

7 Things Yo' Momma Never Told You About Church History

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How this project was born



Coffeehouse Theology

The Unvarnished Truth About Religion, Christianity and Spirituality in 2010

7 Lies Audio Version

Blog Home

Jesus And The Resurrection

Question And Answers

Age Of Reason

Faith+Science

Seven great myths of organized religion: A closer look

Over the centuries, billions of people have fallen prey to religion run amok. How many Jews and Gypsies suffered in Nazi concentration camps while churches in Germany turned their heads? How many people were murdered in the Crusades during the middle ages—in the name of God?

- Some religious leaders seem to tell us that we're not smart enough or good enough to discover God on our own. Who says?
- If God is good and perfect, why is there so much evil and suffering in the world?
- How can anyone rely on the Bible for answers, if it's just a loose translation of ancient myths anyway?

In this course we're going to dissect the most common lies -- and illuminate the fault line that separates genuine spirituality from empty religious dogma.

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Start the Course Today

Disclaimer

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What ancient people really believed about the earth, science and astronomy

“Christopher Columbus’ men threatened mutiny because they were afraid they would sail over the edge of the earth.”

FACT:

1828: “The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus” by Washington Irving was...

“Scriptural objections to Columbus' assertions that the Earth was spherical.”

FACT:

- There was never such a thing as “The Dark Ages”
- Term popularized in the 1800’s

Technologies Invented During the “Dark Ages”:

- Indian cotton gin 400
- Toilet Paper 589
- Pure distillation 700
- Wind powered gristmill 800
- High purity glass 810
- Hang Glider 875
- Chemotherapy 865
- Metal block printing 900

“Dark Ages” Technologies

- Corrective lenses 1000
- Oral anesthesia 1000
- Surgical rod 1000
- Magnifying glass 1021
- Pinhole camera 1021
- Geared mechanical clock 1050
- Flow control regulator 1206
- Programmable analog computer 1206
- Torpedo 1275
- Eyeglasses 1284

How we got the Christianity we have today

Mainstream dating of the gospels:

- Matthew: 70-100
- Mark: 60-70
- Luke: 70-80
- John: 90-100

Jesus before Pilate

Matthew 27:24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

All the people answered, "**Let his blood be on us and on our children!**"

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The Fall of Jerusalem

Josephus, "The Jewish War"

Hiroshima

Foreshadowing in the Gospels: Judas

Matthew 10:4

...Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot,
who betrayed him.

Mark 3:19

...and Judas Iscariot, **who betrayed him.**

Luke 6:16

...Judas son of James, and Judas
Iscariot, **who became a traitor.**

Judas

John 6:71

(He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, **was later to betray him.**)

John 12:4

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, **who was later to betray him,** objected...

Foreshadowing in the Gospels: Death of Peter

John 21:17 Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." **Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.**

Foreshadowing: Destruction of the Temple

Matthew mentions the temple 17 times.

Only reference to destroying it is in Matthew 27:40:

...and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

The Temple

Mark mentions the temple 12 times. 2 references to destroying it:

Mark 14:58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.' "

Mark 15:29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days..."

The Temple: Luke

Luke mentions the temple 21 times. 1 reference to destroying it:

Luke 21:5 Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."

The Temple: John

John mentions the temple 25 times...

John 2:19: Jesus answered them,

"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

The Destruction of Jerusalem

Mentioned 78 times in the gospels

Luke 2:38: Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Destruction of Jerusalem

Matthew 23:33 "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.

The Temple

35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.

The Temple Cont'd

37"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

“Q” & Mark Theory

- Q: An undiscovered original source of Matthew and Mark
- 1786: Gottlob Christian Storr - “Mark was first”

Early Church Fathers: “Matthew was first”

Papias (c. 60-130)

Irenaeus (c. 130-200)

Origen (c. 185-254)

Eusebius (c. 260-340)

Jerome (c. 340-420)

Augustine (c. 354-430)

Early Church Fathers

Irenaeus (130—200) “Against Heresies”:

“So Matthew brought out a written gospel among the Jews in their own style when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel at Rome and founding the church. But after their demise Mark himself, the disciple and recorder of Peter, has also handed on to us in writing what had been proclaimed by Peter. And Luke, the follower of Paul, set forth in a book the gospel that was proclaimed by him. Later John, the disciple of the Lord and the one who leaned against his chest, also put out a gospel while residing in Ephesus of Asia.”

Clement of Alexandria 150- 215

"Mark, the follower of Peter, while Peter was publicly preaching the gospel at Rome in the presence of some of Caesar's knights and uttering many testimonies of Christ, on their asking him to let them have a written record of the things which had been said, wrote the Gospel which is called the Gospel of Mark, from the things said by Peter; just as Luke is recognized as the pen that wrote the Acts of the Apostles and as the translator of the Letter of Paul to the Hebrews."

Origen 185-254

- “For Matthew did not ‘take in hand’ but wrote by the Holy Spirit but so did Mark and John and equally Luke... for there is also the gospel ‘according to Thomas’ and that ‘according to Matthias’ and many others. These are the ones that have been ‘taken in hand.’ But the church of God accepts only the four.”

Dating of Gospels Based on Inference

Matthew: While Peter & Paul were preaching in Rome (early 60's)

Matthew: Written explicitly for Jews

John: After Peter's death, before Jerusalem fell (65-69)

Nearly ALL Scholars Agree...

- Gospels differ too much in their details of the resurrection to have been deliberately harmonized; they represent four sources which are at least partially independent and two which are almost completely independent
- All four gospels tell the same essential story
- All four gospels explicitly speak of an empty tomb
- Nobody ever produced Jesus' body

Established Facts

Paul's letters are dated 40-55 AD, Acts is dated 65-80 AD

Belief in the divinity of Christ is found in the earliest known Christian creeds

Classical historical references to Jesus outside the New Testament: Thallos, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, Tacitus, Mara Bar Serapion, Lucian of Samosata, Celcus; general report is that Jesus was a "troublemaker"

Sources Outside the N.T.

- Jewish references to Jesus outside the New Testament: Josephus, rabbinic tradition, Toledot Yeshu; general report is that Jesus was a “cult leader” and a “magician.”
- All early sources treat Jesus as a real historical person; none assert that he was fictitious

Resurrection of Jesus

Virtually ALL scholars agree:

1. First century Jews expected a Messiah but did not expect a dying / rising Messiah.
2. Jesus died and was buried.
3. After this happened, the disciples were discouraged and dejected.

Virtually all scholars agree...

4. Soon after Jesus' burial, the tomb was claimed to be empty and some disciples had experiences they took to be encounters with a risen Jesus.
5. These experiences caused them to believe Jesus rose from the dead.
6. They started a massive worldwide movement based on the idea that Jesus rose from the dead.

From World's #1 Atheist Website

“I think it is rational to both accept and reject the resurrection. I think there are strong historical arguments for the resurrection (a lá William Lane Craig), but I also think there are good reasons to reject such arguments. I realize this may sound like a cop-out to some, but I think it is quite reasonable, especially when the issue of prior probability is taken into consideration.”

-Jeffrey Jay Lowder, *The Historicity of Jesus' Resurrection*, 1995 (Infidels.org)

The Apocrypha

- Accepted by church until Martin Luther
- Views on inspiration

Wisdom of Solomon 11:20

“Thou hast ordered all things in weight
and number and measure.”

The Rise of Science

Equality: The Greatest Force in Western Civilization

“Nothing struck me with more force than the general equality of condition among the people....A great democratic revolution is going on amongst us... it is the most uniform, the most ancient, and the most permanent tendency which is to be found in history.” -Alexis de Tocqueville

From 1100 AD to 1835: “We shall scarcely find a single great event which has not promoted equality.”

- The Crusades and the English wars decimated the nobles and divided their possessions
- The invention of the gun made the peasant and the king equal on the battlefield

- The printing press opened the same resources to the minds of all the classes
- The post office brought knowledge alike to the door of the cottage and the gate of the palace
- Protestantism proclaimed that all men are alike able to find the road to heaven
- The discovery of America opened a thousand new paths to fortune and led obscure adventurers to wealth and power

Democracy: An Unstoppable Force?

- “Everywhere we look, the same revolution is going on throughout the Christian world. Every event has turned to the advantage of democracy.
- Whether people consciously fought for its cause, or even if they opposed it, all have been blind instruments in the hands of God.
- The gradual development of the principle of equality is, therefore, a Providential fact... it is not necessary that God himself should speak in order that we may discover the unquestionable signs of His will.”

Since Tocqueville in 1835:

- Democracy has spread from the United States to almost all of the Western world
- The invention of the steam engine and the train created a nationwide marketplace for all goods
- Henry Ford's ambition was to make automobiles available to everyone
- Modern mass production made luxuries affordable to all

Since 1835 (Cont'd)...

- Mass communications bring the world to every home
- The Internet gives equal opportunity for all who own a computer to express their views
- “Fast Food” is for everyone – the CEO stands in line with the homeless person at McDonalds
- All technological developments are natural consequences of equality and individualism

Equality: Unstoppable?

“There is no more invariable rule in the history of society: the further electoral rights are extended, the greater is the need of extending them; for after each concession the strength of the democracy increases, and its demands increase with its strength.”

The Declaration of Independence

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are endowed **by their creator** with certain unalienable rights, and that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

“In God We Trust” -*Your money*

Galatians 3:28

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

“Individualism”

- A word coined by Tocqueville to describe **Americans**

Tocqueville Said:

- *“American civilization is the product of two perfectly distinct elements which elsewhere have often been at war with one another but which in America it was somehow possible to incorporate into each other, forming a marvelous combination. I mean the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom. . . . Far from harming each other, these two apparently opposed tendencies work in harmony and seem to lend mutual support.”*

Name 5 Countries...

The Printing Press and...