal? For one thing, notice that we have used our minds in reasoning to the absolute. Wouldn't it be strange if it required rational minds and personalities to engage in this argumentation, and when you 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 rational and personal being Himself. For another thing, 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, and so 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, that is to say, irrational.

Life never evolved from non-life. If I'm an effect, then there's got to be a cause that is greater from someone like I am. The atheist has a big problem, in understanding any type of moral values. Because if they conclude that there is nothing eternal, then there are no absolutes, so who determines what's right and what's wrong? It's like the Russian writer Dostoyevski said, "If there is no God, then everything is permitted." And it's true, if there's no absolute God in authority, then who determines the value of anything, popular vote? The atheist has no answer for where did the laws of logic come from. So he can never defend his position from logic because logic must have an ultimate source to appeal to.

## **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, but there is another alternative than an unending line of causes— namely an eternal God. An

eternal God could be a cause yet need no cause. Also, since the universe is not eternal and all causes are greater than their effects, the cause of the universe must ultimately be eternal.

## **DOES LIFE MAKE SENSE WITHOUT GOD?**

If there is no God, life is absurd. Man's values would be changing, hence moral truth would be relative, but that is impossible. Human utopia and education are also meaningless because man 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 so of the diplomats to secure peace in the world, the sacrifices of good people everywhere all come to nothing. Humanity is nothing essentially more than a swarm of flies or a herd of pigs. Because man ends in nothing, he is nothing.

## **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. By simple observation and logical thinking, a case for God can be constructed.

*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.

*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 which is greater (more complex) than itself.
- 3) The universe exists. (Pantheism is wrong.)

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 (at least) personal moral cause for the universe exists. So the cause can now be called “He” not

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) If the Creator-Cause were finite, then He would have another 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.

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.*



“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 phrase mongers, 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