

## Resources:

- McDowell, Josh, and Sean McDowell. **More Than a Carpenter**. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2009.
- Strobel, Lee. **The Case for Christ**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- McDowell, Josh. **Evidence for Christianity**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2006.

## Chapter 4: What About Science?

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*Science: knowledge about or study of the natural world based on facts learned through experiments and observation<sup>1</sup>*

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**Q. Why might some skeptics ask for scientific proof for the claims of Christianity?**

**Q. What kinds of “Columbo” questions can we ask to clarify what a person really means by a statement such as “...but science has proven Christianity isn’t true”?**

**Q. What is the “scientific method”?**

- Scientific proof is based on showing that something is a fact by **repeating the event**
- To be proven ‘scientifically’, an event must be:
  - **observable**
  - **testable**
  - **repeatable**
- Tests or experiments are done in a **controlled** environment
- Observations are made, data is **measured** and documented, and hypotheses are verified

**Q. Why is the scientific method not the only way to determine if something is true or not?**

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<sup>1</sup> Science. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/science> (March 13, 2016)

**Q. What is the “legal-historical method”?**

- Legal-historical proof is based on showing that something is a fact **beyond a reasonable doubt**
- Legal-historical proof depends on:
  - **Oral testimony**
  - **Written testimony**
  - **Physical evidence**
- The goal is to reach a verdict on the weight of the **evidence** and have no rational basis for **doubting** the decision

**Q. Which method is right for examining Jesus’ claims?**

- The scientific method can be used to prove only **repeatable** things
- The scientific method isn’t adequate for proving or **disproving** questions about persons or events in **history**
- The events in Jesus’ life took place in the past, and therefore cannot be scientifically proven any more than any other **historical** truth can be

**Q. Do we have legal-historical proof for Jesus?**

- Oral testimony
  - The **Gospels** give us eye-witness testimony
- Written testimony
  - The writings of secular **historians** support his existence and life events
  - The writings of **early church fathers** corroborate his claims
- Physical evidence
- **Archaeological** discoveries confirm the Gospels and New Testament

## *Chapter 5: The Challenge of the New Atheism*

**Q. What does the author mean by “New Atheism”?**

- The recent explosion, within the past 10 years, of a group of militant, enthusiastic and articulate atheists
- These atheists are very active, writing books, doing interviews, speaking on college campuses, taking part in debates, etc.

**Q. What do these atheists have in common with those that have come before them?**

- No new **discoveries** in science, philosophy or history that undermine Christianity
- Most arguments are **recycled** from past atheists

**Q. What differences are there in the beliefs of this “new atheism” group?**

- The new atheists **celebrate** the “death” of God
- The new atheists have no **tolerance** for religious faith
- The new atheist choose to attack **Christianity** specifically

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*The first to state his case seems right until another comes and cross-examines him. ~ Proverbs 18:17*

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**Q. Is atheism more reasonable?**

- Atheists believe that religion is based upon “**blind faith**”, but that atheism requires no faith commitment since it relies primarily on the evidence of **science**
- Science is based on a certain set of assumptions
  - The existence of a **real world**
  - A real world that is **orderly** and knowable
  - The trustworthiness of our **minds** to grasp that world
- If the mind developed through the blind, material process of Darwinian evolution, then why should we trust it at all?
  - Science can’t answer this question, because it relies upon this **assumption**
  - Atheists **trust** their ability to reason, but their worldview says otherwise
- Theism provides the proper foundation for science
  - The universe is **rational** and logical
  - The universe is what we would **expect** if God exists

**Q. Is science at war with religion?**

- Atheists believe that religion has **slowed** the growth of science
- Actually, the Christian worldview laid the foundation for modern science
  - Belief that the **world** is orderly
  - Belief that God is **rational**
  - Belief that God has revealed himself to us in **nature**
  - Belief in human **reason**
  - Belief that God is **glorified** in our understanding of his creation
- For many early scientists, their belief in **God** was the prime motivation for their investigation of the natural world
  - Atheists today will argue that early scientists only believed this because they had no better **alternatives**

- They want to give “religious” believers no **credit** for their good contributions to science, but give them all the **blame** for bad behavior throughout history

#### Q. Is atheism more scientific?

- Atheists believe that **science** is on their side, and that a belief in God only still exists because of **gaps** in our current scientific understanding of the world
- Scientific evidence to support **intelligent** design is abundant and accessible
- Science still hasn’t explained the mystery of the **origin of life**
  - The discovery of **DNA** in 1953
  - DNA stores information (encyclopedia) and processes information (computer)
- Science still hasn’t explained the **fine-tuning of the universe**
  - The universe seems to have been **crafted** uniquely with us in mind
  - Physicists agree that life is balanced on a razor’s edge
  - Laws of **nature** (physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy) in sync
- Is “**luck**” really the most reasonable answer for these questions?

#### Q. Is atheism more moral?

- Atheists believe that **morality** can exist outside of God
- If there is no God, then where do moral obligations come from in the first place?
  - **Science** doesn’t explain morals
  - We must have a **standard** of good before we can call something evil
- Atheists often argue that **non-believers** can be moral people, too
  - This is certainly true, but misses the bigger point
  - How can **atheism** make sense of moral obligations in the first place?

#### Q. Is Christianity a curse?

- Atheists believe that religion is not only false, but **evil**
  - Atheists point to several events in history as examples of the cruelty of Christianity
- Why should Christianity take the blame when it is people doing the **opposite** of what Jesus taught?
- Atheists sometimes greatly **exaggerate** the crimes committed in the name of religion while **rationalizing** those committed in the name of atheism
- The question is whether atheism is good or bad for an entire **culture**
- The legacy of **Christianity** has been overwhelmingly positive