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Are All Religions the Same? Part 5: History

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Knight & Rose Show - Wintery Knight and Desert Rose

Wintery Knight and Desert Rose continue their discussion about whether all religions are equally valid paths to God. Our victim this time is Islam, which denies the crucifixion of Jesus. We explain why the crucifixion is a virtually undeniable fact of history. We discuss how historians evaluate reports from ancient history. We review the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Finally, we respond to objections to objective truth from pluralists. This is the fifth episode in a five part series. Please subscribe, like, comment, and share.

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Transcript

Welcome to the Knight & Rose Show, where we discuss practical ways of living out an authentic Christian worldview. Today, we're going to look at another way to falsify a worldview, namely by looking at the record of history. I'm Wintery Knight.

And I'm Desert Rose. Welcome, Rose. So, are you ready for the final episode in our series comparing different religions and worldviews? Yeah, I am.

I'm excited. I've been excited about all the episodes in this series, and this one is no different. Yes.

So, let's just have a quick recap and then we'll get into it. So, in the first two parts of the series, we looked at scientific evidence that falsified several different religions. In part three, we looked at how failed predictions could also falsify a religion.

In part four, we looked at how prophecy can provide evidence for a religion. And today, we're going to look at how historical evidence can falsify a religion. So, you have an example of history that falsifies a major religion.

So, who's getting falsified today? Well, today, we're going to look at some historical evidence that contradicts Islam. All right. So, Christianity claims that Jesus of Nazareth was killed by crucifixion under the governorship of Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius.

But Islam, in contradiction, actually teaches that Jesus was not killed or crucified. Okay. If Jesus didn't die, then he didn't pay the penalty for our sins, and we are then responsible to pay for our sins ourselves.

But if the Quran is right, the Christian faith is a hoax. Yet, if Christianity is right, then Islam is false. So, a lot's at stake here.

Yeah, you can't have a death that atones for sins if you don't have a death at all. Exactly. Right.

So, what does the evidence show about this? Was there really a crucifixion, or is the Quran correct? Well, let me give a quick summary, and then we can go into a little more detail. Okay. The death of Jesus is actually one of the best attested facts in all of ancient history.

The written testimony of Jesus' death is unanimous among ancient historians, both Christian and non-Christian. And it actually remained so for centuries after his death. The non-Christian sources include Jews and Gentiles.

It includes Romans and Greeks. It includes historians, public officials, and philosophers, and lots of different people. So, to question Jesus' death is to claim to know better than everyone who was there, and everyone who lived within hundreds of years of those who were there.

Yeah. Really, the evidence is so strong that, as you know, virtually all historians of these events, regardless of their worldview, their religious persuasion, they virtually all agree that Jesus died by crucifixion. Right.

So, this is going to be a pretty big challenge for Muslims to reconcile. Yeah. I mean, they're very much in the minority.

And just in general, I don't trust things that come up a few hundred years after the events. Okay. So, we know that the gospel writers, they all agree on the crucifixion.

All four gospels have it. So, what about the non-Christian ancient historians? Well, we have Josephus, who lived about 37 to 100 AD. So, he was born very, very close to the

time of Jesus.

He's right there. Yep, exactly. He was a Jewish historian.

He is considered very reliable. He wrote about the crucifixion of Jesus around 94 AD. So, talking first century here.

Yep. He wrote, let me give you a quick quote from him. He wrote, quote, When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had first come to love him did not cease.

Okay. So, those who love Jesus didn't cease loving him after he was crucified. Right.

And it's got that word crucified in there. This is not just an ordinary death. Exactly.

And Josephus also referred to crucifixion as the extreme penalty. So, keep that in mind. That'll come up in other quotes, very early quotes.

And Josephus affirmed that crucifixion was a Roman practice in the first century. Okay. All right.

So, in addition to Josephus, we also have Marabar Serapion, who wrote around 75 AD. Wow. That's even earlier.

Yeah. He was a Jewish stoic philosopher from Syria, and he wrote to his son from prison in the first century. And let me give you a quote from him.

He wrote, Or what advantage came to the Jews by the murder of their wise king, seeing that from that very time, their kingdom was driven away from them. Okay. So, although Mara doesn't offer crucifixion as the means of execution, he does say that Jesus was killed.

He just doesn't say how. And again, keep in mind, the Quran says Jesus wasn't killed or crucified. Wow.

Yeah. All right. So, that's a couple of pretty well-known Jewish historians.

So, do you have any Greek or Roman historians who report the same stuff? Yeah. So, Cornelius Tacitus lived around 56 to 120. Again, we're talking very early.

He was a Roman orator and public official who mentioned Jesus' death in describing how the Roman emperor Nero blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome in 64 AD. And I'll give you a quote from him. He says, Nero fastened the guilt of the burning of Rome 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. Remember,

that means crucifixion. During the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate.

Okay. Good stuff. So, that takes care of the Roman historians and he's writing pretty early, first century or maybe a little bit later than that.

So, do we have any historical evidence from the Greeks? We do indeed. Yes. So, Lucian of Samosata.

He was born around one, he was born in 125. He lived until sometime after 180. We know he was alive in 180, but he was a Greek satirist.

So, he wrote satire. Okay. But he wrote this, the Christians, you know, worship a man to this day, the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rights and was crucified on that account.

Okay. So, that's his quote. By the way, in this quote, Lucian not only affirms that Jesus was crucified, but also that his followers worshiped him very, very early on.

Okay. So, this disproves the idea that belief in Jesus as the God-man, worthy of worship took centuries to develop. That didn't happen.

He was worshiped very early on. Excellent. And again, coming from outside the Bible for someone who I don't, I remember the full passage of this and I think he's like making fun of Christians.

He definitely was not a Christian and did not like them that much. He thought they were kind of like fools or something. So, not in favor of us.

All right. So, now you've given us four non-Christian sources, and that goes together with the Christian sources from within the Bible. But we also have more Christian sources from outside the Bible, people writing in the first and second century.

So, we have Papias and Polycarp and Clement and Ignatius. Those are some of these early Christian writers, and they also confirm the crucifixion of Jesus. Yep.

Okay. Good. So, the evidence for crucifixion is so strong that it's actually affirmed not just by those ancient historians, but also by modern non-Christian historians.

Okay. Yeah. Even people who just absolutely hate Christianity and would love to find any reason to debunk Christianity.

Yeah. So, why don't we just go over a couple of those just to give people an idea of what we're talking about. Yeah.

So, for example, John Dominic Crossan wrote this, Jesus' death by crucifixion under

Pontius Pilate is as sure as anything historical can ever be. For if no follower of Jesus had written anything for 100 years after his crucifixion, we would still know about him from two authors not among his supporters. Their names are Flavius Josephus and Cornelius Tacitus.

So, John Dominic Crossan, if you're not familiar with him, he is not a Christian. He tries to tear the Bible apart, tear apart the gospels in any way that he can. And he is acknowledging that the crucifixion is as sure as anything historical can ever be.

Yes. He's actually debated William Lane Craig on the resurrection of Jesus. And other people who have debated against William Lane Craig are people like Bart Ehrman and Gerd Ludemann.

And they also agree with the crucifixion. So, when we're saying the crucifixion is fact, my goodness, if you're Muslim and you're listening, this is very bad for you. Okay.

This isn't a case where there's disagreement. This is like everybody disagrees with Islam and the Quran on this. So, if that's no problem for you, because, you know, I was once talking to some Mormon friends about the origin of the universe and they believe in a pre-existing matter.

And they said to me, well, science isn't a problem for us because we just don't care to be reconciled with science. And so, Muslim, you know, people who hear this were Muslim, you know, like my mom, maybe we'll listen to my podcast. You know, mom, you guys are really in the minority on this historical issue.

Okay. Let's look at another non-Christian ancient historian. This guy might be more prestigious than the three that we just mentioned.

His name is E.P. Sanders and he taught at Duke University. He just passed away very recently. So, I just did a quick look up of his bio and Wikipedia said that he is, quote, a major scholar in the scholarship on the historical Jesus, unquote.

And he describes himself, according to Wikipedia, as liberal, modern, and secular. Okay. Not a Christian, not a theist, not a conservative.

Okay. So, he actually wrote a couple of books where he lists out what he calls the almost indisputable facts about the historical Jesus. Wow.

Yeah. Interesting. Yes.

So, in the first one, it's called Jesus and Judaism, and it was published in 1985. And I just want to read a little bit of his list. Okay.

Okay. So, he says this, we start by determining the evidence, which is most secure. There are several facts about Jesus's career and its aftermath, which can be known

beyond doubt.

And any interpretation of Jesus should be able to account for these. The almost indisputable facts listed more or less in chronological order are these. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed. Jesus called disciples and spoke of their being twelve. Jesus confined his activity to Israel.

Jesus engaged in a controversy about the temple. Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities. After his death, Jesus's followers continued as an identifiable movement.

At least some Jews persecuted at least some parts of the new movement, and it appears that this persecution endured at least to a time near the end of Paul's career. Yeah, exactly. So, E.P. Sanders there, quite a list.

And number six, Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities. Just for fun, because I looked up another one of his books just for the people who might be skeptical about what historians think about Jesus. I just want to run through a slightly longer list.

This isn't the full list, but this is from another book, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, which was published in 1993. It's just a few more facts about Jesus, because this might be very interesting for even Christians, right? Yeah, for sure. And non-Christians.

Like, what do real historians who are not Christians actually think about Jesus? Well, this is what they think. Jesus was born around 4 BCE near the time of the death of Herod the Great. He spent his childhood and early adult years in Nazareth, a Galilean village.

He taught in towns, villages, and the countryside of Galilee, apparently not the cities. He preached, quote, the kingdom of God, unquote. Around the year 30, he went to Jerusalem for Passover.

He had a final meal with the disciples. He was arrested and interrogated by Jewish authorities, specifically the high priest. He was executed on the orders of the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate.

His disciples at first fled. They saw him, in what sense is uncertain, after his death. As a consequence, they believed he would return to found the kingdom.

They formed a community to await his return and sought to win others to faith in him as God's Messiah. Yeah, exactly. So this is a guy who isn't willing to accept miracles, who isn't willing to say that the disciples would have seen an actual resurrected Jesus, but he is saying that there was a literal bodily actual crucifixion.

Right. And a whole bunch more. So I think for everybody listening, Christian, non-Christian, you have to form your view of Jesus against the backdrop of these facts.

I would call them minimal facts. E.P. Sanders calls them almost indisputable facts. So the only people who doubt the crucifixion of Jesus are Muslims.

So you're familiar with their thoughts on this. You debate them quite a bit. What's their reasoning for rejecting what to everyone else seems to be an almost indisputable fact? Well, the only reason to doubt Jesus' death by crucifixion is an uncritical acceptance of the Qur'an.

In fact, actually, even Muslims who study the evidence, the historical evidence, end up agreeing that Jesus was, in fact, crucified. And then they deal with it by trying to say, oh, well, the Qur'an has been misinterpreted for all these centuries. We need to go back to the Qur'an and figure out it must be saying something different because it really, all the evidence shows that Jesus was crucified.

But the overwhelming majority of Muslims have not studied the evidence. And so they just have been taught by their leaders that Jesus was not killed or crucified and that it's in the Qur'an. And so that's what they accept.

And you and I both love to watch debates between Christians and non-Christians. Yes. I mean, what's the point of having a view and then kind of keeping it to yourself and never letting it see the light of day so that you never find out how far you can go in terms of strength on specific beliefs.

So I'm really comfortable with the Genesis saying that the universe had a beginning because the scientific evidence is there for a beginning of the universe. You know, right. You can claim that in a debate and it will stand up.

But I've actually I happen to know about one debate that a Muslim scholar did with William Lane Craig, where they were talking about who is Jesus and the historical Jesus. The guy's name is Shabir Ali. Have you heard of him? Oh, yeah, of course.

Yeah. Yeah. He's very famous.

He's a really nice, well-behaved, friendly Muslim debater. And he does a lot of debates with a lot of different people. And he used to initially say, you know, I think he used to say that the crucifixion never happened because that was what the Qur'an said.

But in his recent debates, he's had to say, well, this is a misunderstanding because there's just no way that I can make a case that this didn't happen historically speaking. So he's still a Muslim. He still calls himself a Muslim.

He's saying, well, I guess the Qur'an is wrong. The question, the problem for him is, can

you say that and still be a Muslim? Exactly. So let's say that you, you know, we have a Muslim and he says, no, the crucifixion didn't happen.

So what would the theory be for why all the ancient historians believe this several hundred years after the events? Yeah, well, most Muslims believe in what is called the substitution theory. All right. So this theory says that Jesus was never hung on the cross, but rather what actually happened is that Allah, God, made it look like Jesus was hanging on the cross and that he was crucified and killed.

But actually it was somebody else. That sounds fishy. Yes.

There are actually several problems with the substitution theory. First of all, there is no evidence that the person crucified was anyone other than Jesus of Nazareth. There were a lot of people at the crucifixion, according to the historical records, who knew Jesus well.

His own mother was there. Okay. The apostle John, who had just spent the past three years with Jesus, he was there.

There were many eyewitnesses and no one is recorded as doubting that it was actually Jesus. Right. So we're basically waiting 550 years for somebody to come along and say, by the way, that guy who everybody thinks was crucified, it wasn't really that guy.

Right. Right. Exactly.

Yeah. And Muslims will say, well, yes, that's, but that's what we should expect. We should expect all of the people who were there to say it was Jesus.

We should expect all the historical records to show that it was Jesus and nobody to question it because it was Allah making it look like Jesus was crucified. So that means Allah did a really good job of making, of convincing people it was Jesus when in reality it was somebody else hanging on the cross. But here is the biggest problem with that claim.

If Allah made it look like Jesus was crucified, when in reality it was someone else hanging on the cross, then Allah is the greatest deceiver of all time. He is the greatest liar of all time. And he is responsible for Christianity.

Yeah. That is a big, big problem. And this is in Shabir Ali recognizes this.

So I'll also say that this also makes Jesus into an utterly incompetent Messiah. Okay. Because Jesus must have failed so egregiously to prepare his disciples for what Allah was about to do that they fell for a massive lie as well.

Right. Yeah. Cause they, they went on for 500 years thinking, Oh, this is clearly, you know, the death of our Messiah and a resurrection.

And it was a very bad thing for them to think about. And then on top of that, there's no motive at all, no reasonable explanation for why Allah would have done this. It doesn't make sense.

If you think about it, that Allah caused all of that deception just to then send down the Quran 600 or so years later in order to correct the huge misunderstanding that Allah has done. And that's why we're saying that he himself had created. Right.

It doesn't make a lot of sense. So, yeah. So really, I mean, the evidence for Jesus death by crucifixion is astounding.

When we examine the, the evidence, the events from an historical perspective, we inevitably and overwhelmingly come to the conclusion that Jesus did in fact, die by a crucifixion. Okay. All right.

We still got lots of time left. So, you know, I'm kind of thinking about those almost indisputable facts and it makes me think of that first podcast episode that we ever did on the resurrection where we made the, the minimal facts argument. Yes.

Really important argument that I think all Christians should know very easy to learn and very powerful. So it can be the case that history vindicates a worldview that a, you know, a religion or a worldview can make claims, you know, about history and we can go back and do the work and go, yeah, that looks like what really happened. So why don't we just go back and take a look at the, how people determine these minimal facts, these almost indisputable facts, like the ones that EP Sanders was listing out for us.

Yeah. This argument is known by many as the minimal facts argument. That's what, that's what I call it.

I didn't come up with it obviously, but this is primarily the work of Gary Habermas with significant contributions by Michael Lacona and William Lang Craig as well. And what it is, is it's a case for the resurrection of Jesus using only pieces of information agreed upon by virtually all historians who have studied the life and times of Jesus, regardless of their worldview. So we start with the almost undeniable or almost indisputable facts to use Sanders words about Jesus.

And then we ask the question, what is the best explanation for this evidence? I love this argument because it doesn't assume that the Bible is inspired by God or infallible. I believe those things about the Bible, but non-Christians don't, they're not going to give you that. So we need to be able to make a case without assuming that there are actually dozens of facts that we could use that are accepted by virtually all historians of these events.

But we can make the case with just four or five of them with a very simple acronym to help us help us remember it. Yeah. That sounds good.

Let's, let's see that. Let's review this minimal facts case. And then we'll look at why these minimal facts are considered to be minimal facts.

So the acronym I like to use is case. C-A-S-E. We're making a case for the resurrection of Jesus.

The C in case is for crucifixion. Jesus was killed by crucifixion, as we've just been talking about virtually all historians of these events accept this as an undeniable fact. The A in case is for appearances.

Jesus' disciples believed they saw Jesus resurrected from the dead. Most non-Christians are not going to acknowledge that the disciples actually saw Jesus risen from the dead, bodily risen from the dead, but they are going to give you the fact that Jesus' disciples believe they saw Jesus resurrected from the dead. Yeah.

That was in E.P. Sanders' list. They had experiences of Jesus after his death. In what sense is not clear? You know, he's, he's coming at this from a no miracles perspective.

So he wouldn't, he wouldn't accept that they were authentic, you know, post-mortem appearances. He's got to come up with something else, but we could, we could defend against that, but let's just keep going. Yeah.

Okay. So the S in case stands for skeptics, Paul, an enemy of Christ and James, the brother of Jesus, who was a skeptic, both became Christians when they believed they saw the risen Christ. So again, this is accepted by virtually all historians.

And then E is for early. There was an early proclamation of Jesus' resurrection that began in Jerusalem, right there where the events occurred. And this was within one to three years of the crucifixion that the proclamation is known historically.

Right. So given these four facts and the dozens more that we could have mentioned, the best explanation for the evidence is that Jesus really rose from the dead, both literally and bodily. Yeah.

This reminds me of us making that case for fine tuning, where we found out all the things that we need in order to support life. The best explanation was that someone had designed it that way. Right.

You know? Yeah, exactly. Yeah. So the only problem with, with making a conclusion that God raised Jesus from the dead is that it requires that God exists, but this shouldn't be a problem because we've, we've already gone over the evidence in part one of this series for a creator as the best explanation for an origin of the universe.

And we also went over the evidence for a designer that I was just talking about that explains why the universe supports complex embodied intelligent life forms, which is

highly, highly unlikely. Right. Exactly.

Yeah. Another way of saying that might be, you know, a lot of people will say, well, that requires a miracle and I don't, I don't believe in miracles, but if God exists, then miracles are not a problem. Yeah.

Like to me, a resurrection is a piece of cake compared to creating the entire physical universe out of nothing. Exactly. Right.

So let's go over the criteria for establishing a historical report as a minimal fact. Okay. Great.

Yeah. So let's give, we can give several examples. I believe we did in the first episode as well, but I remember some of those.

Yeah. So let's see, I'll mention multiple attestation. Okay.

So in other words, information that is recorded by multiple sources is considered by historians to be more likely than something that was only recorded by one source. Although I will say that any source from 2000 years ago is remarkable because they were writing on papyrus, which disintegrates with any amount of, you know, humidity. And also the Christians were being persecuted.

And so a lot of the things they wrote down were burned by their enemies. Yeah. Having more sources, like having more eyewitnesses to a crime.

Right. Exactly. Yeah.

It's just better for reconstructing what really happened. Yeah. So let me give you an example of multiple attestation.

If, um, if an event is recorded in, in Mark and in Paul's letters, for example, then that would be two sources. If it's in Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, and Paul's letters, that's at least four sources right there. And this pertains to the minimal facts in that the crucifixion and perceived appearances, post-mortem appearances are multiply attested both inside and outside the Bible.

And as we talked about, like both Christians and non-Christians. So let me just say a quick thing about that. So sometimes there are passages that are common to Matthew and Luke and historians will say, oh, that came from an earlier source.

So when we're saying like multiple sources, we might consider the shared source for Matthew and Luke, which is called Q to be one source. And then the material unique to Luke would be a different source and the material unique to Matthew would be a different source. So it's not that straightforward.

As you said, it's a bit more complicated, but base, but yes, we do have multiple independent sources for minimal facts. Right. Exactly.

Does that sound right? Yep, exactly. Yeah. Which is why I say, you know, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul, that's at least four sources.

Yes. In some occasions it's five. Yes.

Okay, good. So another criterion that is helpful for establishing, you know, a report as a minimal fact would be early attestation. And I harped about this and I think it was the last episode when we were talking about, yeah, the one on prophecy.

Right. Earlier sources are always better than later sources because information in earlier sources is less likely to have embellishments kind of creep in. So for example, the consensus of scholars is that Paul's letters predate the gospels.

So they are earlier than the gospels and Mark is the earliest gospel. So Paul's letters and Mark are considered early sources. Right.

Exactly. So if you find a historical detail in those sources, in early sources, it's harder to argue that it developed as a legend later on. Yes.

So probably the earliest source for the details about the death, resurrection, and post-mortem appearances of Jesus is in 1 Corinthians 15, 3 to 7. And that is an early creed that goes back to around 30 to 33 AD. So just one or two years after the events, maybe even earlier. Yeah.

And in episode one of the podcast, we talked about why even skeptical historians accept that, that creed from 1 Corinthians 15 as reliable history. So people can go back and listen to that if they want. But another criterion for reliability would be enemy attestation.

So if your enemies or people who don't share your viewpoint agree on something, then it's considered more reliable than if just people who agree with you on everything and love you and praise you all the time agree with you. Yeah. That's enemy attestation.

Right. Exactly. So let me give you an example.

Okay. An example is the empty tomb. When the disciples began proclaiming a resurrected Christ, those who did not accept their testimony, did not believe in resurrection, they did not reply with, no, the body isn't missing.

We just threw them in the common grave. That's where the body is. They also didn't reply with, no, the birds just ate his flesh from the cross.

What are you talking about? We just left his body up and it was eaten by the animals.

They didn't say his body's right here, where we put it. It's right here in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea.

Right. They didn't say any of those. Yeah.

Just pull the body out and you end any kind of talk of resurrection. Right. But they didn't respond in any of those ways.

What they actually said was, well, the disciples must have stolen the body then. So in other words, they admitted that the body was in fact missing. This is evidence for an empty tomb.

Yes. So kind of related to that, there's the criterion of embarrassment. So any kind of information in a historical source that embarrasses the authors of that source is more reliable than information that presents them in a good light.

So there's a very famous example of this that is very convincing to non-Christian historians specifically about the empty tomb. And that is why were women the first witnesses to the empty tomb? Right. And to the resurrected Jesus.

Yep. Women were not considered reliable in that time and place. Their testimony wasn't even permitted in a court of law.

Right. So skeptical historians trust these women witnesses because they were not seen by that culture as reliable witnesses. So if the early church had kind of wanted to buff up their case for Jesus being the Messiah, then they would have just invented some really reliable male witnesses who had been the first witnesses to the empty tomb.

Yeah. The first witnesses were like making them women would have been a stumbling block to the people they were trying to convince. Right.

Yeah. So that's evidence for the reliability of the empty tomb because the disciples, they wouldn't have made up something that hurt their case in their own time and culture. Right.

So yeah, let me give one more example of a criterion for reliability. That would be dissimilarity. Okay.

If a belief or expectation wasn't common before the event in question, or if it wasn't common after the event in question, then it's more likely that the event actually happened. Okay. Let me give you an example to clear that up.

The Jews did not refer to the coming Messiah before the time of Jesus as the son of man. And also the early church didn't refer to Jesus as son of man. Commonly these were just, these were not common terms used to refer to the Messiah.

So Jesus likely really did refer to himself as son of man as recorded in the gospels because that wasn't common practice before Jesus. It wasn't common practice after. So it's more likely that it really did happen that way.

This is actually double dissimilarity because it's different from what was in his community before. And we're talking specifically beliefs about the Messiah or referring to yourself as the Messiah with a term. This term wasn't used to refer to the Messiah before as it wasn't in common use.

And then it wasn't in common use even after, like the early Christian community didn't identify Jesus as son of man. So it's double dissimilarity. Exactly.

Which Dr. Craig Blomberg says is actually the strictest of all criterion. Wow. The strictest criterion of all.

Yeah. So this is really what Jesus believed about himself. This was his term for himself.

And this term, according to the Old Testament, is a term that identifies the Messiah. Right. So let's apply this to the minimal facts.

The Jews were not expecting a single bodily resurrection. So it isn't likely that this is something they would have claimed of Jesus unless it really happened. They were expecting, you know, they would have maybe seen an en vision like a, you know, living on in Sheol, that type of thing.

But they were not expecting a return to this earth in bodily form. Right. That's only supposed to happen to all of the righteous dead at the end of the age.

Exactly. Like when God raises, when God raises the righteous from the dead and gives them new bodies, it's supposed to happen to all the righteous, a large group of people. Right.

Right. Not everybody, everybody who believes. Yeah, exactly.

Right. Yeah. So that's five criteria for determining what counts as a minimal fact.

And I actually have a funny story about this. Do we have time for a funny story? Of course we do. Okay.

I love funny stories. Okay. So I love William Lane Craig debates and I used to order them even when I didn't live in the United States, I would order them and ship them to where I was.

And one time I got this audio cassette set, I think it was like early nineties and it was William Lane Craig having a debate with a professor on the resurrection of Jesus. And it was happening at University of California, Irvine. And you know, at that time I didn't even

know where California was on a map, probably or certainly not Irvine.

And in that debate, his opponent came out and said, well, I accept all four of these minimal facts that you argue for, you know, burial appearances, empty tomb and early proclamation of the resurrection. And he said, but I have a different explanation for them. And his ex and I went to Dr. Craig's website.

He actually wrote about this and this is what he said. So he goes, a few years ago, I participated in a debate on the resurrection of Jesus with a professor at the University of California, Irvine. He had written his doctoral dissertation on the resurrection and he was thoroughly familiar with the evidence.

He could not deny the facts of Jesus's honorable burial, empty tomb, postmortem appearances, and the origin of the disciples belief in the resurrection. So his only recourse was to come up with some alternate explanation of those facts. And so he argued that Jesus of Nazareth had an unknown identical twin brother who was separated from him as an infant and grew up independently, but who came back to Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion, stole Jesus's body out of the tomb and presented himself to the disciples who mistakenly infer that Jesus was risen from the dead.

Wow. What timing is that? Excellent. Yes.

So let me continue with Dr. Craig. He goes, now I won't bother to go into how I went about refuting this theory, but I think the example is illustrative of the desperate lengths to which skepticism must go in order to refute the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, the evidence is so powerful that one of the world's leading Jewish theologians, the late Pincus Lapid, who taught at Hebrew University in Israel, declared himself convinced on the basis of the evidence that the God of Israel raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.

Wow. Yep. Excellent.

So that's the end of Craig. Okay. So we're about to end this five part series on religious pluralism and comparative religions and how do we evaluate a religion to see if it's true or false? And I wanted to ask you, what would you say to someone who objected to this entire project? Because I know a lot of even Christians who are like, Oh, I'm so uncomfortable saying that anyone is wrong.

Okay. So have you ever heard somebody say that first of all, and then how would you respond? What I often hear is Christianity is so exclusive. How can you claim that your truth is the only way? It's just so exclusive.

So I have a lot of thoughts on this. Let me give you a few. First, usually what I find is behind this comment is the fact that they don't like the truth.

They don't like the idea of telling someone they're wrong. They don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. They don't want to be perceived as mean or divisive or bigoted as we're so commonly called today.

However, I tell people, look, it doesn't matter what we like. It only matters what is true. Okay.

I didn't determine the way the universe would work. You didn't make that decision. You didn't determine how things would work.

We're just following the evidence where it leads. And we really need to make that clear. We are going to blame it on Jesus.

We're just following the evidence where it leads. I didn't make it up to be this way. Yeah.

Sometimes even very prominent scholars will study the evidence and then kind of avoid the conclusion. So remember John Dominic Crossan, you were talking about him or he had a debate with William Lang Craig. It was made into a book.

Paul Kegan edited the book and in the debate, John Dominic Crossan said, well, I'm not comfortable telling my Hindu students that Jesus rose from the dead because that's offensive to them. Yeah. So again, we're following the evidence where it leads.

But secondly, Christianity is about as inclusive as it gets because everyone is welcome into the kingdom of God by grace through faith, regardless of their ethnicity, their skin color, their personality, their IQ, even their past sinfulness. Everyone is welcome. So in that way, Christianity actually isn't exclusive at all.

It's for everyone. Right. Third, and this is an important point as well, all religions and worldviews are exclusive.

Sometimes I'll even start with this one. Look, your worldview is exclusive too. Okay.

I'll give you some examples. Postmodernism says that no metanarrative can describe reality. Okay.

This claim excludes the possibility that any other religion or worldview can be true. They're actually claiming to describe reality when they say that. That's true.

Exactly. This is the authoritative view. No view is authoritative.

Like none of your views, my view. Yes, but not you. That's right.

Exactly. Yeah. Self-defeating statement, which I think we've talked about before.

Yeah. Another example. Okay.

Islam, as we've talked about today, claims that Jesus never died on the cross. And it also claims, in fact, that, that all non-Muslims are wrong in claiming he did. And that those who believe in Jesus, who believe in him as Lord, are going to hell and should be killed.

Talk about exclusive. That's exclusive. They're going to hell and they should be killed right now and sped up on their way to hell.

Wow. Marxism is, as you know, one of my favorite worldviews to talk about and debunk. Marxism claims that belief in the supernatural is dangerous and people who believe in God are akin to diluted drug addicts.

That's talked about quite a bit in the writings of Marx and his followers. Even pluralism, which claims that all paths are equally good and true, excludes religions that claim to be the only way. Okay.

So in other words, pluralists exclude everyone who disagrees with them. So this is, you know, when people are proud of the fact of being pluralists to say, you know, every way is just as good. Well, unless you, unless you think that every way is not just as good, they are being exclusive in the exact same way.

It would be like somebody coming into like a math exam and pointing at, you know, your paper and saying, you think that's the answer? Well, any answer is as good as your answer. And that is their answer to the question. And it's a wrong answer.

And it's wrong. Right. So the point here is exclusivity is not unique to Christianity.

It is a reality of every worldview. Yeah. When it comes to religion, I think the point of this whole series is you and I haven't approached this topic about what should I believe as what do I like? What's going to make me look good to my family? What's going to make me have a nice community? We're looking for something that is an accurate description of reality, something that we can defend when it gets called into dispute by other people.

Yeah. The house is saying go facts don't care about your feelings. Facts don't care about your feelings.

Right. Yep. So let me give you a fourth response to that.

But that claim that Christianity is just so exclusive. A fourth reason to trust in Jesus as the only way is because Jesus is the only one who paid the penalty for our sins. So we can, we have a choice here.

We can accept his payment for our sins or we can pay for our sins ourselves. But no one else has paid the penalty for my sins or for your sins. And so no one else can save us.

So it would be pointless to pick something that tastes good to us when what we're

looking for as medicine, that's going to fix the problem. That's exactly right. Yeah.

So there's no reason for us to be ashamed of the truth. There's no reason for us to fall prey to the wisdom of the age that says truth is whatever you want it to be or the truth can't be known or that all religions are equally true, even though they contradict one another. Right.

So, you know, as we wrap things up, let me just say that everybody has a responsibility to check their religion, their worldview against the quote, almost indisputable facts from history. In the case of the minimal facts about Jesus, everyone has to have an explanation for the facts that we talked about today. If you want more details on the case for the resurrection, go back and listen to our very first episode.

It's called Easter, making the case for the resurrection of Jesus to non-Christians. Great. That sounds like a good place for us to stop for today and to finish off our series.

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