Introduction to Christian Apologetics

May 4, 2025

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We live in an era in which society ridicules both the Bible and those who take its claims seriously. The prominent philosophies of the day have caused most people to view the Bible as a source of myth, fable, and old-wives’ tales. The Bible is the object of criticism and mockery, especially for those who have been educated in the secular university system. Who today actually believes that Noah built an ark, that Jonah was swallowed by a whale, or that Jesus really walked on the water? Such accounts are for the feeble-minded and weak. Further, everyone knows that the Bible is full of contradictions, false statements and inaccuracies. Science has disproved all the major claims of Scripture. Almost everything we’ve been taught about the origins of Christianity is false. The manuscripts have been corrupted and corrupt church leaders have imposed their own political agendas.

Hence, those who have staked their eternal destiny on the truth of the Bible strive to respond to criticisms. If the Bible is verifiably mistaken or corrupt, no one would retain his commitment to it as the Word of God. Also, believers seek to present logical, reasonable responses to critics to show them that their criticism of the Bible is inaccurate or mistaken. Further, students of the Bible want to be able to give an answer to those who have genuine questions about the Bible or about Christianity.

Apologetics has had a long history going all the way back to the New Testament itself. In the Book of Acts the Christians presented reasoned answers to various charges made against Christianity. To the Jews the church pointed out that Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. To the Gentiles the church argued that God was calling them to turn from superstitious religions to the true God revealed in Jesus Christ. In all of their apologetics the early Church emphasized the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, they called it the central pillar on which all of Christianity either stood or fell.

**Key Text: 1 Peter 3:15 “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect.**

All Christians should be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks for the reason for their hope in Jesus Christ. Of course, for some Christians this will be a very special ministry calling, but all Christians should be able to explain what they believe, why they believe it, why others should believe it, and why contradictory systems are inadequate.

Apologetics involves responding to any intellectual challenge to the Christian faith. This means that apologetics deals, first and foremost, with *answering the outright denials of Christianity* which are found in atheism and in other religions. But apologetics also deals with *answering the distortions of Christianity*, which are found primarily in the cults, as well as in some professing Christian groups within the Christian community itself. Thus, *Christian apologetics must answer all challenges to the orthodox, biblical Christian faith* — no matter who the challengers are.

The Greek Word *apologia* is used 20 times in the NT. Here are a few examples:

Acts 18:4, Acts 19:8-9, Acts 22:1, Philippians 1:7, Philippians 1:16, 1 Peter 3:15, Jude 3, Titus 1:3, and Titus 1: 9,11.

Specific Purposes of Apologetics

1. to **defend** or **demonstrate** the truth-claims of Christianity; to prove that Christianity is true

2. to **answer** particular objections and/or criticisms of the Bible and Christianity

3. to **give an account** of the foundational concepts of the Christian faith

A. the existence of God

B. the reality of divine revelation, the Bible

C. the ability to know God and truth

4. to **reach** non-Christians with the gospel (i.e., evangelism)

5. to **challenge** non-Christian faith systems (e.g., Mormonism, Islam); to address the foolishness of unbelieving or unorthodox thought.

Questions for Thought/Reflection this week:

1. What is apologetics and how can we use these methods to reach the lost for Christ?

2. Why do we need to bother with defending Christianity? Can’t God defend Himself?

3. As we embark on our outreach activities in the coming months how can we use the examples of evangelists in Scripture to guide us in our endeavors?

4. Every follower of Christ is called to be an evangelist for the gospel. In what ways can you, as a part of the body of Christ, use the skills and talents you have been given to share the gospel with others?

Please think upon these questions and write down any thoughts you have so that we may share this together next week. Also, spend time in prayer and ask God to reveal to you His will.