

Myth Versus History

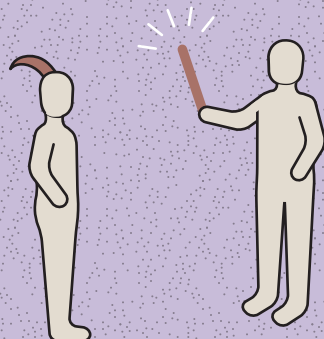
How should biblical stories with miracles be viewed, as fictitious legends or factual history?

Sense from the Author:
It's a fascinating tale. Enjoy.

Once upon a time, in a far off land, there lived a rascal magician.

Not on any map

Hey, I'm growing horns.



So, what's for lunch?



Fictional land, detached from reality

Magical, silly or bizarre

As if the supernatural were common

Could never be proven false

Blurring of natural & supernatural

No missionaries

Historical context

Nature of the miracle

People's reactions

Names & events known from history

Purpose is to help, instruct, or prove

Astonishment, like you and I would react

Places we can visit even today

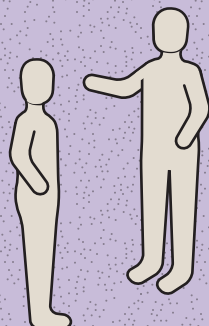
Rare, distinct

Lives altered, nations & religions founded

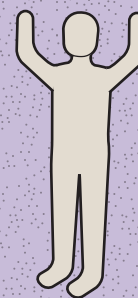
In the 17th year of Tiberius Caesar, a man named Jesus from Nazareth, before many witnesses, did this . . .

Main St. Jericho

I . . . I can see.



Wow!



Listen to what I just saw!



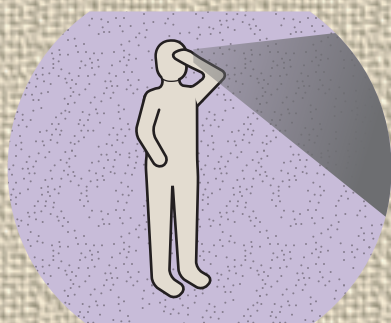
Sense from the Author:
This really happened. Take it seriously.

Similarities between fictional stories & your life don't make you mythical. Likewise ancient myths and the Bible.

Mythical embellishments of Bible stories, written centuries later, do not convert the originals into legends.

Anti-Supernatural Bias

This man is blind to part of reality because he thinks . . .



Even serious stories *have* to be fiction, if they include miracles.

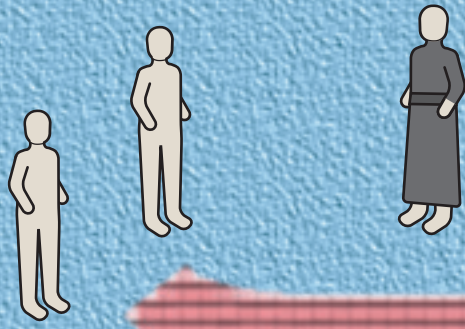
Proven frauds allow me to label anyone else the same, if I don't agree with them.

I quickly accept evidence, as long as it supports my preconceived bias.

I set the required proof for the supernatural slightly higher than the proof given.

I must see it, or it cannot exist. Others seeing it does not count.

1. Preparing the jury



Judge's Briefing

Prospective jurors, this case has many witnesses. Your job is to decide if they are telling the truth.

As with anyone who's serious, assume honesty and competence, unless there's evidence to the contrary.

You cannot selectively dismiss parts of their testimony without a sound basis.

They saw these events, we did not. Modern opinions of what happened at the scene are inadmissible.

The burden of proof for their accuracy should be reasonable, without demanding near perfection.

Men's lives are at stake. Arrive at the correct verdict.

2. Discarding baggage

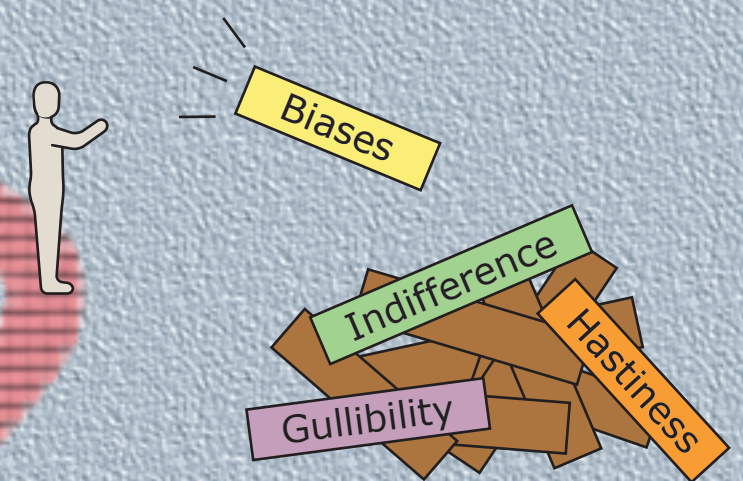
Banned from Courtroom

Deciding ahead of time what is and is not possible in this world.

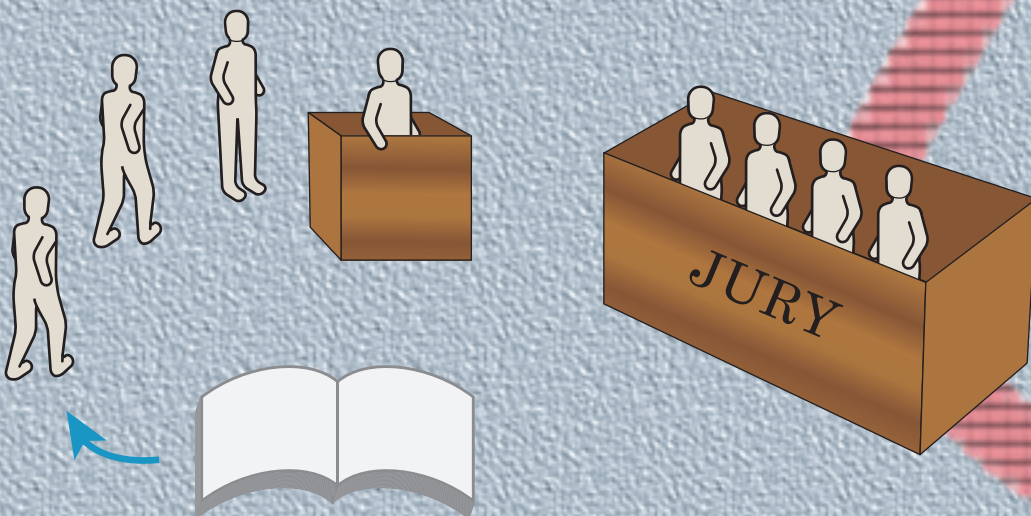
Applying different standards for spiritual and non-spiritual evidence.

Pre-determining the verdict.

Conclusions based on self interest, hidden behind weak arguments.



3. Hearing & weighing the witnesses



A Juror's Notes:

All give essentially the same version . . .
 Can't ALL be dimwits . . . Can't ALL be liars . . .
 Lived centuries apart, collaboration impossible . . .
 This stuff's very public, everyone would know if it's true . . . and it's as sacred as our constitution, everyone would care . . .
 Another witness? When do they run out?

4. Casting a verdict

Reasons to Believe

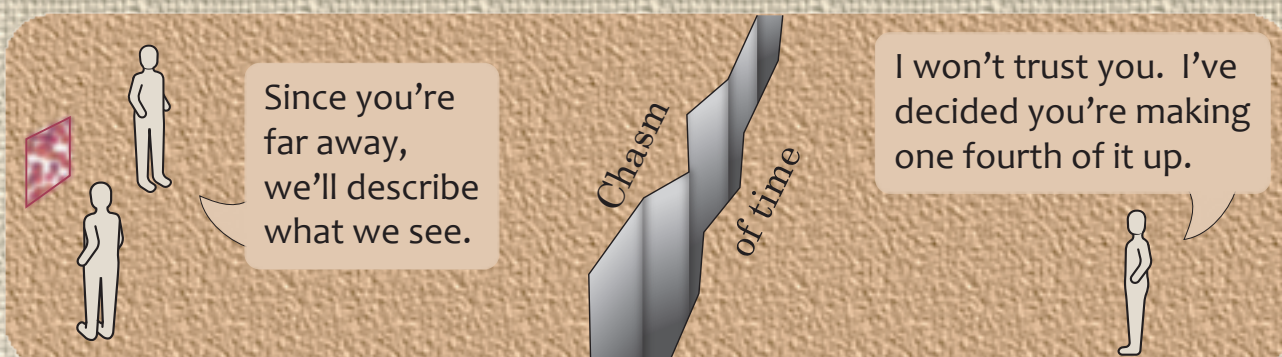
Has ring of truth, with realistic, flawed people.
 Many claimed to be eyewitnesses.
 No record of deceit, recanting, greed, madness.
 There are no alternate versions.



No staying here

Reasons to Doubt

Because there aren't even more witnesses.
 Everyone was "in on it".
 I don't like what they're saying.
 Finding nitpicky discrepancies.



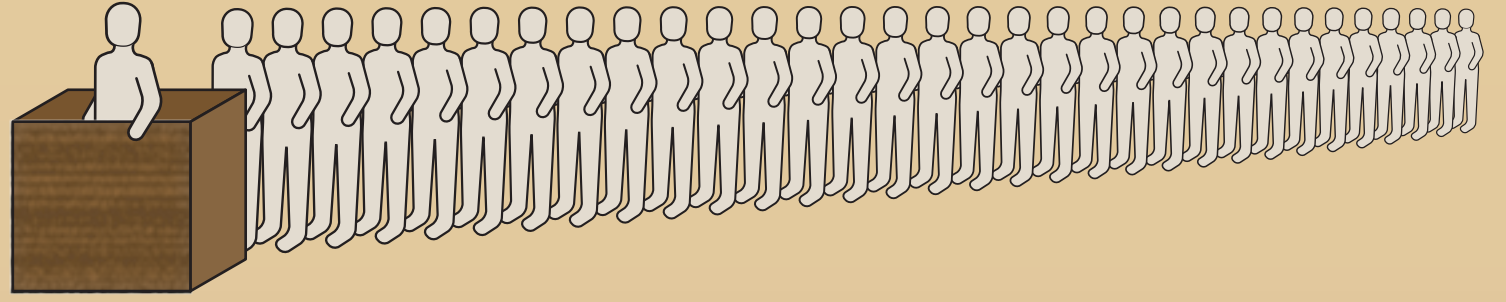
Then why not believe every religion?

Most religions don't have written witness testimony. The few that do have mostly unproven opinions about God or mythical fantasies. Historically based accounts of clear miracles are rare outside the Bible.

Jesus - One of the best documented figures of antiquity



WITNESSES



Four distinct biographers.

Described also in other New Testament books.

Mentioned by early non-Christian historians.

Thousands of eye witnesses followed his very public life.

Highlights of his life passed down in church traditions & rituals.

Initial accounts upheld by writings of following generations.



PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

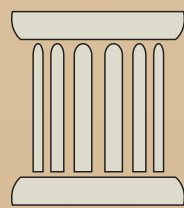


Archeology has unearthed thousands of artifacts corroborating names, dates and places cited in the New Testament.

A wealth of inscriptions and ruins from the first century onward reveal the birth of a movement based on a crucified savior.

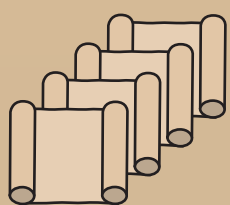
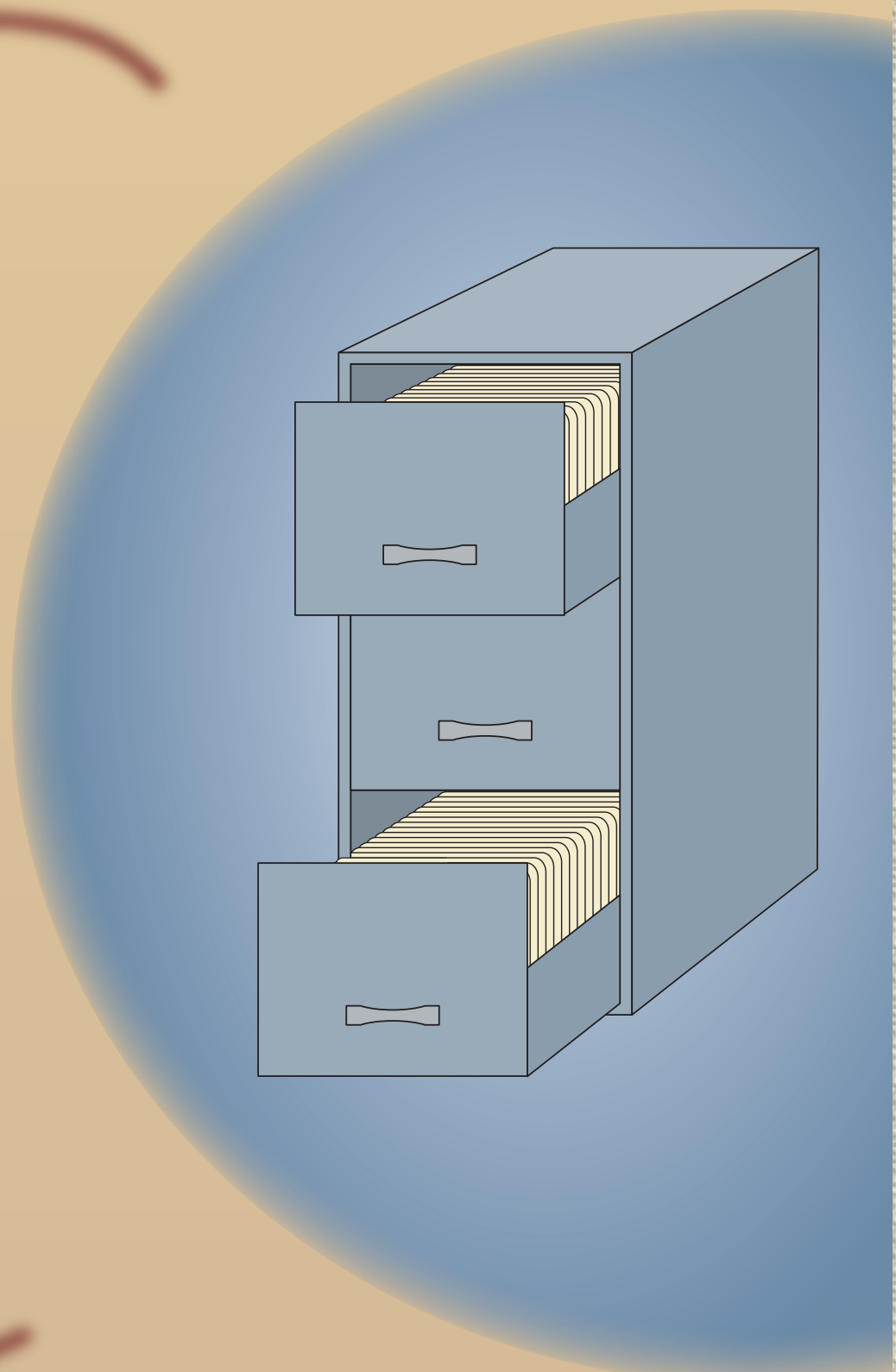


BACKGROUND INFO

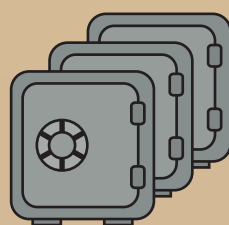


We know more about the nation Jesus was born into than almost any nation of antiquity.

The historical context of Jesus' life is understood in great detail, both from the Bible and from many other sources.



PRESERVING THE WRITTEN RECORD

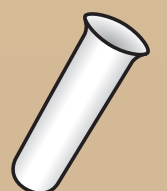


New Testament books were quickly duplicated and distributed throughout the Roman empire & beyond.

Churches in Europe, Asia & Africa each safeguarded their copies of the sacred documents.



EXAMINED



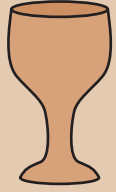


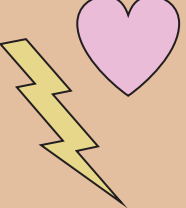




Jesus and his record has been studied & scrutinized like no other person in history.

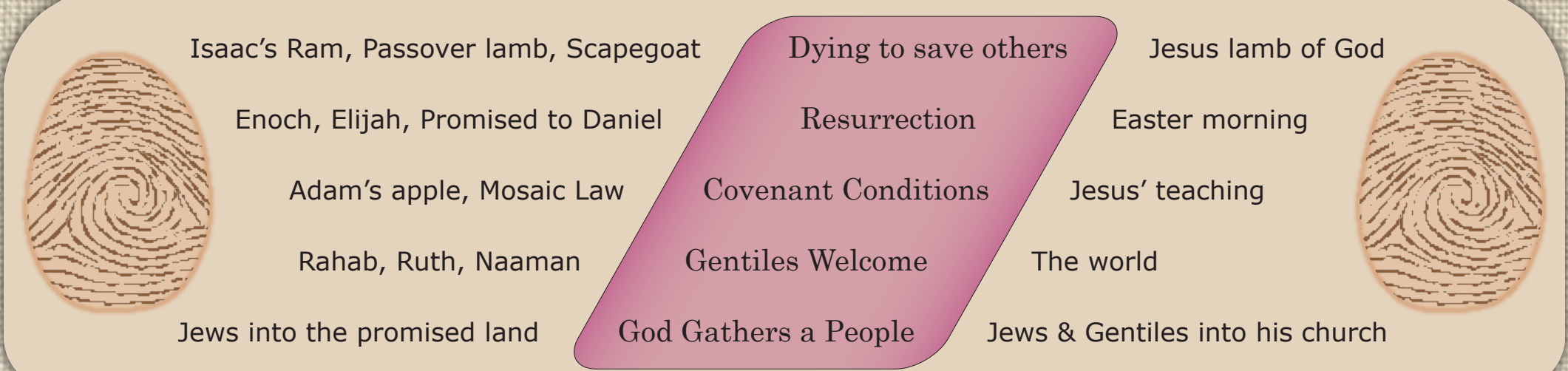
The many historical details in Jesus' biographies made them readily testable by first century readers and every generation since.

Like Father, Like Son

God followed consistent patterns when dealing with Israel, making his Messiah easily recognizable.

THEMES	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
	Patriarchs* • Birth of a nation Moses* • Gave the law Joshua • Brought to the land Samuel* • Initiated the kingship Nehemiah • Rebuilt Jerusalem	John Baptist* • Prepared us for Messiah Jesus* • Ushered in the Kingdom
	Abraham • Slavery in Egypt Moses • Conquest of Canaan Samuel • David to be king Prophets • Messiah coming Prophets • Exile & return	John Baptist • Messiah is near Jesus • His Death & resurrection
	Noah • Rainbow Abraham • Land promised Moses • Jews as God's nation David • Eternal kingdom Jeremiah • New promised	Jesus • New begun Apostles • New proclaimed
	Moses • Manna from God Joshua • Parted Jordan river Elijah • Fire from heaven Elijah • Healing Isaiah • Sun went backward	Jesus • Healed, fed, walked on water Paul • Blinded a false prophet
	Joseph by his brothers Job by his three friends Moses by the Jews in Egypt David by King Saul Jeremiah by King & Jews	Jesus by Jewish leaders Apostles by Jewish leaders
	Worldwide flood Jews given their own land 40 years in the wilderness David forgiven Nineveh spared	Jesus died for us Ananias & Sapphira put to death
	Announced Isaac's birth Called Gideon Announced Samson's birth Fed Elijah Rescued Daniel	Announced Jesus' birth & resurrection Rescued Peter
	Samson for strength David for psalms Elisha for miracles Ezekiel for prophecy Promised to all by Joel	Jesus for ministry Believers for witness

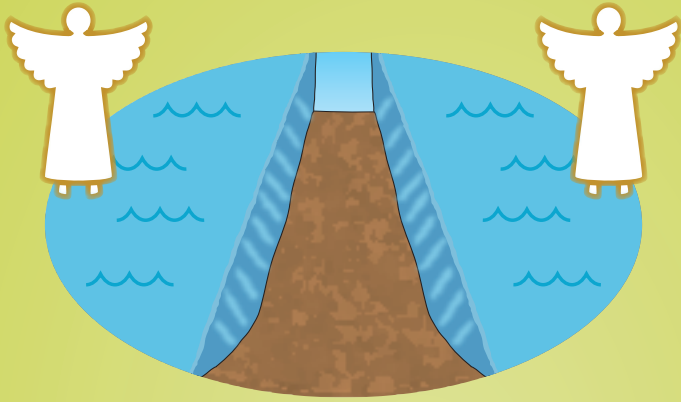
Other threads running through both Old and New Testament



Miracles

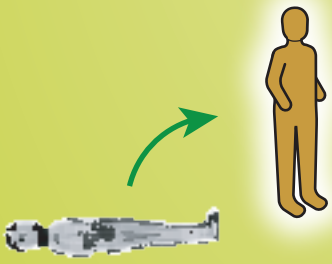
The Bible records over 200 miracles

What only God can do



- Proves divine source of message
- Undeniably supernatural
- Many observers

Demonstrated Cure

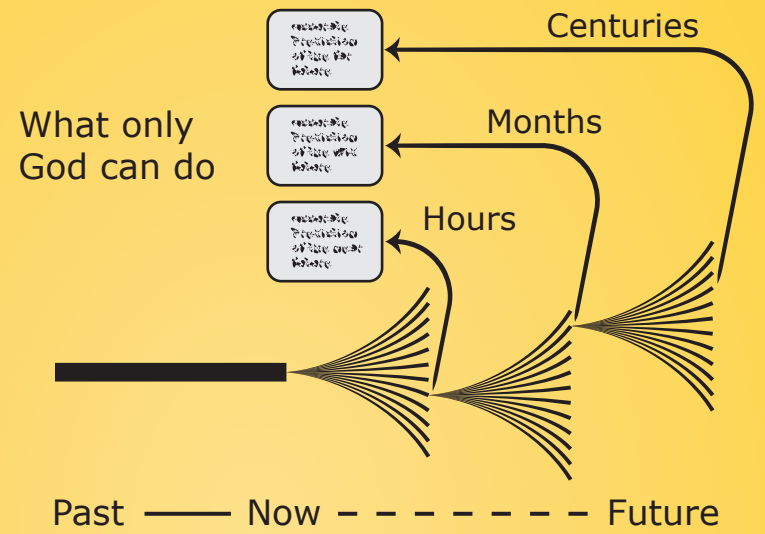


Miracles of physical healing and raising the dead prove that God has both the ability and intention to give us immortal bodies.

Fraudulent & careless claims of miracles do not cancel out the real ones.

Fulfilled Predictions

The Bible records over 200 fulfilled predictions



Demonstrated Forecasting

Repeated foretelling of the future proves that Christianity can be trusted when it speaks on the afterlife.

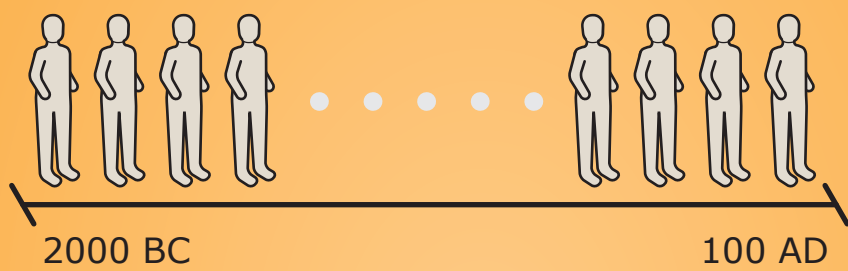


Vague or incorrect predictions by others do not nullify biblical ones.

Witnesses

The Bible records over 100 direct witnesses

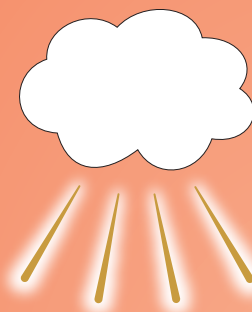
WE MET GOD



- Unique supernatural encounters with God
- Their descriptions of him line up
- A few cases were witnessed by thousands

Results

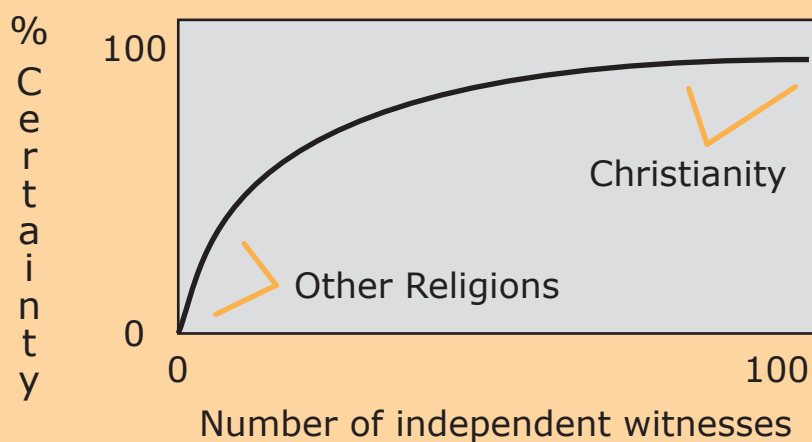
The evidence for Christianity isn't all in the Bible



Among Christians worldwide, past and present:

- Miracles
- Physical healing
- Answered prayers
- Supernatural guidance
- Increased love & holiness
- ...

From its birth, Christianity spread around the world, as the Old Testament prophets and Jesus promised.



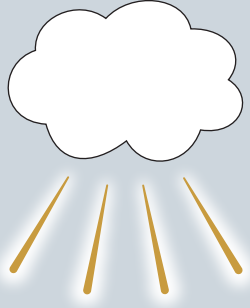
It's fantastic... and real!



Millions of Christians passionately tell others about their faith. The evidence has convinced them of its truth.

Phony Christians do not undo genuine believers.

What Lures You Away - Objections to Christianity



God's fabulous plan will soon end all suffering and evil . . . forever!

I don't like his plan.



I hate this filthy prison and these violent convicts. Why doesn't the warden do something?



Not interested. Your pardon doesn't get me out of here fast enough.



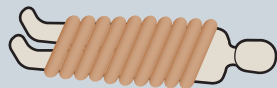
Suffering & evil
Why does God allow suffering & evil to continue?



If a good & all-powerful God existed, he would obviously handle this issue exactly as I would.

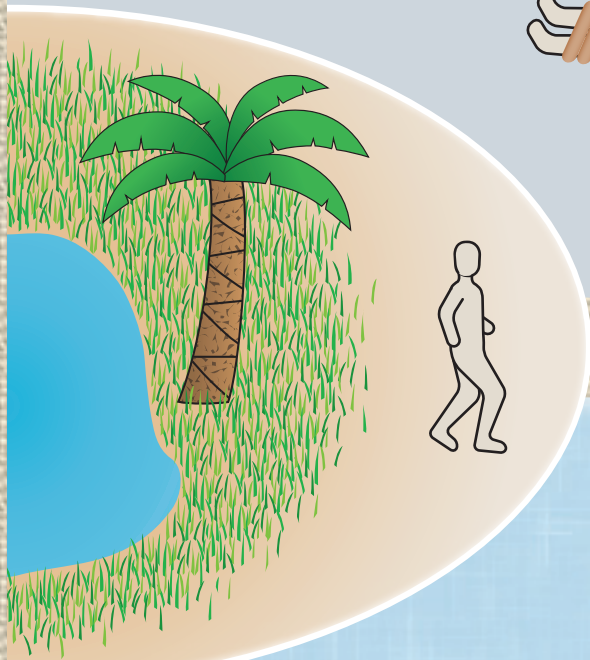


He demanded evil be stopped immediately, so we started with him.



CONSIDER

- Our sin brought God's curse on the earth. If the curse is really bad, it's because **we** are really bad.
- The innocent (Jesus) experienced this world's suffering & evil to rescue the guilty (us).



◇ No Special Rules ◇

When judging the Bible's reliability, use the same rules & criteria you would use on any other literature.

Bible Contradictions
Does the Bible contain discrepancies & contradictions?

I saw three cop cars at the park.



There's a policeman down the street.



I saw three people healed at church!



A deaf man got his hearing, down the street!



Minor differences between descriptions are normal, and would not lead us to doubt the event really happened.

Two people's descriptions of a supernatural event will have the same degree of minor differences.

A Genuine Discrepancy



Author #1:
Jesus crucified in Jerusalem.

Author #2:
Jesus died in battle in Egypt.



The Bible has nothing close to this.

Stories may only *appear* to contradict because of:

- Approximations
- Different perspectives
- Figurative language
- Summarizing
- Language isn't math



An imperfect eye witness account has the ring of truth, showing it wasn't fabricated or cleaned up afterward.