Stoa Apologetics Preparation for Monument Members

Season 22 Monument Release #12



Directions: Work through the source material in this download to help you understand this week’s selection of apologetics prompts. This release addresses approximately 5% of the total number of prompts you will need to be prepared for in your next tournament, so keep up the studying from week to week to ensure your knowledge in Apologetics. This week’s prompts are:

**Category 6: Christianity Compared (Part 2)**

1. Is there more than one way to heaven?
2. Compare and contrast Scientology with Christianity.\*
3. Respond to the Stephen Hawking quote: “There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, and science, which is based on observation and reason. Science will win because it works.” Abcnews.go.com 6/4/2010
4. Respond to the statement by Ernest Hemingway: “All thinking men are atheists.” Hemingway, Ernest. A Farewell to Arms. New York: Scribner, 1929.\*
5. Respond to the quote from Michael Shermer: “Play hard, work hard, love hard... The bottom line for me is to live life to the fullest in the here-and-now instead of a hoped-for hereafter.” Michael Shermer, quoted in Johnson, Chris. A Better Life: 100 Atheists Speak Out on Joy & Meaning in a World Without God. Cosmic Teapot, Inc., 2014.\*
6. What are the unique features of Christianity that set it apart from all other religions of the world?
7. Respond to the claim that Jesus was a socialist?\*

\*This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. A worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

For a list of all the prompts for the year and all other downloads for NCFCA apologetics, visit your download page at <https://club.monumentmembers.com/stoa-apologetics/download-category/stoa-apologetics>.

Heaven *by Maggie Topper*

Is there more than one way to heaven?

Verses

[Luke 9:23; 11:23, 28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9%3A23%3B+11%3A23%2C+28++&version=NIV)

[Matthew 7:13-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7%3A13-14&version=NIV)

[1 Peter 3:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+3%3A15&version=NIV)

[John 8:24; 14:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+8%3A24%3B+14%3A6&version=NIV)

[Acts 4:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+4%3A12&version=NIV)

Quotations

“In our age of ‘tolerance,’ moral relativism is touted as the supreme virtue. Those who favor one faith system over another or—even worse—claim a knowledge of absolute truth are considered narrow-minded, unenlightened, or even bigoted.” - Michael Houdmann

“Jesus is not one of many ways to approach God, nor is He the best of several ways; He is the only way.” - A.W. Tozer

“If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us. There would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed.” - J.C. Ryle

“Who else but Christ can rescue you and bring you into the forgiven family of God? He is the exclusive way to God. He is a narrow way, but a sufficient one.” -Jim Eliff

“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Recommendations

*Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Is Jesus the Only Way?* By Philip Graham Ryken

Jesus: The Only Way To God by John Piper

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/becoming-a-christian/is-christ-the-only-way/is-christ-the-only-way>

<http://www.josh.org/resources/study-research/answers-to-skeptics-questions/why-is-jesus-the-only-way-to-god/>

<http://www.monergism.com/jesus-only>

<http://www.gotquestions.org/absolute-truth.html>

Commentary:

*NOTE: This commentary was also answered in Week 11 when discussing “narrow-mindedness.”*

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *narrow-mindedness* as “not willing to accept opinions, beliefs, or behaviors that are unusual or different from your own.” *Accept* is defined as “to give admittance or approval to.” By these commonly understood definitions of narrow-mindedness and acceptance, the Christian’s belief that there is only one way to heaven could be callednarrow-minded. Christianity is not willing to give admittance to other beliefs on the way to heaven. It says that Jesus Christ is the *only* way. Of course, this does not and should not mean that Christians ought to automatically silence or exclude anyone who believes something different. We must show respect and love to all people, regardless of what religious belief system they adhere to. Every human being is made in the image of God. We can and should listen to and engage in conversation with people of differing beliefs. Preparing for that is a big reason why we study apologetics in the first place! Believing the Bible, however, does necessitate that we believe there is only one way to heaven. We would first have to deny the infallibility of Scripture before we could deny that Jesus is the only way to heaven. The Bible denies the claims that there are “many roads to God” both implicitly and explicitly. Implicitly through the broad picture of salvation laid out in the Word, and explicitly through specific Bible verses.

The message of the Bible implicitly shows us that there can only be one way to God. The idea that there could be more than one way to heaven does not make logical sense if you believe that Jesus died to provide salvation to mankind. If you believe the Word of God when it says that the God of the universe sent His only and beloved Son to be crucified and bear the wrath of God for the sins of the world, it just doesn’t make sense to believe that God would also make salvation possible through other means. Why would God become man and die for our sins if He would also allow mankind to solve their problems by their own means and devisings? It would render Christ’s sacrifice on the cross pointless, because humanity wouldn’t really *need* Him. His atoning sacrifice would just be one of many possible ways for man to pick from. If you believe Jesus is *a* way to heaven, you must logically believe He is the only way.

Staying on the path of logical persuasion, let’s look at other teachings on the “way to heaven”. If you look and study, you’ll see that no other means of ‘salvation’ prescribed by any other religion is manifestly consistent with the demands God lays out in Scripture. Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Mormonism, and Jehovah’s Witnesses tell us we can reach heaven if we follow their prescribed code of works. The Bible tells us that every human being is utterly sinful and God requires complete holiness to enter heaven. Hinduism teaches that we can reach a version of heaven when we become one with the gods. The Bible tells us that there is only one God. All of these religions must deny the teachings of Scripture to be logically consistent, and Christianity must deny the teachings of these religions to be logically consistent. Almost all religions claim an absolute truth of some sort. To try to blend religions and allow for more than one to be true is to be intellectually dishonest. The Bible lays out clear demands for who can get into heaven, and makes clear that man cannot do it Himself. Jesus alone qualifies to be our Savior. He is the only man that ever existed who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, God in flesh, completely holy, and rose again proving His power over death itself.

There is more than just logic to prove this idea, though. Jesus Christ Himself explicitly rules out the possibility that there are any other ways to heaven but Himself. He even says that the road to life is narrow! He says that He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Him(John 14:6). Jesus makes narrow claims, and He absolutely does not leave any other options open to us. If we are to trust the Bible and trust Christ, then we must believe there is only one way to heaven. Yes, it is a “narrow-minded” belief in that it does not permit any other prescription to heaven to hold total truth. Christ makes an absolute truth statement when he says that He is THE way. Whenever an absolute truth statement is made, there will inevitably be “losing sides” that cannot fit with that absolute truth. Any teaching that does not teach Christ as the only way to God is one of those “losing sides” by necessity of what Jesus says.

Jesus not only makes narrow claims, but urges us to follow in a narrow path. Christianity’s exclusive claims to salvation are echoed in her command to exclusive devotion. When answering this question, you want to impress on the unbeliever the seriousness of following Jesus, what you’ve committed your life to. If Jesus truly is the only way to be right with God, then death in pursuit of following Him is the only road to true and lasting life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes this vividly clear in his book *Cost of Discipleship.* Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who knew what it meant to follow Jesus in the narrow way. In the 1930s, he was a leader in the church of men who were opposed to the Nazi regime. He escaped to America when war was imminent, but realized that to have any credibility in the German church he must suffer with her and so he returned to Germany. Soon thereafter Dietrich Bonhoeffer was put in a concentration camp. He was executed by order of a top-German official only weeks before Allied soldiers liberated the camp. While Bonhoeffer paid the highest earthly price for following Christ (his life), he had the assurance of a beautiful eternity awaiting him in heaven.

As you prepare to answer this question, I hope that you will consider how your own life bears witness to the narrowness of Christianity, and the narrow path you must walk in this world. As Christians, we must follow the path that our blessed Redeemer walked in. That path ultimately led to death, and ours will, too. That death, however, leads us to something far greater—eternity in the blissful presence of the Lord. It may be narrow-minded to believe there is only one way to heaven, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t true. There is only one way to heaven, and while we are on this earth, we must proclaim that way to the world.

Scientology

Compare and contrast Scientology with Christianity.

This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. This worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary

Science and Scripture

Respond to the Stephen Hawking quote: “There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, and science, which is based on observation and reason. Science will win because it works.” Abcnews.go.com 6/4/2010

Bible Verses

[Job 35:11; 12:7-9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+35%3A11%3B+12%3A7-9&version=NIV)

[Ecclesiastes 1:13-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes+1%3A13-17&version=NIV)

[Romans 1:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+1%3A20&version=NIV)

[Colossians 1:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1%3A17&version=NIV)

Quotations

“Richard Dawkins regards faith as an evil to be eliminated; he takes all religious faith to be blind faith. (Dawkins says) ‘Scientific belief is based on publicly checkable evidence, religious faith not only lacks evidence, its independence from evidence is its joy, shouted from the rooftops.’ However, taking Dawkins own advice we ask: where is the evidence that religious faith is not based on evidence? Mainstream Christianity will insist that faith and evidence are inseparable. Indeed, faith is a response to evidence, not a rejoicing in the absence of evidence. The apostle Paul says what many pioneers of modern science believed, that nature itself is part of the evidence for the existence of God, ‘Since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. So that men are without an excuse.’ Dawkins’ definition of faith turns out to be the direct opposite of the biblical one. Curious that he does not seem to be aware of the discrepancy.” -John Lennox

“If you’re sincerely seeking God, God will make His existence evident to you.” - William Lane Craig

“God is not an alternative to science as an explanation, he is not to be understood merely as a God of the gaps, he is the ground of all explanation: it is his existence which gives rise to the very possibility of explanation, scientific or otherwise. It is important to stress this because influential authors such as Richard Dawkins will insist on conceiving of God as an explanatory alternative to science—an idea that is nowhere to be found in theological reflection of any depth. Dawkins is therefore tilting at a windmill—dismissing a concept of God that no serious thinker believes in anyway. Such activity is not necessarily to be regarded as a mark of intellectual sophistication.” -John Lennox

“We must not build on the sands of an uncertain and ever-changing science…but upon the rock of inspired Scriptures.” -Sir Ambrose Flemming

Recommendations

“Science in the Bible: Does the Bible Contradict Popular Principles” by Rich Deems

(<http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/sciencebible.html)>

*Darwin on Trial* by Philip E. Johnson

*Skeptics Answered* by Dr. James Kennedy

*God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* by John Lennox

Commentary

NOTE: This prompt originally was worded, “Does science contradict the Bible?”

It goes without saying: The Bible is quick to get a bad rap from the scientific community. Often, the belief in a God and the belief in science are juxtaposed as alternate methods of understanding the world around us. Predictably, it becomes a game of mudslinging—where science is praised as the worldview that embraces knowledge and learning, while religion is downplayed as the essence of blind faith and ignorance. And one of the best ways to answer that proposed conflict is to reexamine what the respective functions of Christianity and science are.

Christianity posits the agent behind the universe. Science offers the mechanism by which it functions (i.e. it can tell us how fast the earth spins, but never who spun it). Choosing one of these as alternatives is like seeing a Model T and being offered two methods of explanation: The Laws of Chemical and Mechanical Engineering, or Henry Ford. No one would reason this way! The existence of a scientific process never precludes the agent behind it. When Newton discovered the Law of Gravity, he didn’t say, “Marvelous, now I don’t need a God.” He recognized that the existence of a scientific law instead demanded the existence of a Lawgiver. Rather than observing the two as conflicting worldviews, he understood them as complementary, which is precisely the way God intended them to be viewed.

Atheists

Respond to the statement by Ernest Hemingway: “All thinking men are atheists.” Hemingway, Ernest. A Farewell to Arms. New York: Scribner, 1929.

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Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary

Life to the Fullest

Respond to the quote from Michael Shermer: “Play hard, work hard, love hard... The bottom line for me is to live life to the fullest in the here-and-now instead of a hoped-for hereafter.” Michael Shermer, quoted in Johnson, Chris. A Better Life: 100 Atheists Speak Out on Joy & Meaning in a World Without God. Cosmic Teapot, Inc., 2014.

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Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary

Christianity as Unique *by Maggie Topper*

What are the unique features of Christianity that set it apart from all other religions of the world?

Bible Verses

Luke 1:35; 24:27

John 1:1-5, 14

Colossians 1:15-20

Acts 4:12

1 Peter 2:22-24

2 Timothy 3:14-17

1 Thessalonians 4:14

2 Peter 1:16, 19-21

Romans 10:9

Quotations

“No other religion has ever claimed that its historical founder is the one and only supreme deity. Nor has any other religion ever dared to suggest that the one true God loves us enough to die for us. This is the glory and the beauty of Christianity. Because God is just, there had to be a payment for sin. Because God is love, He was willing to make the payment in the Person of His own Son.” - Philip Graham Ryken

“Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” - C.S. Lewis

“A religion which did not flatter the rich, the great, and the learned–a religion which offered no license to the carnal inclinations of man’s heart–a religion whose first teachers were poor fishermen, without wealth, rank, or power–a religion which could never have turned the world upside down, if it had not been of God.” - J.C. Ryle

“God has communicated to man, the infinite to the finite. The One who made man capable of language in the first place has communicated to man in language about both spiritual reality and physical reality, about the nature of God and the nature of man.” - Francis Schaeffer

Recommendations

*Jesus Among Other Gods* by Ravi Zacharias

<http://str.typepad.com/weblog/2014/09/christianitys-uniqueness.html>

<http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2013/07/christianity-the-worlds-most-falsifiable-religion>

<http://www.josh.org/resources/study-research/answers-to-skeptics-questions/dont-all-religions-basically-teach-the-same-thing/>

Commentary

Mahatma Gandhi was quoted as saying, “The soul of religion is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms.” The point he is making here is something that many non-religious people will often put forth, “All religions are basically the same, everyone is just trying to reach God in their own way.” It is true that almost all religions share the same basic idea of discovering God, asking the fundamental life questions, but with Christianity the similarities end there. Our religion has an *endless* amount of unique features that set it apart from the other religions of the world. There are far more than you can realistically tackle in six minutes. Because of this, you’ll want to narrow it down to the most significant. In my opinion, the three most notable features of Christianity that set it apart from all other religions are its holy book, its “central character”, and its requirements for salvation. Even within these three topics there is so much rich material you could dive into that you’ll have to be very intentional about what you include to talk about.

Pretty much all major world religions have their own “sacred writings” of some sort. Some text that describes the history of the religion and gives prescriptions for how its followers must live. In some cases, especially cults, they will have changed the Bible and adopt that twisted version as their “holy book”. The reason I put those phrases in quotations is because, while other religions may call their writings sacred or holy, from a Christian standpoint the only truly sacred and holy book is the Bible. It is the only one truly written by God. Of course, most other religions will claim that the major texts they use *are* inspired by God. After further examination into these books, however, it becomes apparent how the Scriptures stand out from all other religious texts. Perhaps the key distinguishing feature of the Bible is its unity. From beginning to end and everything in between, the Bible holds to one unified message—God’s plan of salvation for a fallen mankind through His perfect Son. Now, other religions could perhaps argue that their treasured writings also have a unified message. This is highly debatable, but we’ll grant it for the sake of argument. Even if this were to be true, the Bible is the *only* one of these books that can claim to have such a unified message from forty different writers, spanning three continents and using three different languages, over more than a thousand years! No other book can claim these credentials. Beyond that, the Bible has had hundreds of prophecies fulfilled. In comparison, the book of Mormon is a book containing many *false* prophecies that were supposed to happen but never did. The Quran, in Islam, contains very few prophecies. What predictions it does contain, however, all pertain to end times and are mostly copies of prophecies from Scripture. It contains nothing that is unique that could be fulfilled yet. The Bible stands alone in its ability to produce numerous historically accurate prophecies.

The next unique feature of Christianity would be its central character. Pretty much every religion has a hero of sorts, the person who is really put on a pedestal in that religion. Islam has Muhammad, Buddhism has Buddha, Mormonism has Joseph Smith, Hinduism has…several. Christianity has Jesus. Jesus Christ, the most wonderful, beautiful, perfect person to ever walk this earth. There is so much that sets him apart from all other heroes and founders of world religions. Perhaps most striking is that Jesus is the only one who actually claimed deity. Muhammed, Smith, and Buddha claimed they had private encounters with God and then went out and told people that. Christ did not claim that He had any private dream, vision, or conversation with God. He said that He IS God. Not only did He make this claim, but He backed it up with everything He said and did! He spoke with authority, and the beauty of Christ’s teachings is even acknowledged by many non-religious people. He worked miracles. He lived a perfect, holy life. He lived out everything that He taught. But can you guess what the most important distinguishing factor of Christianity’s central character is? He is still alive. All those other men are dead. Christ died, but He rose from the dead and He lives with God and He will return! Our Savior is an incredible person, and He far outshines any hero of any other religion.

Finally, one of the most life-changing truths of Christianity that differentiates it from other religions is its teaching on salvation. All religions give a goal that you are trying to reach for—whether it be eternal life, a state of peace, a full enlightenment of truth, or something else entirely. However, what all religions (except Christianity) share in common, is that you must *work* in some way to attain these goals. In Islam, you must follow the Pillars. In most Eastern religions, you have the reincarnation cycle, where you’re constantly trying to do good to reincarnate into a higher state. However, in Christianity, we have the blessed assurance of knowing that we need do *nothing* to induce God to forgive us. His forgiveness is a free gift, given from His abounding love and grace and mercy. Jesus did everything for us. Christianity is the only religion that can offer that kind of peace. We don’t have to worry about whether or not we’re good enough, or whether or not we’ve followed the rules perfectly enough. We can rest in Christ and the work He accomplished! The notion is so different, that even many Christians have a hard time wrapping their head around the fact that what *they do* isn’t the point. If the person asking you this question in real life were a follower of another religion, this is where you would want to spend the bulk of your time. Chances are they struggle with anxiety and fear over whether or not they’re good enough. You want to illustrate to them that they *are* insufficient to save themselves, but that it doesn’t matter, because Christ *is* sufficient!

This is one of those questions I could go on explaining my answer to for hours. But remember, in the real world, there’s not many people who are going to want to listen to you talk on and on. If someone were to ask you a question like this, you’d have a very brief window of time with which to plant a seed in their heart and mind, and catch their attention. Keep that in mind as you prepare your card for this question. Imagine someone you just met has asked you this question, and you only have a few minutes to talk to them and pique their curiosity. You want to impress upon them the beauty of Christianity, as well as the urgent importance to seek out its truth.

Jesus as a Socialist

Compare and contrast Scientology with Christianity.

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Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary