

Lutheran[®]

L I F E

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Inside this issue:

*Apologetics:
how to defend
your faith.*



The prosecutor walks into a courtroom to make her case.

She calls her first witness to the stand to give his testimony . . .



You know how this scene plays out. The witness speaks to the who, what, where, and when of the case. Perhaps he holds the key to some crucial evidence or was a witness to particular events. As the attorney asks questions, the witness speaks to the facts of the crime.

What you would never see in the scene described above is a witness getting on the stand to talk about what he thinks or feels. That it just “seems like” a crime occurred or that he could “just feel” that something bad happened. Feelings and opinions, though valid to the human experience, hold no weight in a court of law. Real, factual, corroborating evidence is needed to make a case.

First Peter 3 encourages us to “always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (v. 15). What is the reason for the hope that is in you?

Last issue, we talked about the power of sharing your personal witness of Jesus as Lord. This issue, we will look at the hard facts through the study of apologetics to discover how all of creation—the natural world, history, philosophy, and Scripture—ground us in this truth.

Apologetics, from the Greek word *apologia*, meaning “speaking in defense,” is the discipline of defending the faith through logic and empirical data. It’s a study that seeks to answer the question: Does your trust in Jesus have reasonable evidence to support it? Do your heart, head, feelings, and rationalities go together? They can—and should.

a·pol·o·get·ics

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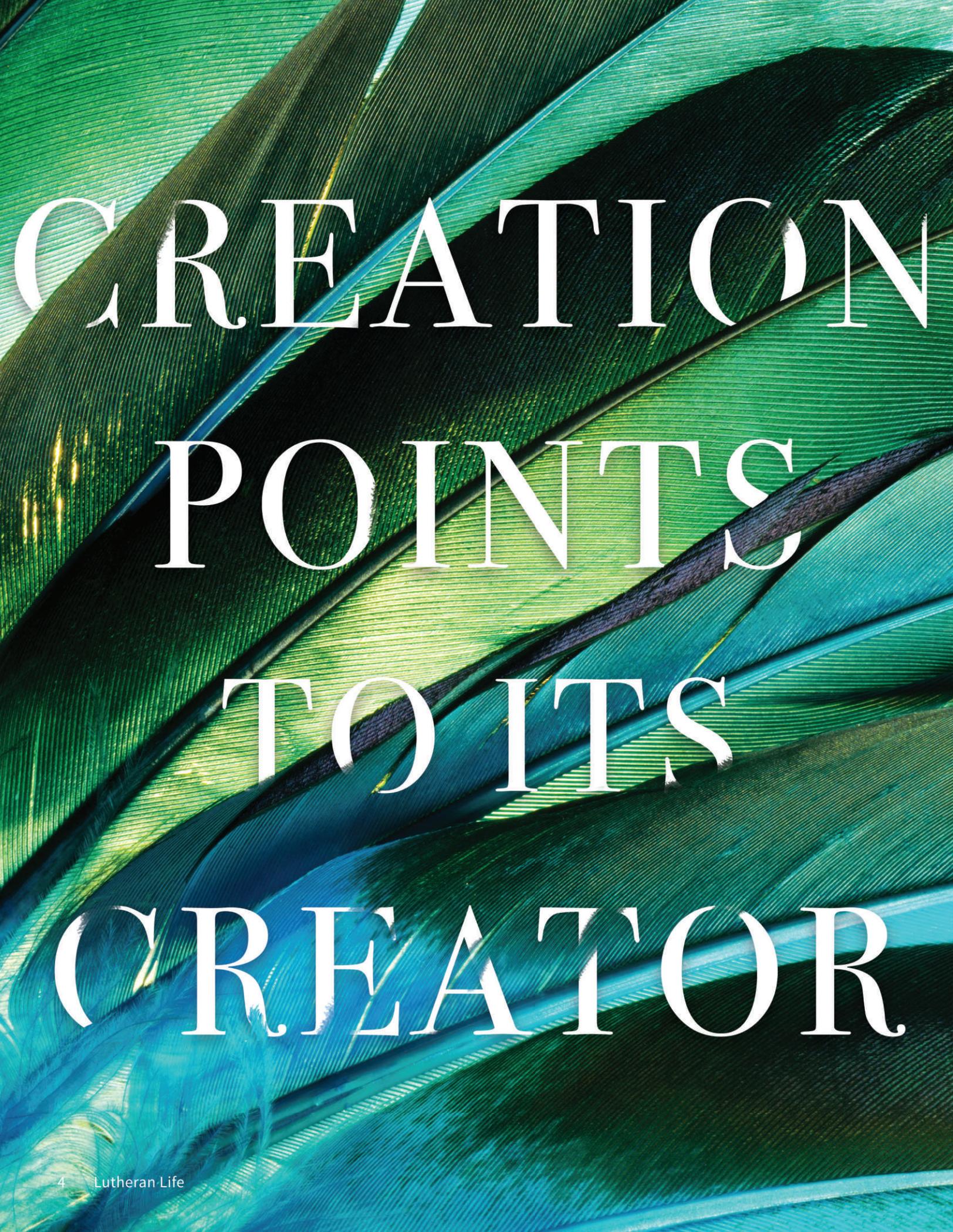
The discipline of defending the faith through logic and empirical data.

Why does apologetics matter? Because truth matters. Every belief system or way of life comes with its own set of feelings, values, and experiences. But what objective evidence is there to support each set of claims? What makes a belief system true? While faith by its very definition will always require trust in what we cannot see or prove, there is good, rational reason to support the Christian belief that Jesus Christ is Lord. The intention of apologetics, then, is not to argue people into the faith (only the Spirit can create faith!) but to encourage the Christian. Through the study of apologetics, we can conclude that given the evidence we see in nature, history, science, and reason, we can stand confidently in our faith in Christ. †

About This Issue’s Author

Amy Bird is a child of God and wife of Aaron. She holds an MA in systematic theology from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and is continually amazed at how precisely God’s Word speaks into life today.





CREATION
POINTS
TO ITS
CREATOR

What is the reason for the hope we have in Jesus as we look at science and the natural world around us?

Society often places faith and science at odds with each other as if the two are incompatible. However, the conscientious Christian knows the two go hand in hand as long as both science and religion are used properly, answering the questions they're equipped to handle. Science relies upon observation and provides great insight into how the world works. We can observe and study how the earth spins in perfect orbit around the sun and how the human brain processes information. It can't, however, answer questions about *why* the world exists—why the earth was made to orbit the sun or why the human brain is programmed to see the world in color. It can't make value statements. Where science is more equipped to answer the intricate questions about *how* the natural world fits together, faith is rightly used to provide great insight into *why* the world exists. From Christianity, we gain insight into who God is, why He created the world, and what His relationship is with all of creation. We need both faith and science. We can (and should) value both, recognizing how they work in harmony to give richness and depth to our human experience and understanding of God.

With this in mind, science gives us many reasons for our hope in Jesus; observing creation can provide natural revelation to the existence of God. David writes in the Psalms, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:1, 4).

As we admire a summer sunset, take in a mountain's majesty, or experience the roll of the ocean's tide, we somehow just know that this level of intricacy and beauty didn't happen by chance. Plants, animals—all living organisms are too complex. Surely, the whole universe was carefully crafted by an architect. Observing the natural world points to the reality of an intelligent designer.

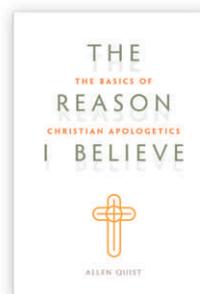
Furthermore, the complexity of the world unpacked by science raises questions that simply cannot be answered without the reality of God. The origin of birds, for example, has always stumped atheists, who believe all of life can be explained by material means without the influence of God. Feathers have highly complex,

intricate designs that are necessary for birds to fly. And yet, there is no fossil record to support the evolution, or transitional changes, of feathers over time. Darwinians struggle to definitively answer how feathers could evolve or what survival value a partial feather would hold as it is in transition. As Professor Allen Quist puts it in his book, *The Reason I Believe*: "So how could feathers possibly have developed by chance? And how could they have developed gradually? A partially formed feather would have no survival value whatsoever. One feather, even fully formed, would have no survival value. Partially formed feathers would have negative survival value. What are the chances that a random mutation could occur that would clothe a reptile with more than one thousand fully formed feathers arranged in such a way so the reptile could fly? None whatsoever" (p. 31).

The feather is just one of many examples pointing to the irreducible complexity of the world—pointing to the work of a creator, not random chance, to orchestrate all of creation. Through science and observation of the world, we find overwhelming evidence for a creator, someone outside of creation who has put the world into play. We see evidence of God.

But who is this God, and what is He like? We'll examine philosophy, history, and the Bible itself to continue to explore the reasons for our hope. †

THE REASON I BELIEVE



"Why should I be a Christian?" your friend asks. "Factually, what makes Christianity real?" Answer them with fact-based arguments and a strong defense of Christianity with Allen Quist's *The Reason I Believe*. You can find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

As we take in the wonders of creation and recognize the existence of our Creator, we're left wondering what kind of God He is. While we marvel at the beauty of creation, we also know all too well the brokenness, despair, and injustice present in our world. What kind of God would allow all this evil? Some have concluded that God can't exist because they can't wrap their head around a God who would permit evil. The line of thinking goes something like this: If there is a God, He must be good. Because there is evil in the world, there is no God.

However, if we dismiss the reality of God because of the presence of evil, we must also dismiss the moral law written upon the hearts of humanity. If there is no creator and all of life happened by chance, there is no basis for value statements or an understanding of right and wrong.

Richard Dawkins, well-known atheist, evolutionary biologist, and author, denies the existence of this universal moral code when he says that the universe we observe has no design, no purpose, no evil, and no good; that it has nothing but indifference. He must make this statement to keep in line with his belief system. Doing so means it's inconsistent for him to then turn around and call Islam a "religion that promotes violence" following the 2015 Islamic terrorist attacks in Paris (*The Reason I Believe*, p. 33). Violence and murder can only be identified as evil if you ascribe to a moral law that defines them as evil. Without it, there is no standard of right and wrong. Everything is lawful and permissible.

Even non-Christians know this is not true. Any sense of fairness, justice, hatred, or love comes from an innate understanding of moral law. As Christians, we know this Law is given by God and written on the hearts of all people. Some may refer to it as our conscience. Despite the baggage that may come from recognizing the existence of God, our inherent understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior points to intelligent design. "Because there is a universal law, there must also be a Lawgiver. A universal moral law cannot exist in a world without God" (p. 33). Morality is not dependent upon survival instincts. It comes from somewhere else. From the existence of moral law, we find further evidence of the existence of God.

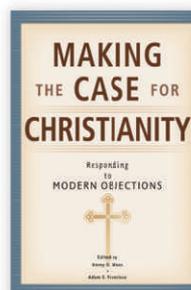
Still, we're left with the question of what kind of God would permit suffering.

Dr. Angus Menuge explains in *Making the Case for Christianity*: "A . . . plausible answer is that God values creaturely free will, not for its own sake, but because it is a necessary precondition for love, which is inherently valuable. God wants us to be loving sons, not slaves, but love cannot be compelled" (p. 147). The capacity for love requires free will, the decision to choose to love. Love cannot be forced. In order for love to be possible then, the opposite must also be true. What we can learn about love—and God—is that giving and receiving love must be so valuable that God was willing to allow the opposite of love to also exist.

In the Bible, Job endured great hardship and suffering and "put God on trial" by asking Him why He'd allow such evil to occur. God listens to Job's questions and responds by asking where Job was when He laid the foundation of the earth (Job 38:4). God made His point. We, as creatures, are not in a position to pass judgment on God, who created us all. We don't have the mind or perspective of God to understand His ways. And yet we know that on the other side of Job's suffering, Job discovered a richer understanding of God's love and mercy.

While we don't have the perspective of God to answer all our questions, the reality that we recognize suffering as suffering does point to the existence of a Lawgiver: God. As we investigate further, we'll discover we have a God who not only permits suffering but also joins us in it, even enduring the agony of suffering on the cross. Through Christ's painful death, we are redeemed from everlasting suffering and invited into the eternal joy of His love. †

MAKING THE CASE FOR CHRISTIANITY



Modernity constantly creates strong objections to Christianity that seemingly have no rational explanation. But these rational, factual answers exist. Explore the answers you can use in *Making the Case for Christianity*. Find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

HOPE BECAUSE OF GOOD AND EVIL



HOPE ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

Science and philosophy point to the existence of God. But who is this God? For this, we look to the Scriptures to learn of a God who created the heavens and the earth, who made a covenant with His chosen people, and who showed His love for the whole world by sending His Son, Jesus, to defeat evil and redeem creation.

But can the Scriptures be trusted? After all, they were written by more than forty authors over nearly two millennia and in three different languages. Do we even have the same words today? Through careful research and study, we can confidently conclude that we have sound evidence to support the authenticity and credibility of the Scriptures.



MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN

Let's begin by looking at the four New Testament Gospels that each record the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Even liberal New Testament scholars agree that all four of the New Testament Gospels were written before AD 70, mere decades after the events of Christ took place. Compared to other works of antiquity, the Gospels are recorded closer to the events they recount and with a number of manuscripts that far surpasses any other work in the ancient world.

Consider these comparative works described in Craig A. Parton's *The Defense Never Rests*, Second Edition: "For example, Caesar's *Gallic Wars* (written in 58–50 BC) survives today on the basis of approximately ten manuscripts, the oldest of which is dated about nine

hundred years after the events. Thucydides's *History* (ca. 460–400 BC) as well as Herodotus's *History* (ca. 480–425 BC) are known to us through eight manuscripts, the earliest of which is dated ca. AD 900. The poems of the Roman playwright Catullus (ca. 84–54 BC) are known to us from just three manuscripts, the earliest of which dates from the late fourteenth century. F. F. Bruce, former Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, concludes that "no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals" (p. 103).

Comparatively, there are thousands of copies of the New Testament Gospels dating back to the first century. Furthermore, the accuracy between manuscripts is over

99%

with only insignificant variances like spelling and punctuation.

Herodotus's
History
ca. 480–425 BC

Thucydides's
History
ca. 460–400 BC

Catullus's
Poetry
ca. 84–54 BC

Caesar's
Gallic Wars
ca. 58–50 BC

Gospels
ca. AD 70

Gospels MSS
ca. AD 100

Gallic Wars
MSS
ca. AD 842

Herodotus's
History MSS
ca. AD 900

Thucydides's
History MSS
ca. AD 900

Catullus's
Poetry MSS
ca. AD 1300

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN

EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS (MSS)

What can we take away from all this research? The New Testament Gospel records have been passed down and maintained in substantially the same condition in which they were written. They pass the evidentiary test for reliability in an overwhelming fashion.

Moreover, the content of the Gospels also speaks to its validity. Here are three key ways they do so:

First

The Gospels provide four different, but not inconsistent, accounts of Jesus' public ministry. From a legal perspective, this "is one of the strongest evidentiary factors in favor of the integrity of the Gospel writers" (*The Defense Never Rests*, Second Edition, p. 112). Identical statements by multiple witnesses in a court of law is a sure sign of collusion. People don't have identical stories but speak to what they observe from their own perspective. The Gospels do just that. The authors don't claim to give a comprehensive account of the life of Christ, just what they witnessed with their own eyes or recorded from eyewitnesses.

Second

The disciples don't paint themselves in a favorable light. If the authors were conspiring to write a lie, why include such embarrassing details like Peter denying Jesus (Luke 22; Matthew 26) or James and John being reprimanded for wanting to be seated at Christ's right and left hand (Mark 10; Matthew 20)? No, the Gospels record the account of what actually happened, warts and all.

Third

Throughout the four Gospels, we see historical references marking the work of Jesus by the news and rulers of the day. (See examples in Luke 2:1 or 3:1-2.) These give us detailed descriptions of the government and decrees to the people. The authors mark the account of Christ with historical citations that can be (and have been) cross-referenced and checked. The Gospels don't reside in the land of myth and fairy tale or "once-upon-a-time" storytelling. They're based in reality and have the historical backing to prove it.

Historical evidence and the content of the Gospel accounts confirm the reality of the events recorded. If Scripture can be trusted to give an accurate account of the life of Christ, what does it have to say? Next, we'll look at who the prophets said the Messiah would be and how Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecy.

Much more can be explored about the validity of Scripture and how history and archaeology give us confidence in Scripture's reliability. For further reading on the credibility of Scripture, check out *Why Should I Trust the Bible?* by A. Trevor Sutton. †



WHY SHOULD I TRUST THE BIBLE?



The Bible constantly gets questioned. Tough questions. Follow Trevor Sutton through comparisons of the Bible to other, seemingly factual literary works, and see that you can, and should, put your trust in the Bible. Find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

Hope in Jesus, the Prophesied Messiah

Our reading of the New Testament Gospels (and the entire New Testament, for that matter!) is incomplete without reading it in conjunction with the Old Testament. The whole of the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—tells one story that points to Jesus on every page. The Old Testament is filled with hundreds of prophecies foretelling who the Messiah would be. Mathematicians have calculated the likelihood that one person would fulfill even eight of these prophecies with an estimation of one in more than a quadrillion. In other words, extremely unlikely!

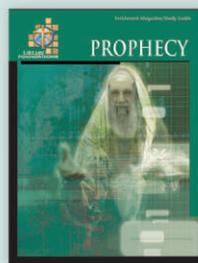
Some of the most significant Old Testament prophecies that point to Jesus concern His birth, ministry, death and resurrection, and role in the Church. On the following page, use an excerpt from the LifeLight Bible study *Prophecy* to do an investigation and reflection on Jesus' death and resurrection, according to the prophet Isaiah.

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, the disciples went out and declared the news that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ. Often, upon entering a city, the disciples would first go to the Jewish synagogue to speak this news. They purposefully went and spoke to the people who would have in-depth knowledge of Old Testament prophecy and who could make serious arguments against the disciples' claims. Lawyer and author Craig Parton remarks:

Thus, [the disciples] effectively subject[ed] their testimony to the rigorous rebuttal of the hostile religious community who had an intimate knowledge of the Old Testament and surely would not have stood idly by while the Gospel witnesses falsely claimed that Jesus had fulfilled numerous prophecies. (*The Defense Never Rests*, p. 117)

Instead, we see Jews and Gentiles alike in agreement with the disciples, recognizing the truth of their testimony, and placing their trust in Jesus as Messiah and Lord. Of course, the disciples faced opposition as they presented their case, but nevertheless, Christianity spread throughout the land and continues to spread today, two millennia later. †

LIFELIGHT™ BIBLE STUDY *PROPHECY*



In the New Testament, Jesus fulfilled all of God's promises from the Old Testament. See how He did this in LifeLight's *Prophecy*, part of the Foundations series. You can find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

Read Isaiah 52:13–53:12. This is the most quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament and the most important portion of the last half of Isaiah (chs. 40–66).

1 Isaiah paints a vivid, poetic picture of the human treatment that the Servant Jesus experienced during His trial and crucifixion.

a. How do 52:14 and 53:3 describe how terrible Jesus would look after His beatings?

b. God did not force His Servant to endure this suffering. Jesus went “like a lamb to the slaughter” in silence (53:7). See also 53:12. How do the Gospel writers record the fact that “He did not open His mouth” (Matthew 27:14; Mark 14:60–61; Luke 23:8–9)?

2 There was a reason why both the Father and Jesus, the Son, wanted this suffering to happen.

a. In 53:4–5 check which terms were used with the word *our* to tell what Jesus was suffering.

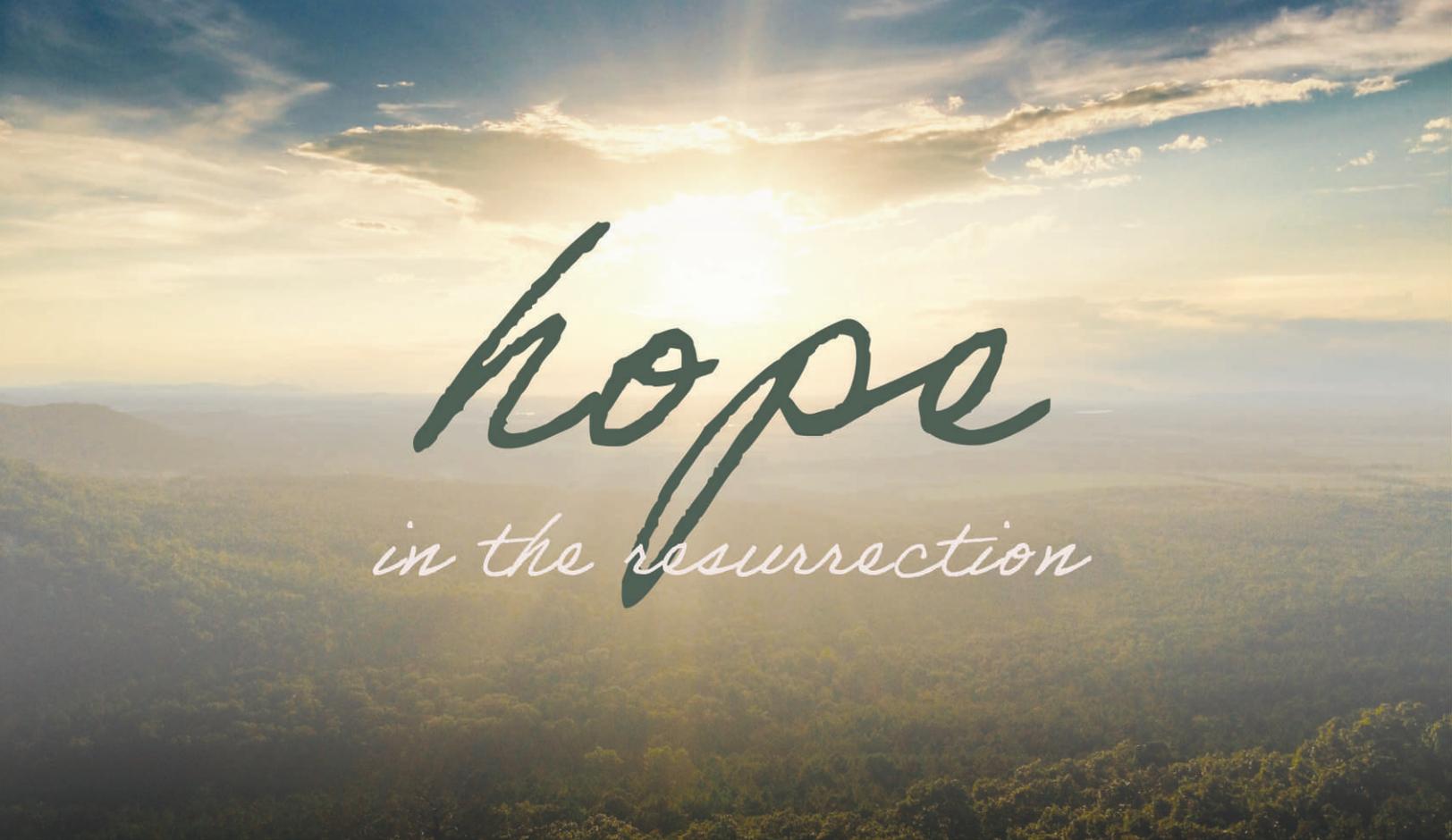
b. What two things are mentioned that we have because Jesus took our punishment upon Himself (53:5–6)?

3 But the sovereign Lord rewards the Servant Jesus for His sacrifice. In 53:12, the Lord compares Himself to a king dividing the spoils of battle, and in 52:13, the Servant is promised that He would be “lifted up and highly exalted.” How was this fulfilled, according to Acts 2:32–35; 3:13; and Ephesians 1:20–22?

4 Isaiah’s message of salvation was so tremendous, yet many did not believe (53:1), just as even after the tremendous miracles of Jesus many would not believe in Him (John 12:37–38).

a. What one word was behind this salvation, according to John 3:16 and Ephesians 5:25?

b. How do you respond when you realize that God’s love was behind it all? (Breathe a word of thanks, now, to God the Father for the love by which He “gave” His Son; to Jesus, who so loved you; and to the Spirit, who has brought you to faith and now lives in you.)



hope

in the resurrection

Ultimately, all of Christianity hinges on the validity of the resurrection. We've identified compelling evidence for the existence of a good God who has been made known to us in Jesus. But all of our faith—including Jesus proving He is indeed the Christ—is grounded in the validity of the resurrection. As the apostle Paul says, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). There is nothing to believe about Jesus if He did not rise from the dead. As we round out the reasons for the hope we have in Jesus, it's most appropriate to examine the resurrection.

Since the time of Christ's resurrection, people have been trying to disprove it. The Romans didn't want word to get out that Jesus' body disappeared under their watch and were all too happy to spread around that His disciples stole the body (Matthew 28:12–15). The Jews didn't want news of the resurrection to spread because they were trying to kill this blasphemer and disrupter of their order. And yet, as the women went to the tomb to prepare Jesus' body, they found it empty. How do we make sense of this, and more important, what validity is there that Jesus truly did rise from the dead?

There are several factors concerning the resurrection that help us to have certainty that Christ is indeed risen:

1

The action of the Roman guards. When the guards encounter the angels, they become "like dead men" (Matthew 28:4). They pass out from shock and fear. When they come to their senses, they report what happened to the chief priest. What had happened? The tomb was empty. Jesus' body wasn't there. The Roman guards report the news even though this would put the Romans' reputation and the soldiers' lives at risk.

2

The Jews' admission that the tomb is empty. Matthew 28 tells us the elders bribe the soldiers to spread the rumor that Jesus' disciples stole His body at night while they were sleeping (v. 13). They, too, admit the tomb is mysteriously empty even though the chief priests, Pharisees, and Pilate had strategized to protect the tomb just the night before by stationing soldiers and placing a large stone at the opening. Alas, Jesus somehow escaped—and they knew it. So, the counsel plotted their cover-up

story, even accounting for how to satisfy the governor's ear, should the soldiers' diligence be in question (v. 14). Verse 15 says the story of the disciples stealing Jesus' body continues to spread among the Jews to this day. Still, this gives us evidence that non-Christians admit the tomb was indeed empty.

3

The people in Jerusalem. Besides the soldiers and Jewish leaders spreading the fake story of Jesus' stolen body, there were also many people in Jerusalem celebrating the Passover who were well aware of what had transpired over the past week. They knew Jesus was on trial and had been crucified. They knew he had been buried. They would have also heard about the empty tomb. Eyewitnesses do a good job of revising and clarifying a story; if Jesus' body was still in the tomb, they would have quickly corrected the news. There are no accounts from the Jewish people at the time that insisted Jesus' body was still in the tomb.

4

The women's testimony. If Jesus' disciples were planning a heist, sending women as witnesses to the news of Jesus' resurrection would be a weak tactic. The testimony of a woman wasn't considered valid in a court of law—it didn't hold weight, and it would be easily dismissed. Women reporting the resurrection would not have been the way to establish trust and validity that Jesus was alive. And yet, that's exactly how the story goes. Why use the testimony of women unless that's actually what happened?

5

The disciples' response. Upon hearing the news that Jesus was alive—and later seeing and touching Him themselves—all of the disciples dedicated the rest of their lives to proclaiming this news. Ten of the eleven original disciples of Jesus were martyred for their confession. People don't die for a lie that they know is a lie. If they truly had stolen the body, at least one of them would have cracked before enduring a martyr's death. Instead, we see just the opposite. As the disciples face op-

position, persecution, and death, they become even bolder in clinging to the truth that Jesus was raised from the dead.

But what if the disciples only *thought* it was true? What if they were hallucinating and only thought they saw Jesus? This argument doesn't hold up well when you carefully consider Jesus' interactions with the disciples. After being raised from the dead, the disciples saw, touched, talked, and ate with Jesus on multiple occasions. Nothing about His interactions revealed that He was anything less than human. His body revealed the wounds of His crucifixion. His need for food showed He still relied on daily sustenance to survive.

The hallucination theory is also faulty when considering the number of people who would have seen the same hallucination in multiple instances. Not only did Jesus appear before the disciples but later to crowds of more than five hundred people at the same time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Rather, the drastic change in the disciples' behavior from hiding behind locked doors to boldly proclaiming Jesus' resurrection points to the truth that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

6

The spread of Christianity. As the disciples told others about Jesus, Christianity spread rapidly throughout the land across countries and continents. It continues to spread today. Many ideologies and cults come and go but rarely survive more than a couple of generations. This is not so with Christianity—the truth of Christ's resurrection continues to compel believers even today. It cannot be stopped.

The historical circumstances surrounding Jesus' resurrection, along with the reactions of the people at the time, give compelling evidence for the truth of the resurrection. We can exclaim with St. Paul that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead! (See 1 Corinthians 15:54–58.) †

Apologetics holds overwhelming evidence supporting the reason for the hope we have in Jesus as Lord. It's a vast field with great opportunity for research, study, and encouragement in the faith. It can also seem like a daunting task to dive into the literature and keep track of the various facts and figures supporting the faith. So, we asked two apologists to break it down for us by sharing their own experience studying apologetics and the reason for their hope as Christians.

What initially sparked your interest in studying apologetics?

Rev. Dr. Adam Francisco: During my military service, I met people and spent time in places with a wide variety of religious backgrounds. When I spoke with people, I was struck by the fact that they were often eager to explain the reasons for their belief. I could speak the doctrines of Christianity, but I was not equipped to “give a reason for the hope within me.” This was troubling.

After I left the service, I went to college. I took a course in Christian apologetics from Dr. Rod Rosenblatt [at Concordia University Irvine] and learned that, of all the world's religions and philosophies, Christianity was the one that could actually be explained on the basis of facts, not abstract philosophies, especially the resurrection.

Rev. Trevor Sutton: Curiosity has always been a passion of mine. As a child, I used to get in trouble for taking apart calculators or deconstructing the remote control for the television. I always had to know how something worked and what was going on beneath the surface.

This inquisitive streak has continued on into adulthood. I enjoy asking questions like “Why?” and “How do we know?” Apologetics asks similar questions in relation to the Christian faith: Why is it reasonable to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? How do we know that the Bible is trustworthy? I love exploring these questions and talking with people about these topics.

What role should apologetics play in the life of a believer?

Francisco: With catechesis and worship, I'd say apologetics is vital. 1 Peter 3:15 is not a recommendation. The Church has always been about the apologetics task, from Paul at Mars Hill and before Agrippa to medieval missionaries before Muslim scholars. Luther himself addressed Judaism and Islam from an apologetics standpoint (see, e.g., my *Martin Luther and Islam* [Brill, 2007]).

Sutton: As the people of Jesus, we are to always be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15a). Rather than trying to force people into the Christian faith through logic, apologetics is simply providing a response to questions or accusations made against Christianity.

When the world accuses us of being brainless believers, we can show the world that we are neither lacking

brains nor hearts. God has given us brains and hearts . . . so we use them!

What do you think is the single most compelling argument of Christian apologetics?

Francisco: That Christ died and rose again, “not in a corner” (see Acts 26:26), is the rock bottom fundamental fact verifying Jesus' claims to divinity.



Sutton: This might be surprising: I think that a life transformed by Jesus is the most compelling Christian apologetic. I have a friend whose life was a complete mess before God completely transformed him. This guy was alcoholic, jobless, and estranged from his family. By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, his life was totally transformed. He is a new man because of Jesus. While that may not sound like a Christian apologetics argument, that makes for a powerful statement about the power of God's grace in Jesus.

What Bible verse encourages you to hope in Jesus?

Francisco: Well, all the Scriptures point to Christ so . . . all of them? 2 Corinthians 5:19 if I have to choose one: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

Sutton: It's hard to pick just one! However, one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture comes from 1 Corinthians: "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (15:14, 20).

Everything hinges on the empty tomb of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus has the power to change everything: sin, fear, worry, despair, and death are all upended by the empty tomb. I derive tremendous hope in Jesus knowing that He makes all things new!

What's the reason for your hope in Jesus?

Francisco: He rose from the dead. This tells me He is who He said He is, that what He said about the Old Testament is true (that it's the very Word of God), and that His promise to the apostles (John 14–16) and what would eventually be written down by/for them (the New Testament) is inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus the Word of God too.

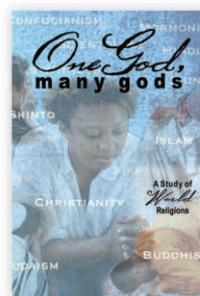
Sutton: Michel de Montaigne, a French philosopher from the Renaissance, once wrote: "Live as long as you please, you will strike nothing off the time you will have to spend dead." As harsh as these words are, there is something true about them. Apart from life in Christ Jesus, death has the final word. It does not really matter if you live fifty years or one hundred and fifty years; if death is the eternal end, those numbers do not make all that much of a difference.

Yet, thanks be to God, death does not get the final word: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20). God assures us, through His Word and Sacraments, that He is for us and that we have eternal life in Him. The reason for my hope in Jesus is, at its core, rather simple: God's Word has spoken hope to me. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I have heard and believed the Good News of Jesus.

Clinging to the Word of God and His unbreakable promises, I now, "make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." I suppose you could say that my whole life is a life of apologetics. As a baptized child of God, every day that I live in my baptismal grace is a day that I get to tell someone about the hope that I have in Jesus.

Both Rev. Dr. Francisco and Rev. Sutton have written insightful, practical resources on apologetics. Use their resources below for your own personal study or in your next small group discussion. †

ONE GOD, MANY GODS



As a Christian, it can be difficult to understand other religions and how to interact with those who believe differently than you. Learn about fourteen different religions, such as Judaism, Buddhism, Scientology, and Islam, to help you start a clear and healthy discussion about Christianity with those around you. You can find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

CLEARLY CHRISTIAN



Misinformation in today's world is rampant, even in Christianity. Learn how to see through the confusing clutter to clear Christianity: the real love and forgiveness of Christ, the Savior of our sinful souls. You can find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

LOOK INSIDE TO SEE HOW
APOLOGETICS USES BOTH FAITH AND
SCIENCE TO DEFEND CHRISTIANITY.

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