

Introduction to Apologetics-Part VI

Course modeled after Frank Turek and Norman Geisler's *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* curriculum, with additional materials from William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland, Hugh Ross, Stephen Meyers, John Lennox, Douglas Groothuis, N.T. Wright, Ravi Zacharias, Andy Bannister, Paul Copan, and Rodney Stark.

Course Outline:

- I. ~~_____ The Four Questions Everybody Needs to Ask of Their Belief System~~
- II. ~~_____ Can You Handle the Truth?~~
- III. ~~_____ The Big Bang of Science and Theology~~
- IV. ~~_____ Watchmaker, Watchmaker, Make Me a Watch~~
- V. ~~_____ The Herd and the Gut~~
- VI. All We Need is a Miracle
- VII. Can Somebody Give Me a Testimony?
- VIII. Books of Myth or Books of Truth?
- IX. Who is This Jesus Guy?
- X. The One Answer to the Four Questions

Can You Handle the Truth?

1. Truth about reality is knowable. ✓
2. The opposite of true is false. ✓
3. It is true that the theistic God exists. ✓
4. If God exists, then miracles are possible.
5. Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God.
6. The New Testament is historically reliable.
7. The New Testament says Jesus claimed to be God.
8. Jesus' claim to be God was miraculously confirmed by His fulfillment of prophecies, His sinless life and miraculous deeds, and His prediction and accomplishment of His resurrection.
9. Therefore, Jesus is God.
10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) teaches is true.
11. Jesus taught that the Bible is the Word of God.
12. Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God (and anything opposed to it is false).

Everything in this 12-step argument is built on knowable truth. By this point, you should be able to discern self-defeating statements, establish that truth is knowable, explain that absolute truths do exist, the four basic questions every person needs to ask about their humanity, the basic cosmological arguments for the existence of God, show that Intelligent Design is not unscientific, show that there is a universal moral law, explain about the Big Bang miracle, and the veracity of the New Testament.

What We Can Demonstrate So Far...

1. By means of the Cosmological Argument, we can demonstrate that the universe and all that is in it was caused by an intelligent being outside of space, time, and matter, which is immensely powerful and personal.
2. By means of the Teleological Argument, we can demonstrate that this being is not just intelligent, but supremely intelligent since he designed life and the universe with incredible complexity and precision, evidenced by the constant emerging of the Anthropic Principle.
3. By means of the Moral Argument, we can demonstrate that there is a moral law, which provides the means by which we can delineate between good and evil, and that this law must have been created by a moral law giver, it is universal, and that the definition of good in its fullest meaning is only found in God and His attributes, and that goodness must be attached to purpose.

So, if the balance of probability tips heavily on the side of a theistic God existing, then what?

Then miracles are a possibility. But what is a miracle, exactly?

In order to define a miracle, you must define _____. For, if you do not clearly define _____, then the possibility of miracles, including supernatural activity and supra-natural activity, becomes much less probable.

What is the difference between supernatural and supra-natural activity?

Great question! Supernaturalism is activity that takes place _____ seemingly normal explanations of causality; the actions seem to defy natural laws of physics or scientific explanation. Supra-naturalism is activity that takes place _____ seemingly normal explanations of causality; the actions do not seem to defy natural laws of physics or scientific explanation, but the _____ of the activity seems to be more than coincidental.

What are some examples of:

1. Supernatural activity found in the Bible?
2. Supra-natural activity found in the Bible?
3. Are there some things that have been considered supernatural that could be better explained to a skeptic as supra-natural?

We have already shown evidence of the greatest miracle of all, which is decidedly supernatural!

Any idea what that miracle could be?

All three arguments, Cosmological, Teleological, and Moral, point to an external, intelligent causality. They all point to a supernatural cause. Therefore, they all point to a miraculous causality.

Objections to miracles

1. Natural Laws are Immutable (Benedict Spinoza)
 - A. Miracles are violations of natural laws.
 - B. Natural laws are immutable.
 - C. It is impossible to violate immutable laws.
 - D. Therefore, miracles are impossible.
2. Miracles are not Credible (David Hume)
 - A. Natural law is by definition a description of natural occurrence.
 - B. A miracle is by definition a rare occurrence.
 - C. The evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare.
 - D. A wise man always bases his belief on the greater evidence.
 - E. Therefore, a wise man should never believe in miracles.

What is the primary objection to Spinoza's second premise?

Natural laws are descriptions not prescriptions of what must happen. They describe the four known natural forces:

1. Gravitation
2. Magnetism
3. Strong nuclear forces
4. Weak nuclear forces

Intelligent beings can overpower natural forces by will.

What is the primary objection to Hume's third premise?

To disprove Hume's third premise, we only need one counter-example, because Hume said "always." There are actually four good counter-examples that utilize facts Hume would concede:

1. The origin of the universe happened only once.
2. The origin of life happened only once.
3. The origin of new life forms happened only once.
4. The entire history of the world is comprised of rare, unrepeatable events.

So, according to Hume, if miracles happened more often, or, in his words, if they were "less rare," then they would be believable since they would cease to be miracles. So, by Hume's own words, the four counter-examples cannot be believed since they are rare, unrepeatable events.

Why don't we see the same large scale miracles like in the Bible?

If the Bible is complete and there is no new revelation of God outside of Scripture, then there is no need for such miracles. Remember, the large miracles recorded in the Bible are, many times, hundreds of years apart!

How can we know that the New Testament is true?

1. At least 10 ancient non-Christian writers within 150 years of Jesus' life give information about Jesus, and their collective references provide a storyline consistent with the NT.
2. We have an accurate copy of the original New Testament documents:
 - A. While the originals do not survive or have not yet been found, we have abundant and accurate copies of the original documents, many more than the ten best pieces of ancient literature combined. We have manuscript fragments from the early 2nd and perhaps as early as the mid-first century. There are no works from the ancient world that come close to the NT in terms of manuscript support.
 - B. Reconstruction is further authenticated by the thousands of quotations from the early church fathers. The entire NT, except for 11 verses, can be reconstructed just from their quotations.
3. The NT documents are early and contain even earlier source material:
 - A. Since the NT documents are referenced by other writers by about AD 100, they had to have been composed before then.
 - B. Since the NT documents speak as if the temple and the city of Jerusalem were still standing at the time of their writing, most of the NT documents are probably earlier than 70 AD.
 - C. We have very strong evidence that Acts was written by AD 62, which means Luke is even earlier.
 - D. We have source material that goes back into the AD 30s; most notably, 1 Cor. 15.
4. We have eyewitness testimony about Jesus
 - A. The major NT writers record the same basic events with diverging details and some unique material.
 - B. They cite at least thirty real historical figures that have been confirmed by ancient non-Christian writers and various archeological discoveries.
 - C. Luke peppers the second half of Acts with at least 84 historically confirmed eyewitness details and includes several others in his Gospel.
 - D. Luke's proven trustworthiness affirms that of Matthew and Mark because they record the same basic story.
 - E. John includes at least 59 historically confirmed or historically probable eyewitness details in his Gospel.
 - F. Paul and Peter provide the fifth and sixth written testimonies to the Resurrection.
 - G. Since this early, independent eyewitness testimony is within one generation of the events, the NT events cannot be considered legendary.
5. The top ten reasons to believe the NT writers
 - A. Numerous embarrassing details about themselves
 - B. Numerous embarrassing details and difficult sayings of Jesus
 - C. Include the demanding sayings of Jesus
 - D. Carefully distinguish Jesus' words from their own
 - E. Include events about the Resurrection that they would not have invented
 - F. Include at least 30 historically confirmed public figures in their writings
 - G. Include divergent details

- H. Challenge their readers to check out verifiable facts, even facts about miracles
- I. Describe miracles like other historical events: with simple, unembellished accounts
- J. Abandoned their long-held sacred beliefs and practices, adopted new ones, and did not deny their testimony under persecution or threat of death

Is it really possible to believe reports about an event nearly ten years after the event happened?

Do you remember the recession that hit in 2008? Do you remember what caused it and the people who were involved with it? Write what you remember about it in the next few minutes.

Now listen as the reports are read. Are they exactly the same? Are any of them true? Can the facts be gleaned by hearing a collection of reports, or should only one of them be used as authoritative?