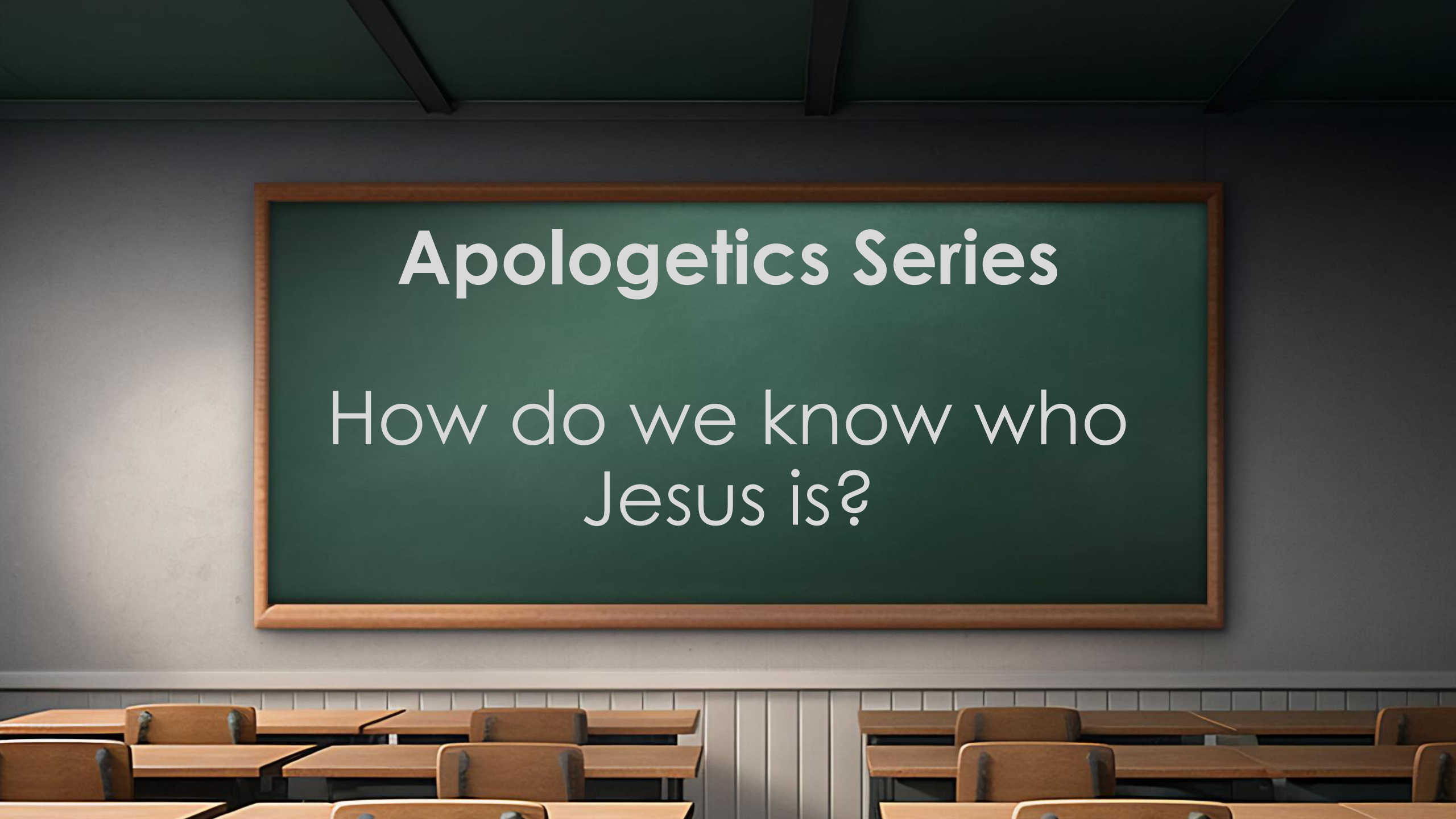
BELIEF



=REASONABLE


Apologetics Series
How do we know who Jesus is?

Did Jesus actually exist?

- What the evidence shows:
  - Many Christian (and heretical) documents from late first and early second century refer to Jesus
  - Roughly 10 non-Christian documents also mention Him
- We have more independent sources for the historical existence of Jesus than for most other people whose existence is unquestioned



Josephus

- Born about 37 AD in Jerusalem
- Became a general in Galilee in the early 60's
- Defected to the Romans in 67 AD.
- Accompanied Titus during the siege of Jerusalem (AD 70)
- Wrote "Wars of the Jews" and "Antiquities of the Jews"



Josephus: Antiquities 18:3:3

“Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man…a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles…and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principle men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”



Tacitus (AD 56-120)

- Was a Roman senator and historian
- Contemporary of Josephus
- Most famous historian of first-century Rome



Tacitus: Annals 15:14 (116 AD)

“But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt 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 during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome...”



What about His Deity?

- What Non-Biblical sources say: not much
- For evidence of Jesus' Deity, we have to rely on the Gospels and the New Testament



Can We Trust the Gospel's Authority?

- Gospels were written AD ~70-95
- Order was probably Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John
- Well within expected lifespans for disciples
- No evidence to suggest the authors were anyone besides the names on the books.
- Many "church fathers" including Papias (AD 60-130), Eusebius (260-340), and Clement (35-98) recorded the authorship of the Gospels

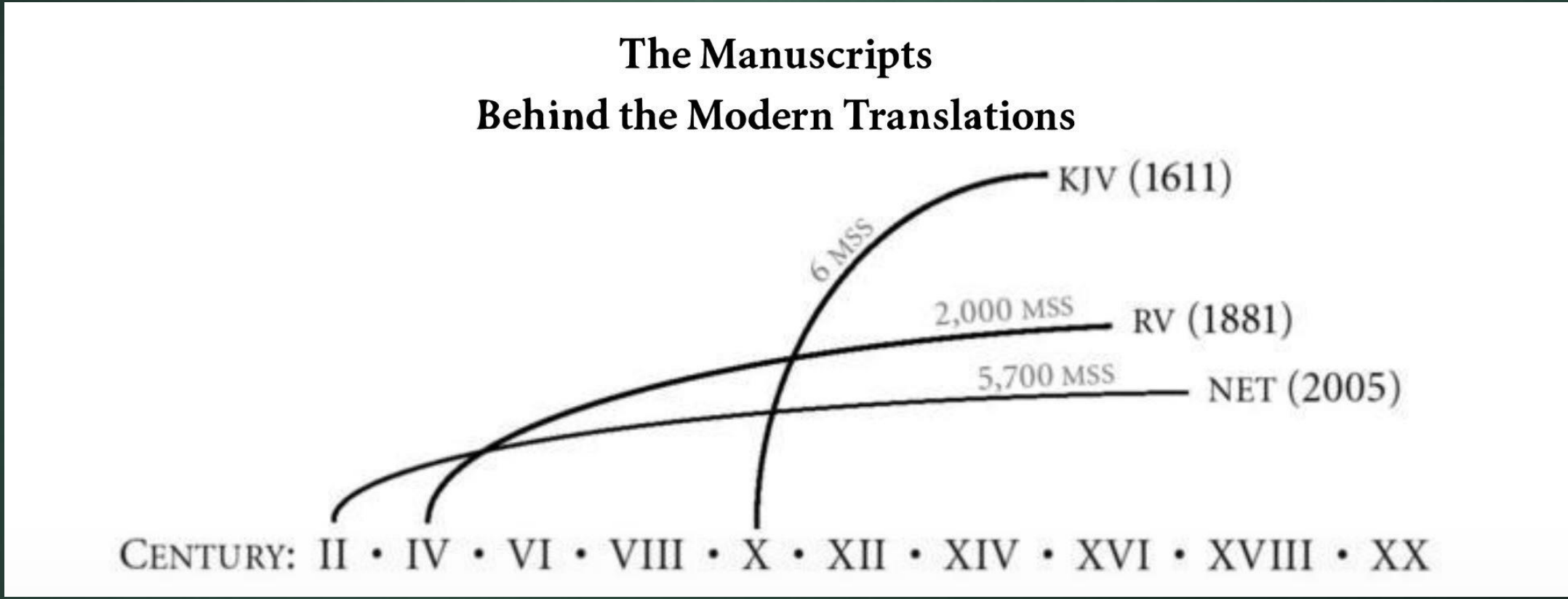


Can We Trust the Gospel's Authority?

- Here's where the critics jump into the argument.
- How do we know who wrote the Gospels?
- Are they based on oral history?
- What about all the differences and contradictions?
- What did Jesus actually say?



Can We Trust the Gospel's Authority?



Reinventing Jesus, Chapter 5. Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace

BELIEF + = REASONABLE

Bart Ehrman

- Argues the gospels were either repeatedly re-written or conglomerated from oral history.
- Argues that Jesus doesn't claim to be God until the gospel of John
- Disputes that Jesus said most of the things recorded in the gospels
- Completely disregards the resurrection accounts



A few key counter-points to the critics

- All of Paul's epistles were written before he died in AD 64, and were universally recognized to be Scripture
- The first-hand gospel accounts (Matthew and John) were written after Paul died
- Christianity could not have dramatically changed doctrine in ~40 years
- Coherent testimony over many years between many people (including Prophecy) speaks to divine power, not a conspiracy.



A few key counter-points to the critics

- The gospel accounts contain many details embarrassing to the disciples
- Joseph of Arimathea would have been well known
- Hundreds of eye-witnesses would have noticed inconsistencies between Jesus' message and the apostles teaching



A few key Scriptures

- Mark 14:62 Jesus said, “I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

- Above saying references Ps. 100:1 and Dan. 7:13



A few key Scriptures

Luke 22:69-71 9 Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.” Then they all said, “Are You then the Son of God?”

So He said to them, “You rightly say that I am.”

And they said, “What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”



A few key Scriptures

Matthew 26:63-65 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”

Jesus said to him, “*It is as* you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!



Evidence that demands a verdict

- Based on the historical and Scriptural evidence, Jesus is God
- Based on the recorded words of Jesus, He claimed to be God
- Based on the Old Testament Prophecies, Jesus is God



Evidence that demands a verdict

- Was He a liar, lunatic, or Lord?
- These things are written so that you may believe…



References and Additional Resources



