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# Introduction

“It is a very silly idea that in reading you must never ‘skip’. All sensible people skip freely when that come to a chapter which they find is going to be no use to them.”

— C.S. LEWIS, *Mere Christianity*, Chapter 3

This study guide will focus on a defense of the New Testament (with a central focus on defending the resurrection). My hope is that the content of this class will expose you to some of the recent New Testament scholarship while at the same time making it easier to defend the Gospel.

Part of this study will involve answering objections from non-believers. The chapters that are in quotes are those in which we will attempt to answer an objection (e.g. “The Bible is full of contradictions”). I have not filtered these objections in order to find the weakest ones but rather sought to give non-believers a chance to offer some of the arguments that they find most convincing. This is intentional. I strongly believe that it is far better to encounter these objections when you can work through them with your fellow Christians than to encounter them first with an unbeliever.

People can sometimes find working through objections overwhelming. I myself have encountered objections that gave me a start (until I worked through them). I am convinced that all of the objections have reasonable responses, but some can sound persuasive at first.

My advice is to skip any section that you find unhelpful or overwhelming. The same applies to questions; if you cannot come up with an answer, move on and don’t fret about it. These will be discussed in class and you will come to see reasonable answers do exist. As Proverbs 18:17 says, “The first to state his case seems right, until his opponent begins to cross-examine him.”

One more thing.

The study of apologetics can have a dark side in that it can cause the Christian's focus to be based upon the arguments in support of God's word as opposed to on God's word itself. As C.S. Lewis once said:

I have found that nothing is more dangerous to one's own faith than the work of an apologist. No doctrine of that faith seems to me so spectral, so unreal as the one that I have just successfully defended in a public debate. For a moment, you see, it has seemed to rest on oneself: as a result when you go away from the debate, it seems no stronger than that weak pillar. That is why we apologists take our lives in our hands and can be saved only by falling back continually from the web of our own arguments, as from our intellectual counters, into the reality--from Christian apologetics into Christ Himself. That also is why we need one another's continual help--oremus pro invicem. (Let us pray for each other.)

— C.S. LEWIS, *Christian Apologetics*

# Part I

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## A Game Plan

# 1. The Art of Asking Questions

“Can it be that questioning is a kind of teaching, Ischomachus? The fact is, I have just discovered the plan of your series of questions! You lead me by paths of knowledge familiar to me, point out things like what I know, and bring me to think that I really know things that I thought I had no knowledge of.”

— SOCRATES, *Economics*, 19.15 <sup>1</sup>

Read the following passages in which Jesus used questions at key points as part of his discussion. For each of these passages, explain why you think Jesus used questions.

**Luke 24:17**

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**John 4:7**

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**Luke 10:26, 36**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://textcritical.net/work/works-on-socrates-english/Ec./19/15>

Mark 11:29

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For further study:

<i>Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions</i>  GREG KOUKL	This book offers several techniques for being able to engage others in a conversation easily and work through any objections. I strongly recommend reading this.
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## 2. Gardening and Harvesting

“Other types of fruits have other ways of signaling when they are ripe, but to taste their best, they must also be harvested at just the right moment. Many people mistakenly believe that any fruit can be picked underripe, then ripened on a kitchen counter.”

— LEE REICH, *Recognizing When Fruit Is Ripe for the Picking*<sup>2</sup>

The New Testament makes the point several times that there are stages in the process of becoming and being a disciple of Christ. This is important because non-Christians may need help to be ready for the receipt of the Gospel message.

**What are some topics that it likely does not make sense to focus on when talking to a non-Christian? Alternatively, what are the things that we ought to focus on? Consider 1 Corinthians 5:12.**

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**Alternatively, what are some topics that it likely does make sense to focus on when talking to a non-Christian? Consider the sermon summaries in Acts to see what they focused on.**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/27/style/cuttings-recognizing-when-fruit-is-ripe-for-the-picking.html>

**1 Corinthians 3:6 says that Paul planted, and Apollos watered. What does this mean? In what ways did Paul's work and Apollos' work seem to be different?**

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**Jesus offers a distinction between the sower and the reaper in John 4:35-39. Explain what this means in the larger context of John chapter 4.**

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### 3. Ambassadors for Christ

“I’m an ambassador 24 hours a day.”

— JAMES COSTOS, United States Ambassador to Spain

Paul says that disciples are ambassadors for Christ. He makes it clear that being an ambassador means far more than just having good answers, it means modeling an artful and attractive approach.

**2 Corinthians 5:21 refers to the Apostles as “ambassadors for Christ”. Explain the significance of him referring to the Apostles in this way.**

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**Consider examples of Paul’s method of communication in Acts and his epistles that serves as good examples of being an ambassador.**

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**1 Peter 3:15** notes the responsibility of Christians to be prepared to share their reasons for their faith. Read the rest of 1 Peter 3 and make some notes about what you notice that relates to verse 15.

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**Consider examples from Jesus' life that illustrate him being an ambassador.**

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**What are some other examples of people in the New Testament that built bridges to others?**

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**What are some things that Christians can do that get in the way of others becoming disciples of Jesus?**

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**For further study:**

<i>Dear Friend: Letters to Christian Ambassadors</i>  GREG KOUKL	This small book includes a series of short essays related to how Christians can learn to be the “only Bible some people ever read.”
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## 4. A-Paul-agetics

“But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. Yet do it with courtesy and respect”

— PETER, *1 Peter* 3:15-16a

Paul exemplifies his ambassadorial approach in Acts 17 when he speaks to the people of Athens. Read Acts 17 and answer the following questions regarding his approach.

**In what ways did Paul act in a gracious way towards those in Athens?**

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**Describe the knowledge that Paul offers and the argument he makes in verses 24-27. Explain why this is significant.**

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**List out ways in which Paul adjusted his approach according to the people in Athens. What can we learn from this?**

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**What is the argument that Paul uses against idolatry? Why would this argument be persuasive?**

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**Courage is a necessary aspect of a good disciple. List out ways in which Paul showed courage and the willingness to tell the truth even when it is difficult.**

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**Describe the responses to Paul's sermon (there is more than one). Why do you think Luke thought it was worthwhile to record negative reactions to the Gospel (in addition to the positive ones)? What can we learn from this?**

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**Was there anything else that stood out to you?**

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# Part II

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## The Origin of the New Testament

## 5. Is the New Testament from Eyewitnesses?

“Now many have undertaken to compile an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, like the accounts passed on to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning.”

— LUKE, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 1:1-2

Non-believers sometimes claim that the New Testament accounts were formed as legends and were far removed from the original eyewitnesses. However, recent scholarship has shown that the New Testament were likely very close to the original eyewitness sources. Some skeptics have even admitted that the accounts may come within just a few years of Jesus’ death.

**Read the requirements for the 12 Apostles as outlined in Acts 1:21–26. Explain why you think each of them was considered important or any other thoughts you have.**

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**Read Luke 1:1-4 and write the claims that Luke makes in regard to the sources for his account of the Gospel.**

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**Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 and write the claims that Paul makes in regard to the sources for the resurrection account.**

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**Read Acts 2:14-36, Acts 3:11-26, Acts 10:34-43 and document anything you notice in terms of the Twelve defending the resurrection using eyewitness support.**

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**For further study:**

<i>Jesus and the Eyewitnesses</i> RICHARD BAUCKHAM	This book shows that the Gospel accounts are best understood as eyewitness testimony from people who personally knew Jesus. This book covers many areas and is a little technical.
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## 6. Eyewitness Memory

“Human memory is a remarkable facility, and the traditions found in the Synoptic Gospels may be considered to be a product of its effectiveness.”

— ROBERT MCIVER, *Memory, Jesus, and the Synoptic Gospels*, p. 187

The prior lesson established that the Gospel accounts came from eyewitnesses. This lesson will take up the question of whether those eyewitnesses could be expected to have remembered the events accurately.

Scholars indicate that events are more likely to be memorable when one or more of the following are true:

1. Is a unique or unusual event
2. Is an important or consequential event
3. Is an event in which the person is emotionally involved
4. It includes vivid imagery (strong visual image)
5. Are frequently repeated or rehearsed

**Write down some memories that you have usually clear recollection of. To find examples, think back to disasters (war, natural calamities), major life events (marriage proposal, birth of your child), very positive events (purchase your first house, coming back from war) or stories that you have retold.**

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**Pick a memory or two from the list above and write down the details (including minute details). The best examples are those that took place a while ago but in which you still remember many details.**

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**Look at the list of five reasons of why events are more likely to be remembered (on page 20) and identify the ones that you think make you remember the events you listed above. More than one of the attributes will likely apply.**

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**Go through at least one Gospel account of Jesus death and resurrection. Make a list of the events that you think are both important and highly memorable (according to the list on page 18).**

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Go through at least one Gospel account of Jesus death and resurrection and make a list of the events that you should think are both important and highly memorable (according to the list on page 20). Check the boxes to indicate which of the attributes apply to each memory.

Event	Unusual	Important	Emotional	Vivid

Parables are designed to make them easier to remember and self-correcting if you get the details wrong (similar to a joke where the punchline doesn't make sense if the joke is told wrong). Review some of the parables and make a case that they have a structure that makes memorizing them easier. Luke 10:25-37 and Luke 15:1-32 are good examples.

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For further study:

<i>Memory, Jesus, and the Synoptic Gospels</i> ROBERT MCIVER	McIver draws on research regarding memory and applies the concepts to the Synoptic Gospels in order to show that the eyewitnesses would have likely remembered the accounts. This book is a little technical.
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## 7. The Primacy of the Primary Sources

“Eyewitness sources are primary sources. However, if no eyewitness sources have survived, a second-hand source (not to be confused with a secondary source) writing close to the event can be a primary source. So, all eyewitness sources are primary sources, but not all primary sources are eyewitnesses.”

— MICHAEL LICONA,  
*What are the Primary Sources for Jesus' Resurrection?*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://hbu.edu/news-and-events/2016/06/03/primary-sources-jesus-resurrection/>



## 8. Jesus the Rabbi (Ancient Teaching Methods)

Jesus and the apostles used sophisticated teaching methods to enable people to be able to more readily recall his teachings. These Rabbinical methods techniques were ...

**Paul commended Christians for keeping traditions in 1 Corinthians 11:2, 23 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6. However, Jesus criticized traditions in Mark 7:4-7, 13. How can these be explained?**

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Ancient teachers often used chiasmic structures to make messages easier to remember. A chiasmic structure occurs when someone use repetition with a structure of something like ABBA. Consider the following simple example from John F Kennedy:

"ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country"<sup>4</sup>

This can be broken down into a structure like this:

“ask not what your country	YOUR COUNTRY	<b>A</b>
can do	CAN DO	<b>B</b>
for you	YOU	<b>C</b>
ask what you	YOU	<b>C’</b>
can do	CAN DO	<b>B’</b>
for your country”	YOUR COUNTRY	<b>A’</b>

These can follow other similar structures like ABA, ABCBA, etc..

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<sup>4</sup> Kennedy, John. "Inaugural Address". American Rhetoric. American Rhetoric. Retrieved November 5, 2014.

For the following, mark out the chiastic structure. The first example has already been done for you as an example.

### Luke 19:1-10 (already done as an example)

Mark out the chiastic structure in this passage that includes the following themes (not necessarily in this order):

1. Crowd
2. Tree
3. Zacchaeus
4. Jesus' coming
5. Jesus' acceptance

#### ***A. Jesus' presence***

And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name

#### ***B. Zacchaeus (implied selfishness)***

Zacchaeus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who

#### ***C. Crowd***

he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. And he ran on before,

#### ***D. Tree (going up)***

and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when

#### ***E. Jesus' acceptance***

Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come

#### ***D'. Tree (coming down)***

down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and

#### ***C'. Crowd***

received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to

#### ***B'. Zacchaeus (implied selflessness)***

lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold,

Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any

#### ***A'. Jesus' presence***

man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, Today is salvation come to this house,

forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save

that which was lost.

## **Luke 12:15-21 (The Rich Fool)**

Mark out the chiastic structure in this passage that includes the following themes (not necessarily in this order):

1. Plans for wealth in the present
2. Plans for wealth in the future
3. Storing wealth

Then he said to them, “Watch out and guard yourself from all types of greed, because one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” He then told them a parable: “The land of a certain rich man produced an abundant crop, so he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to myself, “You have plenty of goods stored up for many years; relax, eat, drink, celebrate!” ’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded back from you, but who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ So it is with the one who stores up riches for himself, but is not rich toward God.”

## Luke 14:15-24 (The Great Banquet)

Mark out the chiastic structure in this passage that includes the following themes (not necessarily in this order):

1. Banquet
2. Room for guest / invitation (first)
3. Room for guest / invitation (second)
4. Room for guest / invitation (third)

When one of those at the meal with Jesus heard this, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will feast in the kingdom of God!” But Jesus said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time for the banquet he sent his slave to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, because everything is now ready.’ But one after another they all began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going out to examine them. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I just got married, and I cannot come.’ So the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the master of the household was furious and said to his slave, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ Then the slave said, ‘Sir, what you instructed has been done, and there is still room.’ So the master said to his slave, ‘Go out to the highways and country roads and urge people to come in, so that my house will be filled. For I tell you, not one of those individuals who were invited will taste my banquet!’ ”

## 9. How Not to Start a Religion

## 10. “Christians believe by ‘faith’, not facts”

## 11. Evidence for God that Everyone Has (Romans 1:18-23)

“There is the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.  
Therefore there must be a God.

You either see this one or you don’t.”

— PETER KREEFT, *20 Arguments For God’s Existence*<sup>5</sup>

For further study:

<i>The Atheist Delusion</i> <a href="http://bit.ly/Ai1LAtheistDelusion">http://bit.ly/Ai1LAtheistDelusion</a>	Ray Comfort talks to several people about the appearance of design in the Universe.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://strangenotions.com/god-exists/>



# Part III

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## The Content of the New Testament

## 12. Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels

**Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet (read John 13:1-15)? Read Luke 22:24-27 and explain.**

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**What “cup” is Jesus talking about in John 18:10-11? Read Matthew 26:39-42.**

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**Jesus says that his servants will not fight (John 18:36). However, John also records that Jesus' disciples fought with those that came to arrest him (John 18:10-11). How could this be? Read Luke 22:47-53.**

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**Why would Jesus repeatedly ask Peter “do you love me more than these” in John 21:15-17? Read Matthew 26:31-35.**

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**Why were “many coming and going” in Mark 6:30-31? Read John 6:1-4.**

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**Jesus makes a point in Luke 22:25-27 that the one who serves is greater than the one who “reclines at the table.” Read John 13:3-17 and explain the connection.**

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**Pilate asks Jesus if he is the “king of the Jews” to which Jesus says “yes” in Luke 23:1-3. Why would Pilate let him go given that looks like an act of sedition? Read John 18:36.**

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**Mark says that Joseph of Arimathea “took courage” to ask Pilate for the body (Mark 15:42-45). Why was considered courageous? Read John 18:38-39.**

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**Mark 6:7 says that Jesus sent out his disciples “two by two”. Read Matthew 10:2-4 and see what it says about Jesus pairing the disciples.**

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**Matthew 14:1-2 says that Herod spoke to his servants about Jesus. Read Luke 8:1-3 in order to determine how Luke might have found out about this conversation.**

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**John 19:41-42 mentions that they use a nearby unused tomb to bury Jesus. How did they just so happen to have access to a nearby tomb? Read Matthew 27:57-60.**

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Why did Jesus ask Philip where to find food in John 6:1-5. Read John 1:43-44 and Luke 9:10 to figure out why?

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For further study:

<i>Undesigned Coincidences in the Writings of the Old and New Testament</i>  JAMES JOHN BLUNT	Most of the content from this lesson was came from this book. You can find this book for free online since the copyright has expired.
<i>Hidden In Plain View: Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels and Acts</i>  LYDIA MCGREW	This book is an updated version Blunt's book above. It is fairly easy read, I highly recommend it.

### 13. Undesigned Coincidences in Paul's Letters and Acts

Why does Paul mention he “returned *again* to Damascus” in Galatians 1:11-18 (he never mentions being in Damascus in the first place in Galatians). Read Acts 9:3-8.

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Why might Paul have been originally named “Saul”? Read Philippians 3:4-6 and compare it with 1 Samuel 9:1.

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Paul is uncharacteristically angry at the Jews in 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16. Read Acts 17:1-13 to figure out why.

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**Paul uses a metaphor in 1 Corinthians 3:3-7 saying that “I planted and Apollos watered”. Read Acts 18 and use it to explain why Paul uses this metaphor.**

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**Why did Barnabas want to take Mark despite Paul’s objections in Acts 15:36-40? See also Colossians 4:10-11.**

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**Read Acts 16:1-3 and 2 Timothy 3:14-15 and explain how this describes Timothy’s family background that would explain why he needed to be circumcised.**

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**How did Timothy already know of Paul’s persecutions per 2 Timothy 3:10-11? Read Acts 16:1-2.**

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**Read Acts 27:1-2 and Philemon 23-24 and put them together to explain Aristarchus' history with Paul.**

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For further study:

<i>Horae Paulinae</i> WILLIAM PALEY	
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## 14. “The Bible is full of contradictions”

“It is impossible that the same thing belong and not belong  
to the same thing,  
at the same time,  
and in the same respect.”

— ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1005b19-20

People who don’t believe the Bible often claim that the Bible is full of contradictions. The following list of contradictions comes from infidels.org (a well-known Atheist website). Review each alleged contradiction and try to come up some possible ways to understand the passages that doesn’t involve assuming that it is a contradiction. Feel free to skip the question if you cannot think of any solutions. Each of these will be discussed in class.

**Did Jesus answer his accusers or not? Compare Matthew 27:11-14 and John 18:33-34.**

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**What color was Jesus’ robe, scarlet or purple? Compare Matthew 27:28 and Mark 15:17/John 19:2.**

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**Who carried the cross, Jesus or Simon of Cyrene? Compare Matthew 27:32 and Mark 15:21.**

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**How long was Jesus in the tomb? Matthew 12:40 says three days and three nights but Luke 18:33 and Matthew 28:1 seem to say three days and two nights.**

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**What was written on the cross? Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38 and John 19:19 all have different wording.**

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**Where were the women, far off or close enough to hear Jesus' words  
(Matthew 27:55 versus John 19:25-26)?**

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**When did they visit the tomb (Matthew 28:1 versus Luke 24:1 versus John  
20:1)?**

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**What did the tomb visitors do next, tell no one or tell the disciples  
(Matthew 28:8-9 versus Mark 16:8)?**

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**Could Jesus be touched or not (Matthew 28:9 versus John 20:17 versus John 20:27)?**

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**Did they believe the report of Christ's resurrection or not (Matthew 28:7,11,16 versus Luke 24:11)?**

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**Come up with some general guidance about how we should think about alleged contradictions.**

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**15. “You cannot trust the Gospel authors since they were Christians”**

## 16. With the Gospel, I See the World as It Is

“If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motion of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true. They may be sound chemically, but that does not make them sound logically. And hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.”

— J.B.S. HALDANE, *Possible Worlds*, 1928, page 220

“Those who ask me to believe this world picture [of scientific atheism] also ask me to believe that Reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of mindless matter at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming. Here is flat contradiction. They ask me at the same moment to accept a conclusion and to discredit the only testimony on which that conclusion can be based...Granted that Reason [God] is prior to matter and that the light of that primal Reason illuminates finite minds, I can understand how men should come, by observation and inference, to know a lot about the universe they live in. If, on the other hand, I swallow the scientific cosmology [of atheism] as a whole, then not only can I not fit in Christianity, but I cannot even fit in science. If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on bio-chemistry, and bio-chemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees.”

— C.S LEWIS, *Is Theology Poetry?* The Oxford Socratic Club, 1944

## **17. The Gospel According to God (Isaiah 53)**

**18. “Isaiah 53 is not a good example of fulfilled prophecy”**



## 19. Out of Context I Called My Prophecy?

People sometimes claim that Matthew misuses Old Testament passages as support for prophecies of Jesus. I think it can be shown that Matthew uses the Old Testament passages in ways that may be different than we may expect but are also very much within context. Oftentimes, Matthew's use of the passage is not out of context but actually requires reading *more* context to gain the insight necessary to understand the connection.

Review each of the 12 fulfillments in Matthew and the corresponding Old Testament passage. Then, document why you think Matthew believes this is a fulfillment. Make sure to consider the following:

1. What is the context of the Old Testament passage (the events surrounding the cited text)? New Testament writers often bring in the entire story that includes the cited passage, not just the part that is quoted.
2. What is the context of the New Testament passage? There are likely other clues in Matthew's Gospel that indicate why he thinks the context matches the Old Testament story.
3. There is more than one way in which an Old Testament passage is "fulfilled". Sometimes the Old Testament passage is specifically Messianic but in other cases the fulfillment is a typological foreshadowing (like in Hebrews).

**Matthew 1:22 / Isaiah 7:14**

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**Matthew 2:15 / Hosea 11:1**

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**Matthew 2:17 / Jeremiah 31:15 (and Genesis 35:16-19)**

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**Matthew 2:23 (as a possible fulfillment of Isaiah 11:1 or generally of the concept that Jesus would come from a no-name town)**

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**Matthew 4:14 / Isaiah 9:1-2**

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**Matthew 8:17 / Isaiah 53:4**

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**Matthew 12:17 / Isaiah 42:1 and following**

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**Matthew 13:14 / Isaiah 6:9-10**

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**Matthew 13:35 / Psalm 78:2**

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**Matthew 21:4 / Zechariah 9:9**

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**Matthew 25: 54, 56 (does not include a specific text that this is a fulfillment of)**

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**Matthew 27:9 / Zechariah 11:12-13 and Jeremiah 18:19**

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**How might the perspective of shadows and types (like in Hebrews) help us to understand Matthew's use of the Old Testament passages?**

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**What are some things that you may suggest to someone who is confused by Matthew's claim of prophetic fulfillments?**

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## 20. “Jesus didn't claim to be God”

## 21. Regarding Miracles

“Do not attempt to water Christianity down. There must be no pretense that you can have it with the supernatural left out. So far as I can see, Christianity is precisely the one religion from which the miraculous cannot be separated. You must frankly argue for supernaturalism from the very outset.”

— C.S. LEWIS, *Christian Apologetics*

# Part IV

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## The Transmission of the New Testament



## 22. “The copies of the New Testament have been corrupted beyond recovery”

“Jesus died and people started telling stories about him in order to convert people to the faith. When somebody converted, they told the story to somebody else. That person told the stories to somebody else, that person told the stories to somebody else and that person told the stories to somebody else. This went on for year after year after year, decade after decade before the Gospel writers were themselves writing.

What happens when stories are put in circulation orally? Stories get changed. If you ever have your children play the game ‘telephone’ at a birthday party. One kid tells a story to the next kid sitting at that birthday party; then the story goes to the next kid, to the next kid and goes around the circle until it comes back to the first when it is a different story. If it weren't a different story it would be a pretty dumb birthday party game to play if the stories didn't change.

What happens if you play this game not in one living room with a bunch of kids from the same socioeconomic class all speaking the same language but you play the game for 35, 45, 55 years in different languages in different countries telling stories that the people were telling these stories were not there to witness what happens to the stories? The stories get changed.”

— BART EHRMAN (Skeptical New Testament Scholar)

## **23. Has the Bible Been Mistranslated?**

# Part V

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## The One Lesson: Jesus' Resurrection

## 24. Facts 1 & 2: Jesus Died by Crucifixion and His Disciples Believed He Resurrected

“Thus the testimony of Acts, written of course many years after the event, is explicit that the fisherman, Peter, who was then the dominating figure of the movement, taught the resurrection of Jesus in what, having regard to the context, can only be regarded as a resurrection in the full physical sense. In this he was apparently supported and upheld by the united party for which he spoke.”

— FRANK MORRISON, *Who Moved the Stone?*, page 121

Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 that the resurrection is so critical that the belief in the Gospel entirely rests upon it. A strong argument can be made for the resurrection based upon on only four facts:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion
2. Jesus’ disciples believed that Jesus appeared to them
3. Paul, an enemy of the church, changed his mind after Jesus appeared to him
4. James, a former skeptic, changed his mind after Jesus appeared to him

These facts are generally accepted even by the large majority of skeptical scholars. We will consider the first two facts in this lesson.

**Read the non-Christian accounts of Jesus’ death by crucifixion. These are available at the end of the book in the appendix on page 60. Write down anything that you found noteworthy about them.**

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**Read the Gospels accounts of Jesus' death by crucifixion (Mark 15, Matthew 27, Luke 23, John 19). Write down anything that you found that would be useful in defending the crucifixion of Jesus' as a historical event.**

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**Read through the book of Acts and document the claims of the early witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. In particular, pay close attention to the sermon summaries (2:14-41, 3:12-4:21, 5:27-42, 10:34-48, 13:16-51, 17:1-32).**

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## 25. Facts 3 & 4: Early Skeptics (Paul and James) Became Believers; the Tomb was Empty

“I thought the Conversion and the Apostleship of St Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a Divine Revelation.”

— GEORGE LORD LYTTTELTON,  
*Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*, page 5

## **26. Response to the Minimal Facts for the Resurrection**

# Part VI

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## Miscellaneous Topics



## 27. Dealing with Doubt

“Christianity, it turned out, looked nothing like the caricature I once held. I found the story of Jacob wrestling with God especially compelling: God wants anything *but* the unthinking faith I had once assumed characterized Christianity. God wants us to wrestle with Him; to struggle through doubt and faith, sorrow and hope. Moreover, God wants broken people, not self-righteous ones.”

— SARAH IRVING-STONEBRAKER,  
*How Oxford and Peter Singer drove me from atheism to Jesus* <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.veritas.org/oxford-atheism-to-jesus/>

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# Appendix

## A. Historical Non-Christian Accounts of Jesus' Death and Early Christian Beliefs

The following is a list of non-Christian sources for information about Jesus' death. These accounts should not be assumed to be completely accurate, but they provide valuable insight into the basic facts surrounding Jesus and early Christianity.

### Tacitus

Cornelius Tacitus was a Roman historian and politician who lived from AD 56 to 120. Tacitus is considered to be one of the greatest Roman historians.

Tacitus records that Nero tried to blame Christians for a fire that ravaged the city of Rome and rid himself of the suspicion that Nero himself had started the fire:

“Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.”

— TACITUS, *Annals*, 15:44

## Josephus

There is a question regarding whether this account has been amended by over-zealous Christians. I italicized the places that scholars think may have been altered<sup>7</sup>. Some believe that Josephus' account comes from the same source as Luke's source for the Emmaus narrative in Luke 24:19-21, 25-27<sup>8</sup>.

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, *if it be lawful to call him a man*; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. *He was [the] Christ*. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day. ”

— JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:3

## Mara Bar-Serapion

Mara Bar-Serapion wrote letter that is preserved in a 6th or 7th century manuscript that makes a passing reference to Jesus:

“What else can we say, when the wise are forcibly dragged off by tyrants, their wisdom is captured by insults, and their minds are oppressed and without defense? What advantage did the Athenians gain from murdering Socrates? Famine and plague came upon them as a punishment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? It was just after that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea and the Jews, desolate and driven from their own kingdom, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates is not dead, because of Plato; neither is Pythagoras, because of the statue of Juno; nor is the wise king, because of the ‘new law’ he laid down.”

— MARA BAR-SERAPION, British Museum, Syriac MS, Additional 14,658

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<sup>7</sup> I think that the most likely case is that the first alteration (“If it be lawful to call him a man”) is a later addition and that second alteration (“He was the Christ”) was intended to be what Christians were reporting. The Arabic translation of this account is missing the first alteration and says that “it was reported that he was the Christ” for the second alteration.

<sup>8</sup> Goldberg, Gary J. “The Coincidences of the Emmaus Narrative of Luke and the Testimonium of Josephus.” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 7, no. 13, 1995, pp. 59–77., doi:10.1177/095182079500001304.

## The Talmud

The Talmud is the main text of Rabbinic Judaism and it provides significant thoughts regarding Jewish thought. The following excerpt describes Jesus' trial and follows with a description of the martyrdom of early Christians:

“The mishna teaches that a crier goes out before the condemned man. This indicates that it is only before him, i.e., while he is being led to his execution, that yes, the crier goes out, but from the outset, before the accused is convicted, he does not go out. The Gemara raises a difficulty: But isn't it taught in a baraita: On Passover Eve they hung the corpse of Jesus the Nazarene after they killed him by way of stoning. And a crier went out before him for forty days, publicly proclaiming: Jesus the Nazarene is going out to be stoned because he practiced sorcery, incited people to idol worship, and led the Jewish people astray. Anyone who knows of a reason to acquit him should come forward and teach it on his behalf. And the court did not find a reason to acquit him, and so they stoned him and hung his corpse on Passover eve.

Ulla said: And how can you understand this proof? Was Jesus the Nazarene worthy of conducting a search for a reason to acquit him? He was an inciter to idol worship, and the Merciful One states with regard to an inciter to idol worship: ‘Neither shall you spare, neither shall you conceal him’ (Deuteronomy 13:9). Rather, Jesus was different, as he had close ties with the government, and the gentile authorities were interested in his acquittal. Consequently, the court gave him every opportunity to clear himself, so that it could not be claimed that he was falsely convicted.

Apropos the trial of Jesus, the Gemara cites another baraita, where the Sages taught: Jesus the Nazarene had five disciples: Mattai, Nakai, Netzer, Buni, and Toda. They brought Mattai in to stand trial. Mattai said to the judges: Shall Mattai be executed? But isn't it written: ‘When [matai] shall I come and appear before God?’ (Psalms 42:3). Mattai claimed that this verse alludes to the fact he is righteous. They said to him: Yes, Mattai shall be executed, as it is written: ‘When [matai] shall he die, and his name perish?’ (Psalms 41:6).

Then they brought Nakai in to stand trial. Nakai said to the judges: Shall Nakai be executed? But isn't it written: ‘And the innocent [naki] and righteous you shall not slay’ (Exodus 23:7)? They said to him: Yes, Nakai shall be executed, as it is written: ‘In secret places he kills the innocent [naki]’ (Psalms 10:8).

Then they brought Netzer in to stand trial. He said to the judges: Shall Netzer be executed? But isn't it written: ‘And a branch [netzer] shall grow out of his roots’ (Isaiah 11:1)? They said to him: Yes, Netzer shall be executed, as it is written: ‘But you are cast out of your grave like an abhorred branch [netzer]’ (Isaiah 14:19).

Then they brought Buni in to stand trial. Buni said to the judges: Shall Buni be executed? But isn't it written: 'My firstborn son [beni] is Israel' (Exodus 4:22)? They said to him: Yes, Buni shall be executed, as it is written: 'Behold, I shall kill your firstborn son [binkha]' (Exodus 4:23).

Then they brought Toda in to stand trial. Toda said to the judges: Shall Toda be executed? But isn't it written: 'A psalm of thanksgiving [toda]' (Psalms 100:1)? They said to him: Yes, Toda shall be executed, as it is written: 'Whoever slaughters a thanks-offering [toda] honors Me' (Psalms 50:23)."

— TALMUD, *Sanhedrin*, 43a:18-22

## Lucian of Samosata

The Death of Peregrine is a satirical story of a man named Peregrine who takes advantage of the kindness of Christians. The text is historically significant because it contains one of the earliest evaluations of early Christianity by a non-Christian author:

“It was now that he came across the priests and scribes of the Christians, in Palestine, and picked up their queer creed. I can tell you, he pretty soon convinced them of his superiority; prophet, elder, ruler of the Synagogue—he was everything at once; expounded their books, commented on them, wrote books himself. They took him for a God, accepted his laws, and declared him their president. The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day, —the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. Well, the end of it was that Proteus was arrested and thrown into prison. This was the very thing to lend an air to his favorite arts of clap-trap and wonder-working; he was now a made man. The Christians took it all very seriously: he was no sooner in prison, than they began trying every means to get him out again, —but without success. Everything else that could be done for him they most devoutly did. They thought of nothing else. Orphans and ancient widows might be seen hanging about the prison from break of day. Their officials bribed the jailers to let them sleep inside with him. Elegant dinners were conveyed in; their sacred writings were read; and our old friend Peregrine (as he was still called in those days) became for them "the modern Socrates."

In some of the Asiatic cities, too, the Christian communities put themselves to the expense of sending deputations, with offers of sympathy, assistance, and legal advice. The activity of these people, in dealing with any matter that affects their community, is something extraordinary; they spare no trouble, no expense. Peregrine, all this time, was making quite an income on the strength of his bondage; money came pouring in. You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property. Now an adroit, unscrupulous fellow, who has seen the world, has only to get among these simple souls, and his fortune is pretty soon made; he plays with them."

— LUCIAN, *The Death of Peregrine*, 11-13

## Pliny the Younger

Pliny was a governor of Pontus from 111-113 AD. He wrote letter to the Emperor Trajan asking what to do with Christians:

“They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food—but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.

I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found.”

— PLINY THE YOUNGER, *Letters*, 10.96-97



## B. Historical Accounts of James' Death

The following is a list of sources for information about the death of James' (the brother of Jesus).

### Josephus

Josephus records the death of James in his history of the Jews:

“And now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. But the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrim without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.”

— JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20:9

## Eusebius

Eusebius was an early Christian historian. Eusebius' quotes from someone else named Hegesippus<sup>9</sup> who relates details regarding James' death.

“James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Saviour to the present day; for there were many that bore the name of James.

He was holy from his mother's womb; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath.

He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woolen but linen garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people.

Because of his exceeding great justice he was called the Just, and Oblias, which signifies in Greek, 'Bulwark of the people' and 'Justice,' in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him.

Now some of the seven sects, which existed among the people and which have been mentioned by me in the Memoirs, asked him, 'What is the gate of Jesus?' and he replied that he was the Saviour.

On account of these words some believed that Jesus is the Christ. But the sects mentioned above did not believe either in a resurrection or in one's coming to give to every man according to his works. But as many as believed did so on account of James.

Therefore when many even of the rulers believed, there was a commotion among the Jews and Scribes and Pharisees, who said that there was danger that the whole people would be looking for Jesus as the Christ. Coming therefore in a body to James they said, 'We entreat you, restrain the people; for they are gone astray in regard to Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat you to persuade all that have come to the feast of the Passover concerning Jesus; for we all have confidence in

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<sup>9</sup> Hegesippus' account may have some embellishments but it has a historical core. F.F. Bruce noted that “when the embellishments are stripped of, the story amounts to this: the high priest and his colleagues, alarmed at the growth of militant messianism, which threatened to embroil the nation with the Roman power, demanded that James should disown his Nazarene claim that Jesus was the Messiah. His refusal to do so lead to his death”. See F.F. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James and John: Studies in Non-Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 116.

you. For we bear you witness, as do all the people, that you are just, and do not respect persons. Matthew 22:16

Therefore, persuade the multitude not to be led astray concerning Jesus. For the whole people, and all of us also, have confidence in you. Stand therefore upon the pinnacle of the temple, that from that high position you may be clearly seen, and that your words may be readily heard by all the people. For all the tribes, with the Gentiles also, have come together on account of the Passover.'

The aforesaid Scribes and Pharisees therefore placed James upon the pinnacle of the temple, and cried out to him and said: 'You just one, in whom we ought all to have confidence, forasmuch as the people are led astray after Jesus, the crucified one, declare to us, what is the gate of Jesus.'

And he answered with a loud voice, 'Why do you ask me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? He himself sits in heaven at the right hand of the great Power, and is about to come upon the clouds of heaven.'

And when many were fully convinced and gloried in the testimony of James, and said, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' these same Scribes and Pharisees said again to one another, 'We have done badly in supplying such testimony to Jesus. But let us go up and throw him down, in order that they may be afraid to believe him.'

And they cried out, saying, 'Oh! Oh! The just man is also in error.' And they fulfilled the Scripture written in Isaiah, 'Let us take away the just man, because he is troublesome to us: therefore they shall eat the fruit of their doings.'

So they went up and threw down the just man, and said to each other, 'Let us stone James the Just.' And they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned and knelt down and said, 'I entreat you, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Luke 23:34

And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of the Rechabites, who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out, saying, 'Stop. What are you doing? The just one prays for you.'

And one of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the just man on the head. And thus he suffered martyrdom. And they buried him on the spot, by the temple, and his monument still remains by the temple. He became a true witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ. And immediately Vespasian besieged them."

— EUSEBIUS, *Church History II*, 23:4-18

## C. Historical Accounts of Paul's Death

The following is a list of sources for information about the death of Paul.

### Clement of Rome

Clement was an elder of the church in Rome around the end of the first century. He reportedly knew Paul and might be mentioned in scripture itself (Philippians 4:3). Clement wrote a letter to the church in Corinth and referred to the death of both Peter and Paul:

“But not to dwell upon ancient examples, let us come to the most recent spiritual heroes. Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through envy and jealousy the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the church] have been persecuted and put to death. Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labours; and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience.”

— CLEMENT OF ROME,  
*The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, pages 230-231

## Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius was an elder in the church in Antioch in the very early part of the second century. Ignatius himself also gave his life around 107 A.D. He likely knew John personally. Ignatius wrote a letter to the church in Ephesus and referred to the Paul's death:

"I know both who I am, and to whom I write. I am a condemned man, you have been the objects of mercy; I am subject to danger, you are established in safety. You are the persons through whom those pass that are cut off for the sake of God. You are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet may I be found, when I shall attain to God; who in all his Epistles makes mention of you in Christ Jesus.

I know both who I am, and to whom I write. I am the very insignificant Ignatius, who have my lot with those who are exposed to danger and condemnation. But you have been the objects of mercy, and are established in Christ. I am one delivered over [to death], but the least of all those that have been cut off for the sake of Christ, 'from the blood of righteous Abel' to the blood of Ignatius. You are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, inasmuch as he was 'a chosen vessel;' at whose feet may I be found, and at the feet of the rest of the saints, when I shall attain to Jesus Christ, who is always mindful of you in His prayers."

— IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Letter to the Ephesians*, chapter 12

## Dionysius of Corinth

Dionysius was an elder in the church in Corinth in the second century. There are some fragments of Dionysius letters preserved in Eusebius' writings. Dionysius wrote a letter in 171 A.D. to the church in Rome and referred to the deaths of Peter and Paul:

"Therefore you also have by such admonition joined in close union the churches that were planted by Peter and Paul, that of the Romans and that of the Corinthians: for both of them went to our Corinth, and taught us in the same way as they taught you when they went to Italy; and having taught you, they suffered martyrdom at the same time."

— DIONYSIUS OF CORINTH, *Letter to the Roman Church*

## D. Wikihow Article “How to Play the Telephone Game”

The following is a copy of the Wikihow article on how to play the telephone game. This was copied from <https://www.wikihow.com/Play-the-Telephone-Game> and is used with permission<sup>10</sup>.

The game of telephone is a classic ice breaker and party game. It's easy to set up and a lot of fun to play. You and your friends will try to pick a word or phrase, “pass it on” by whispering it to someone next to you, and have fun seeing how much it changed during the game. All you will need to play is a couple of friends, a word or phrase, and a quiet whisper.

### Part 1: Playing the Telephone Game

**1. Get everyone in place.** Although the game of telephone is simple to play, you will need to arrange the players in a way that supports the game. Have everyone stand in either a line or a circle. Players should be spaced far enough apart that they won't overhear the word when it isn't their turn.[1]

Proper position is important when playing telephone. If people aren't in some sort of order, they won't know when it's their turn.

**2. Start the game.** Choose a person to start the game. This person will think of a word and whisper it to the person next to them. The word should be an uncommon one as the idea is to see how much it changes by the game's end. Once the word has been told to the next person, they will whisper it to the person next to them.[2]

Alternatively, choose a word with three or more syllables, such as: extraterrestrial, planetarium, or encyclopedia.

Base the difficulty of the word on the age of the audience. What might seem difficult for a 5 year old would be easy for a 12 year old.

If this is for school, consider using one of the vocabulary words that you are studying. You can also use a term from a science class.

**3. Continue whispering the word.** Players continue listening to the word and repeating what they think they heard to the person next to them. This is done until the last person in the line or circle is told the word.

**4. By the end of the game, every person should have heard the word or phrase.**

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.wikihow.com/wikiHow:Terms-of-Use> (per the Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 License)

**5. See how much the word changed.** Once the last person hears the word or phrase, they will say what they think they heard out-loud. This is compared to the original word that the game started with. This is the moment when all the players get to learn just how much the word or phrase changed through their “telephone line”.

## **Part 2: Playing The Telephone Game Well**

**1. Say a word or phrase only once.** An important rule for the game of telephone, is that you can only say a word or phrase one time. Repeating the phrase will only help to clarify it, going against the point of the game. Only allow those playing one chance to whisper the word or phrase on their turn.

This will force the players not only to speak clearly, but to also listen carefully.

**2. Pick a unique word or phrase.** The fun of telephone is to see how much a word changes throughout the game. Picking a simple or familiar word will make the game too easy, allowing the word to be heard clearly. Instead, it's a good idea to pick a difficult, long, or unique word to use when playing telephone.

Choosing the word "dog" is probably a poor choice, even for young children. Something like "bayou" might be a better choice.

Using the word "misanthropic" could be a challenging choice, and suitable for older children.

**3. Let only one person know the word.** It's important that no one but the person starting the round of telephone knows the word being used. If other players know the word, they will be able to repeat it with ease.

Always keep the word a secret to ensure that it ends up being changed by the game's end.

Sometimes, the word does not get changed at all by the last person. This means that the players are really good at listening (and honest about not changing the word).

**4. Always whisper.** You will need to whisper a word or phrase to a person during the game of telephone. Whispering helps in two ways; keeping the word a secret and making it hard to interpret correctly.

Keeping the word quiet can make it more likely that it will end up being misheard and wildly different from the starting phrase.