

Challenge Questions

Optional Appendix

1. Challenges from Christendom - John 12:37-41

“These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him”

The Scripture says that through the beginning of signs in Cana, Jesus manifested his glory. His glory would be seen in all the signs that followed, especially in his death and resurrection. In the passages above, John the apostle explains that Isaiah saw Jesus’ glory (Isaiah 6:5).

Isaiah says his “eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,” while John explains that it was the glory of Jesus Christ. The vast majority of Christendom expounds this passage through the vehicle of Trinitarianism. How should we understand these passages?

2. Challenges from Christendom - John 3:16

“Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”

There were several instances during the disciples’ experience with Jesus, that Scripture records they believed on him (i.e. John 1:40,45,49; 2:11; Matthew 16:16; John 20:29; etc.). Even many of the chief rulers—who consented to the death of Jesus—believed on him (John 12:42).

It is a common teaching of Evangelical Christianity that this belief alone grants eternal salvation—or, ‘eternal security.’ How should we understand these passages?

3. Challenges from Biblical Skepticism - John 2:13-16; Matthew 21:12-13

“Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise”

“It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves”

Both Matthew and John record Jesus’ ‘cleansing’ of the temple.

Biblical antagonists argue that since Matthew places the cleansing late in our Lord’s ministry, and John places it early (just after his ‘beginning of miracles’ in Cana), the record contains a conflict, and cannot therefore be inspired. How should we respond to this attack?

4. Challenges from Christendom - John 4:2; 1 Corinthians 1:17

“Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples”

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel”

In an effort to edify an existing theological structure, some who operate from the ‘once-saved-always-saved’ position suggest that the verses above prove that baptism is not necessary for

salvation. Because Jesus himself never baptized, and Paul only baptized few, they believe baptism is not a prerequisite for salvation. How should we understand these passages?

5. Challenges from Christendom - John 5:18; John 5:23

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God”

“All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father”

These passages are sometimes used to prove that Jesus made himself equal with God, and so must be God. How should we understand these passages?

6. Challenges from Christendom - John 5:28-29

“The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth”

This passage is sometimes used to prove a ‘universal resurrection’. How should we understand this passage?

7. Challenges from Christendom - John 6:33; John 6:51

“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world”

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven”

These passages are sometimes used to prove that Jesus preexisted personally in heaven before his incarnation in human flesh in the womb of Mary. How should we understand these passages?

8. Challenges from Christendom - John 6:54

“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day”

This passage is used with others by Catholic theology to teach the doctrine of transubstantiation. What is transubstantiation, and why is it important to Roman Catholicism? How does Scripture actually refute this doctrine?

9. Challenges from Christendom - John 6:62

“What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?”

This verse is used in conjunction with others (see Challenges from Christendom Part 1) to prove the personal preexistence of Jesus Christ. Does this passage present any difficulties that Part 1 may not have addressed? Explain.

10. Challenges from Christendom - Matthew 14:26

“And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear”

Many Christians believe in the immortality of the soul, and they would cite this passage as proof that the disciples did as well. How would you explain this verse to an interested friend? (You may find it helpful to look at other passages in the Bible where people actually saw a spirit or thought they saw one.)

11. Challenges from Christendom - Matthew 14:32-33

“And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God”

Trinitarians could cite Revelation 22:9 and say that God alone can be worshipped; therefore, since Jesus received worship in this passage, he must be God. How would you explain this passage to an interested friend who believed in the Trinity?

12. Challenges from Bible Skepticism - Mark 6:45; John 6:16-17.

“And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people”

“And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them”

Mark says Jesus sent the disciples unto Bethsaida. John says Jesus sent them toward Capernaum. Is this an error in the Bible? How would you explain this to an interested friend, particularly one who has questions about the inspiration of the Bible? (The Oxford King James Bible has a center column note that is helpful in understanding Mark 6.)

13. Challenges from Christendom - John 8:56

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”

Many Christians believe that Jesus pre-existed and cite this passage as evidence. How would you explain this verse to an interested friend?

Be ready to turn the conversation around when sharing the Truth with others. We do not want to focus too much on what the Bible does not teach (e.g., the Bible does not teach the pre-existence of Christ). Instead, we want to share its positive message. If you are discussing this verse with an interested friend, what would be a good direction to take the conversation in once you had addressed the question of pre-existence? In particular, why does Jesus say Abraham rejoiced to see his day?

14. Challenges from Christendom - John 8:58

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am”

In Exodus 3:14, God tells Moses that His name is “I am.” Is Jesus saying here that he is Yahweh? How would you explain what Jesus is saying to an interested friend?

15. Challenges from Christendom - John 10:30

“I and my Father are one”

Many Christians believe that this passage supports the concept of a triune god of equal beings, and they contend that verse 33 shows that the people of Jesus’ day understood that is what he was teaching with these words. How would you explain these passages to an interested friend?

16. Challenges from Christendom - John 20:28

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God”

Thomas calls Jesus “my God.” That settles the issue in the mind of many Trinitarians. How would you explain this passage to an interested friend?

17. Challenges from Christendom - John 21:17

“Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep”

Catholics claim that Jesus gave Peter authority over all of his followers when he told him, “Feed my sheep.” They further assert that this authority has been passed on to his successors, the Popes, a view that they contend is supported by Matthew 16:18, which states, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” How would you explain these passages to an interested Catholic friend?