

## Gamma 2017

Book	
Topic	Gamma Apologetics
Reference	
Date	16 August 2017
Speaker	Ps Mark Tan

### **What is apologetics?**

Apologetics is the discipline of learning how to reasonably defend or give an answer for the reason that you have the hope in Jesus Christ.

### **Where does the word apologetics come from?**

Apologetics comes from the word 'apologia' which means to defend. It is a legal term.

When the Holy Spirit came down up the disciples on Pentecost and people were murmuring and saying, what is going on up in the upper room, are they drinking, are they having too much new wine. Then Peter says, *men in Jerusalem, some of you are saying that we are drunk, let me explain, let me given an apologia.*

### **Common Experience:**

Often times when people ask us, why is that you became a Christian and many times we answer that question not by why we became a Christian, but we answer how. So there is a slight mismatch of answers to the question. It also sounds a lot like chance. Suppose if your other religion friend invited you to his religious beliefs. What differentiates the how from the why is that you are now giving foundational reason as to why I am a Christian.

Our faith is not a blind faith, our faith is with reason and with evidence and that's what makes it distinct from any other belief. In any other belief we are looking at the philosophy based on a story that may or may not necessarily happen, but the moral matters. For us as Christian, it is a historical matter. We believe that he is real and so is our faith.

### **How can I be sure that God exists?**

We can speak about our experiences about God; having a dream and got a message from God. Someone of us might say that when I pray I believe by faith that God is hearing and answering my prayers. Sometimes, it is yes, sometimes it is no, sometimes it is wait. But these people would then ask the question, how can you be sure that there is a recipient on the other end of the line in the first place. So from there comes the whole sense of doubt, maybe God isn't on the other side of the spectrum. How can be I sure that this is God that I believe in exists.

Some questions have some flaws and one of the flaws in this question here is not whether God exist or not. But, how can I be sure to which then I can through back to question to you, how can I be sure of anything. How could you be so sure that a chair can hold your weight. You seem to be pretty sure of a chair holding our weight.

## How can we have this sense of assurity on the existence of God?

Roderick Chisholm is an American philosopher at Brown University, passed away. He actually gives this proposition of here is we can be sure of things. There are two senses of being sure.

- **Incorrigible certainty:** meaning you believe in something and it cannot be improved, modified or added. One example is this whole feeling that you have when you go to a chair, it has four legs, you are going to sit on it and you are incorrigible and you do not need to improve it, you sit back and enjoy the chair. It is almost as if you have no doubt in your mind anymore. You have asked every question, does it have four legs, is it made out of strong material, will it be able to hold my weight, which would then leave you to the conclusion if all are yeses, then incorrigible, no need to ask any further, have a seat on the chair.
- **Epistemic certainty:** is that for the whole most part of my life I had believe something to be true but I do know at the back of my head that it could possibly be false or it may not be the whole answer which I have right now. For example, that last time when I learned about heat transfer that goes from the stove to the kettle, I learned it in two ways. I learned it first as a very primitive kindergartener when I first touched the kettle with my finger, while it was still on the stove. So my first basic knowledge is that if the kettle is on the stove it is hot. Until one day, I went to the kettle and curious me touched it again. Only this time it is not hot, because it was left on the stove overnight and it is cool. So what happened, I had to change the way I think about that kettle. Is not hot all the time the moment is on the kettle.

This is from our epistemic certainty that I will try to know for a fact that a kettle will sometimes be hot, sometimes be cold and now I know how and when and why it becomes hot or cold through these exposures to certain things, which is why for Christianity we can still find people to writing Ph.D. in theology because there is actually much more to God than we know even right now. Now of course we have certain proximities, we say that the Bible is the fundamental definition of God, which is true, but the application of the God of the Bible is so great. There are so many ways that we can look at God and that's why within churches there are denominations, difference of thought but yet still common belief in the person that is Jesus Christ, our Lord, because there is so much to think about him. It is the second sense of being sure, the epistemic certainty that we would go and travel through life and say I will take Jesus Christ to be God and though I admit that I could be wrong, he could either be greater than what I think or may be lesser than what I think but I will say that he is true, but I am not going to look at God and look at him sceptically and not taking to him a 100% just because I had this doubt, because if I am not all in on the Christian faith than I will never know for certain whether he is real or not.

So therefore if do not go both feet into the faith that is in Jesus Christ I will never know the truth as to whether he is really real or not. So how do you answer a friend who says how can I be sure that there is a God. To which we can answer that, we can never really be certain to everything, we take a lot of certainties for granted. We can be sure that God exist because by our experience and by the fact that we are taking this theory that God does exit wholeheartedly and he hasn't failed us yet, we carry on in that belief, hoping to be better and better every day.

So moving on to that thought to say that I am going to try and believe that God is real. So assuming that God is real, a bunch of scientists and philosophers actually set down and said,

**Is it reasonable to believe that God exist?** To which we will say, yes. One of the arguments that have been famously used throughout Renaissance and Enlightenment Ages is Leibniz's Contingency Argument. Here is what he says.

- Everything that exists has an explanation of its existence, either in necessity of itself, or in an external cause.

It is either I exist because of something else or I exist because I need to necessarily exist. What is another example other than God necessarily must be there even though it might not necessarily exist? One of them is abstract thoughts. I don't mean imaginations; I mean things like numbers. We count numbers as if it is a real thing but they are not physical. They are not caused by anything; they are necessarily there. Numbers are by imagination. It is by the fact that we are in a physical existence that we know that. Only two things can exist by necessity, the cause of the universe or abstract thoughts like numbers. Since abstract thoughts like numbers cannot make anything so we can assume that there is God.

- If the universe has an explanation of its existence, that explanation is God.
- The Universe exists.
- The explanation of the universe's existence is God.

Some people may ask this question. How can we do this, does everything needs to have an explanation of its existence? Why can't just everything just be there, just because it has been there.

What about the universe?

Leibniz gives this theory. Suppose two people were walking by the beach side and they found a lovely spheric clear glass ball in the middle of the sands. There are no footsteps on the trail other than their own and so we can conclude that no one had dropped it there. We would still ask the question who put it there, how did it get there. While one friend ask the question how did it get there, the other friend would say it has always been there, let's just leave it alone. The first person is a logical person because he had asked a valid reason, because it can't be in the middle of the sands there is suddenly a crystal ball that came out of nowhere for no reason. Let's make the ball a little bigger. Suppose the ball is no longer the size of a tennis ball but the size of a tractor wheel. Does that make the question go away or does it make the question even more wanting? It makes the question even more wanting. You want the answer to the question even more. Let's talk about the universe and all of its intricacies and the beauty and the magnitude of universe. Surely we should ask the question, how did it get there. That's why the first proposition is important and that is everything that exist has an explanation of its existence either in necessity of itself or in an external cause. Some people may have issue of this part which is if the universe has the explanation of its existence, the explanation is God.

This argument is usable in every religion that believes that there is a God, but if some of our friends are very skeptical of using the word 'God'. We can also say that what we mean by God as the explanation of the universe is the extremely powerful, uncaused, necessarily existing, non-

contingent, non-physical, immaterial, eternal being, who created the entire universe and everything in it.

The reason why we assume God, it has to be made by something else is because we assume that God is physical. Jesus said in John 4:13 that God is spirit and that's why we worship him in spirit and in truth. In revealing the truth, we then realize that God being non-physical is actually able to be everywhere at the same time and that's why we can reasonably believe that God does exist and he had begun this universe.

### **Doesn't science disprove God?**

Some people say that science have disproved God, we don't need him. He is such a messy complicated answer. Everything that we don't know we just sweep it under him, God did it. People who believe in that kind of God, to say that God was the cause of lightning until we take the first course in physics and realize how lightning was made, therefore we don't need God anymore to explain the lightning. This is called God of the gaps. We don't believe in the idea of the God of the gaps. God is not the reason behind the item but he is certainly the agent of existence of something.

Law explains to us how something happens, the agent actually helps you understand how did it get there in the first place and why. God being the agent is the cause of all things, the law just merely explains how did he do it. Laws will remain, agents on the other hand explain it self and can manipulate things. God through miracles inputs information and that's why God is able to interact into many-many things. So can science disprove God. The more complex we see the world is, the more we realize that God had to be the genius of a mind behind this universe. For example,

There is a constant of gravity which must be otherwise the pull will too hard on us and we would not exist or if it too light then we wouldn't be able to breathe. The fatal variation, meaning the constant of gravity cannot change, not even in  $1 \times 10^{60}$ . If it moves even just a little bit this world is not habitable, we cannot exist in this world. This is so finely tuned. The cosmological constant is the necessary speed of how the universe expands and contracts. If it expands too fast we will be a piece of carbon already, because we burnt off. If it was too slow the universe will still be too hot and we will not exist. The change variation is  $1 \times 10^{10^{123}}$ . This supposedly is to say that if the universe expanded too quickly even just by a little bit at the beginning we would have been burnt. If we are too slow, we wouldn't exist in the first place. There has to be something, a genius of a mind, a powerful of a being to exact these constants for us to exist. If our earth was only 20% closer to the sun, water will boil and we will die. If we were 20% away from the sun as we are now water will freeze and we cannot exist either. God had placed us very firmly and very securely in a certain axis point to revolve around the sun for us to exist.

The more intricate we see the universe to be, the more wonder we see what a mighty God He is.

Paul Davies says, *the laws of physics...seem to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design... the universe must have a purpose.*

There has to be genius of a mind behind all of these physical constants in order for us to exist.

## **How can I believe in God when there's so much evil?**

Whether a person believes in God or not, the fact that we have these moral constants, we know something to be good and we know something to be bad, it is only because of God. Mostly, all humans have common moral understandings which tells us that God exist. So if God does not exist then objective morals do not exist. Both the Atheist, Agnostic, Buddhist and the Muslim and the Christian will sit down and agree to this statement. He who says that it is okay to rape an 8-year-old girl is as wrong as saying  $2 + 2 = 5$ . As sure as I know that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , I know that it is equally wrong that a girl should be raped as such a young age. If objective morality does not exist than God does not exist. Objective moral do exist and we experience this all the time.

Without God we don't have a definition of what is good and what is bad. So through the fact that the universe began to exist, through the fact that the universe is so finally tuned that if we move even a little bit to the left and little bit to the right, we will not exist and yet here we are and by the fact that we as human beings actually have a resonance of what is morally right and wrong and therefore there is an image in us which we call the image of God in us we then could say that there is a God. This is the introduction of what is apologetics.

## **What makes you so sure that Jesus is God?**

The answer to that question lies solely on the person that we depend our entire faith on and that is the historicity and the evidence of Jesus of Nazareth. So we then need to ask the question, how can you be so sure that this Jesus is God. What makes you so sure that this Jesus is God?

First of all, it first starts with the idea that everyone is very curious about Jesus. The historians still want to study the places where Jesus walked and buried. The religions of this world like the followers of Krishna relates Jesus to Krishna, the Buddhists relate Jesus to Buddha of the East and in Islam he is the greatest prophet who can do miracles like God.

There are accurate narratives of his extraordinary ministry of miracles and exorcisms. The source of it is Bible. Bible is considered as a very reliable book. The gospels are not written like myth or legendary stories. It was written as if there were eyewitness accounts, like journalist writing down what was happening. For what you see in the eyewitness accounts of the gospels, it sounds a lot more like they are actually recording as to what is really happening. It doesn't sound like a legend. The gospel also points to eyewitnesses. So one example is Alexander and Rufus. Mark chapter 15:21 talks about, Simon of Cyrene who was coming in from the country side just then and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus's cross. So this Simon who helped Jesus carry the cross was the father of Alexander and Rufus.

C. S. Lewis said this, we can take Jesus to be who he claims to be, either a liar, a lunatic or Lord. We can never call him a good teacher because none of the eyewitness accounts even give us the space to say, that he was a good teacher. For the words that he has said would have been as crazy as someone else who is saying that he is a postiche. We can only deduce that either he is a liar, a lunatic or he is Lord. We cannot say anything else. So that calls us to think about the accounts. The second one is that he was worshipped and revered by his initial disciples from early on. Some people believe that the veneration or the worship of the Jesus as the son of God was only later developed,

may be 200-300 years after the fact but the gospel accounts were not written two to three hundred years later.

Jesus resurrection, appearances and the growth of the church, we are an unbroken proof that Jesus Christ is who he claims to be.

**3** For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve. **6** After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **8** and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

- Christ died
- Christ was buried,
- Christ raised
- Christ appeared.

These are what we call the four-line formula and the proposition is this, that all of these four are true that Christianity and Jesus Christ is true. Proof even one of these to be false then we could just pack up our bags and go home and enjoy the rest of the day. We see this in all four gospels. This is a common skeletal narrative of the death, burial, resurrection and appearance of Jesus.

He didn't rise would be the one easiest to be proven wrong if at all possible. In fact, in the gospel of Matthew, the Pharisees says, you are to say his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep and until today there are still some people who believe that the disciples did that. There are some problems with this argument for a few reason.

**12** When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, **13** telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' **14** If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." Matthew 28:12-14

The first flaw that we have here is this, the soldiers could still be alive while saying this sentence. The penalty for a soldier falling to sleep while on duty is death. They will not be able to live to tell this tale if they said the disciples came and stole the body while the soldiers were asleep.

The second flaw is that, the problem is that the governor was in denial for a long time but then the people began to speak and because of this so called lie, 12 disciples were persecuted. It doesn't make a sense that 12 men will plot this and in the end lose their lives for a lie. Nobody dies for a lie unless it is true and then it is worth dying for.

The Muslims say that the Christ didn't die, he only looked like he died but he didn't really die. So one of the theories is that, yes he was beaten, he was flogged, he was crucified but when they brought him down and put him to tomb he had a good sleep for three days and on the third day he woke up and walked out, he never really died.

According to the gospel of Luke, the soldiers pierced Jesus while he was on the cross and water and blood came out of his rib, is therefore evidence that Jesus had die of affixation because water was collecting at the lungs and the blood was from the wounds and if the cross didn't kill him that stabbing certainly did. It collapsed the lung, therefore causing the final shock to the body and he died.

Some people believe that the disciples had a collective delusion, they all certainly went crazy and they all end up having the same illusion which then led everyone to believe the same thing and that's why we have the church. So they believed that when Jesus appeared to the disciples it was all a delusion. They were all so caught up in grieve that they were imaging that he was there until the day they died. The problem here is that; it is not impossible. It is possible, there is a record of a whole village actually got into a same delusion of very similar dream and they all believed that this had really happened. It was in Eastern Europe and the group size was about 20. So it is possible except the problem is the numbers. Jesus also appeared to 500 people. Every one of our minds here are individual and independent in nature. Therefore, if all of them have a delusion it will be totally different, so if 500 people said the same thing it therefore has to be true.

That's why peter can proudly say on the day of Pentecost that

**32** God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. **33** Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. **36** "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." Acts 2:32-33, 36

N. T. Wright, writes in Early Traditions and the Origins of Christianity

*I have so far endeavored to sketch a historical argument I have urged that the rise of early Christianity cannot be explained except on the basis upon which the early Christians themselves insist, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth, following his shameful execution, was raised bodily from the dead.*

Friends our faith is a faith of response. We are responding to something that has happened in history. If this Jesus really could rise from the dead and claimed all who he and make proof of all that he has claim to be than what we are doing right now is a positive and right response, now we need to make sure that other people can hear this same evidence.