

Historical Reliability of the New Testament

By Kris Herman

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Bibliography

I. Establishing Eyewitness Authorship

A. Scriptures:

1. 2 Peter 1:16: "For we did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

2. 1 John 1:3: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ."

3. Acts 26:26: "The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner."

B. Video clip — 10 min (Who Is This Jesus? Is He Risen; Examining the Truth About Jesus. Coral Ridge Ministries.)

Eyewitness Authorship of the Four Gospels

C. To the credit of the Christian Church, it has been honest about who was and was not an eyewitness.

1. Historically in the church, it has been held that Matthew and John were eyewitnesses.

2. John was an eyewitness

a. John 13:23, 19:26, 35, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20, 21:24

b. Second-century writer Irenaeus: "Lastly, the disciple of the Lord [John], who had leant back on his breast, once more set forth the gospel, while residing at Ephesus in Asia" (Barnett 59).

c. For more information on the authorship and content of John's Gospel and the controversy surrounding this Gospel, see Barnett 56-80, Bruce 46-61, and Strobel 27-28.

3. Matthew was an eyewitness. His authorship is supported by Papias (Strobel 28, McDowell 53).

4. Mark and Luke were not eyewitnesses.

a. Mark was a close companion of Peter as quoted by Papias (a hearer of John) in 130 A.D. "Mark, having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he [Peter] mentioned, whether sayings or doings of Christ; not, however, in order. For he was neither a hearer nor a companion of the Lord; but afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter... So then Mark made no mistake, writing down in this way some things as he [Peter] mentioned them; for he paid attention to this one thing, not to omit anything that he had heard, nor to include any false statement among them" (Bruce 35).

b. Luke was a follower of Paul and he himself tells us that he was not an eyewitness: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1-4 NIV). On a side note: Luke is considered to be a very accurate historian! See more about this in the section on archaeology of this outline.

5. Irenaeus (180 A.D.) has a quote supporting Matthew, Mark, Luke, John as Gospel authors: "Matthew published his own Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the Gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned on his breast, himself produced his Gospel while he was living at Ephesus in Asia" (Strobel 29).

Eyewitness Authorship in the Rest of the New Testament

The rest of the NT was written by eyewitnesses and/or Apostles or their close associates. Note: at times the authors would dictate their letter to a secretary of sorts called an amanuensis.

Example: the Apostle Paul's authority is based on his life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ (in spirit) on a road to Damascus. Note: Paul was not a witness to Jesus' earthly life but his encounter with Christ was real nonetheless. As F.F. Bruce points out, Paul also knew of the apostles, although not close companions (Galatians 1:13-24), and is consistent with their views and beliefs about Christ:

"In short, the outline of the Gospel story as we can trace it in the writings of Paul agrees with the outline which we find elsewhere in the NT, and in the four Gospels in particular. Paul himself is at pains to point out that the gospel which he preached was one and the same gospel as that preached by the other apostles — a striking claim, considering that Paul was neither a companion of Christ in the days of His flesh nor of the original apostles, and that he vigorously asserts his complete independence of these" (Bruce 78-79).

The Importance of Independent Eyewitness Authorship

Important: It is known that many of the NT writers wrote independently of each other.

1. "It is well to remember that the NT is not one document, but twenty-seven separate pieces of literature written by nine or ten different authors, most of whom wrote without reference to or knowledge of what the others had written" (Barnett 169).

2. This is important because when two or more independent authors write about the same beliefs, persons and issues, their writings can be compared and checked with one another for accuracy and congruity.

II. How can we test this eyewitness material? How can we know that myth was not added to this history?

Importance of Understanding Oral Tradition: Oral Tradition Does Not Mean Myth
It is very important to realize that books were rare at this point in history and that recording and copying devices simply did not yet exist. Education, learning, and the recording and passing on of history was often done by word of mouth and memorization (oral tradition).

A. Believe it or not, rabbis would become famous for having the entire Old Testament memorized. This is hard for us to believe, but it was simply a part of their culture to memorize their history (Blomberg in Strobel 54).

B. Memorization was more flexible back then. "In studies of cultures with oral traditions, there was freedom to vary how much of the story was told on any given occasion — what was included, what was left out, what was paraphrased, what was explained, and so forth" (54).

C. They wrote and remembered history in poetic form to aid in memorization (54).

D. In dealing with differing perspectives or details found in the gospels, it is important to consider that even the apparent contradictions point towards the authors' faithfulness.

1. "If the gospels were too consistent, that in itself would invalidate them as independent witnesses. People would then say we really only have one testimony that everybody else is just parroting" (Strobel quoting Blomberg 58).

2. In regards to the Gospels of Mark and John, Paul Barnett says "while for some this difference is unpalatable, it may, in fact, enhance the deeper historicity of the account. Perfect agreement in every detail might justifiably arouse a suspicion of some kind of collusion between the authors" (Barnett 55).

3. Also note that discrepancies in historical accounts are not grounds for discarding the evidence and the historicity of the event or events. For example, there are "two narratives of Hannibal crossing the Alps to attack Rome, and they are incompatible and irreconcilable. Yet no classical historian doubts the fact that Hannibal did mount such a campaign" (Strobel quoting Blomberg 290-291). Note: this would also apply to the Gospel accounts and they are not incompatible and irreconcilable.

A Relatively Short Period of Oral Transmission

It is important to establish the time distance between the actual events of the New Testament and when they were recorded on paper. The shorter the distance between the events and when they were written down, the better. A shorter distance seems to be more reliable, because it would not afford as much time for myth to be added or for people to alter the story.

A. Many scholars, for various reasons internal and external to the biblical record, date the books of the NT from around 50-100 A.D. I believe this point to be established well enough that I will not argue it further here.

B. All four Gospels were written within the lifetimes of various other eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ and his disciples, "including hostile witnesses who would have served as a corrective if false teachings about Jesus were going around" (Strobel quoting Blomberg pg. 41)

C. Dates are not all that late (Strobel 40-42, Bruce 12).

1. Christ died around 33 A.D.
2. Mark written around 60s A.D.
3. Matthew and Luke around 70s A.D.
4. John around 90s A.D.

Papyrus Rylands Greek — this is the oldest Greek fragment copy of the NT dating from 100-150 A.D. On it is written five verses from John chapter 18. This was a very important discovery as it pushed John's gospel to an earlier date than thought by critics of this Gospel (Bruce Metzger in Strobel p. 79).

D. Time distance is almost a nonissue. The amount of time between the events and the written records of the events is not so much that myth would have developed distorting the truth.

1. For example, Arrian and Plutarch wrote the earliest biographies of Alexander the Great more than 400 years after his death in 323 B.C. Yet historians consider their biographies to be accurate. Legendary material about Alexander did come about, but only centuries after Arrian and Plutarch (Blomberg in Strobel pg. 41).

2. C.S. Lewis: "If he [the Bible critic] tells me that something in the Gospel is legend or romance, I want to know how many legends and romances he has read, how well his palate is trained in detecting them by the flavor; not how many years he has spent on that Gospel...I have been reading poems, romances, vision-literature, legends, myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know that not one of them is like this."

E. There is evidence from earlier material (creeds, confessions of faith, or hymns) in Paul's writings. Even before the written records, evidence for the belief in Christ's resurrection and such are early; they predate any of the New Testament records.

1. Paul says in I Corinthians 15:3-5ff, "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve..."

a. Here Paul is passing on an oral truth concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ of which was passed on to him. It is believed that Paul was given this creed around 35 A.D. (Strobel quoting Blomberg 44).

b. "Now, here you have the key facts about Jesus' death for our sins, plus a detailed list of those to whom he appeared in resurrected form — all dating back to within two to five years of the events themselves" (44).

2. It is also believed that Philipians 2:6-11 and Colossians 1:15-20 represent early church creeds as well (Strobel 43).

Accountability Within the Community to Get Oral and Written Accounts Right

A. Simply put, if the resurrection of Christ, his miracles, and his teachings were not true and if the disciples were only making a myth out of what actually happened, everyone else in the community — those for, against, or neutral to the movement and message — would have challenged and/or dismantled it.

1. "We have a picture of what was initially a very vulnerable and fragile movement that was being subjected to persecution. If critics could have attacked it on the basis that it was full of falsehoods or distortions, they would have...but that's exactly what we don't see" (Strobel quoting Blomberg, p. 66).

2. "The earliest preachers of the gospel knew the value of...first-hand testimony, and appealed to it time and again. 'We are witnesses of these things,' was their

constant and confident assertion. And it can have been by no means so easy as some writers seem to think to invent words and deeds of Jesus in those early years, when so many of his disciples were about, who could remember what had and had not happened. And it was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with; there were others less well disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the ministry and death of Jesus. The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies (not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts), which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so... Had there been any tendency to depart from the facts in any material respect, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would have served as a further corrective" (McDowell quoting Bruce, pp. 51-52).

B. A biblical example: Acts 2:22-41: " 'Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know...God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact...therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' When the people heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.'" (emphasis added)

Here is an example of Peter challenging the people with the truth that they themselves saw. Notice their reaction. They did not respond with "Peter, you're wrong on your facts. What you saw was wrong". Instead they wanted to know what to do with the truth presented to them. They were "cut to the heart." The text then goes on to say that many accepted Peter's message and sought forgiveness (Stobel — Harry and Mary 32).

C. Hostile witnesses: these are early ancient writers who, in their adverse writings of Christianity, actually bring affirmation to the historicity of the biblical account.

1. Celsus: second-century philosophic critic of Christianity who ascribes Jesus' miracles to sorcery. Note that Celsus doesn't deny the miracles, he attributes them to a different power source rather than God. Later Jewish rabbinical writings also attribute Jesus' miracles to sorcery (Bruce 68).

2. Acts 4:16-17: In regards to a miraculous healing done by Peter and John, the Sanhedrin say, "What are we going to do with these men? Everybody living in Jerusalem knows that they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we

must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name." Note: they do not deny the miracle, they simply try to stop Peter and John from spreading the news about Jesus Christ any further.

Other Evidence to Consider When Testing the Accuracy of the Eyewitness Accounts

A. Integrity of the Apostles: If the Apostles were merely inventing a new movement, they hardly would have included all the embarrassing accounts of themselves. If they were trying to sell something that really was not true, why would they include their doubts, unfaithfulness, fear, and difficult sayings that are hard to understand? If not true, why not fabricate it to make the movement easier to swallow and leave a legacy for yourself that is heroic, powerful, and glorifying? This we do not see!

B. The integrity of the Apostles went against their culture. For example, the Gospel accounts show Jesus interacting lovingly with women and social outcasts. Again, if the Apostles were trying to make a newly-invented myth they would not have added this stuff because it went directly against the norm of their culture!

They would not have had women be the first to discover the empty tomb. "Women were on a very low rung of the social ladder in first-century Palestine. There are old rabbinical sayings that said 'let the words of the law be burned rather than delivered to women' and 'blessed is he whose children are male, but woe to him whose children are female.' Women's testimony was regarded as so worthless that they weren't even allowed to serve as legal witnesses in a Jewish court of law... Any later legendary account would have certainly portrayed male disciples as discovering the tomb — Peter or John, for example" (Strobel quoting William Lane Craig, 293).

C. The writers had nothing to gain by telling the truth! They had integrity enough to proclaim what they saw even though it meant persecution, financial instability, and death. It is believed that 9-10 of the disciples, not to mention millions of other Christians from that point on, died for the truth they saw and embraced in the resurrected Christ.

1. Peter was told by Christ that he would die for his allegiance to Christ: "Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.'" Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me'" (John 21:17b-19).

It is quite trustworthy history that Peter died from crucifixion, possibly upside-down, in Rome (Gonzalez, 27).

2. The Apostle Paul went from a life of a high status successful Jewish Pharisee who persecuted Christians to having an encounter with Christ that changed the course of his life forever. He went from persecuting Christians to being one. He left the success and comfort of his life as a Pharisee to share the Gospel of Christ, which led to his persecution, great sufferings, and being beheaded in Rome (Gonzalez, 27). See Acts 7:57-8:1, Acts 9, Galatians 1:11-24, Philippians 3:4-7, and 2 Corinthians 11:16-33.

D. They had nothing to gain by believing a false, unresurrected messiah. Why would these men and women (Mary) follow Christ if he was not truly resurrected?

1. Nobody will die for religious beliefs that they know are false (Strobel quoting Moreland, 334).

2. Everybody knew then that a crucified "messiah" was a failed "messiah" (N.T. Wright quoted in video: Who Is This Jesus; Is He Risen?)

"When Jesus was crucified...his followers were discouraged and depressed. They no longer had confidence that Jesus had been sent by God, because they believed that anyone crucified was accursed by God. They also had been taught that God would not let his Messiah suffer death. So they dispersed. The Jesus movement was all but stopped in its tracks" (Strobel quoting Moreland, 332).

3. The story doesn't end there. They actually believed, taught, and recorded as historical truth that Christ rose from the dead.

"Then, after a short period of time, we see them abandoning their occupations, regathering, and committing themselves to spreading a very specific message — that Jesus Christ was the Messiah of God who died on a cross, returned to life, and was seen alive by them. And they were willing to spend the rest of their lives proclaiming this, without any pay off from a human point of view... For what? For good intentions? No, because they were convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that they had seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead. What you can't explain is how this particular group of men came up with this particular belief without having had an experience of the resurrected Christ. There's no other adequate explanation" (333).

4. It is known that many other so-called "messiahs" and "prophets" existed during and after the time of Christ. Their movements would quickly be dismantled when the Roman government found out about them, killed the leaders, and their followers dispersed (video — Who Is This Jesus; Is He Risen?)

a. ben Kosiba: a false messiah — "In the year A.D. 135 after a three-year war, the Romans captured and beheaded the leader of a major Jewish uprising in which more than half a million Jews were killed, fifty fortresses destroyed and almost a thousand villages razed. This man who called himself 'President of Israel' and issued coins and land deeds as such, was hailed as the Messiah by the leading rabbi of the day. A formidable generalissimo who amputated a finger from each serving soldier, he was only removed, according to the Roman Emperor Hadrian, by an 'act of God.' And yet, though this man was so great a figure, little evidence from the period has come to us, and such as there is does not even accurately record his name...Ben Kosiba" (Barnett 9).

"During his lifetime Rabbi Akiba had hailed him as Messiah, the fulfillment of the long expected star of Jacob who would rule the world (Numbers 24:17). It is for this reason that he was known by some as bar Kokhba, which means son of a star, or Messiah. For others, however, he came to have a different name. After his death, when so many hopes and dreams were smashed, his name was subtly altered by some to ben Koziba, 'son of a liar'. Notice the sequence — ben Kosiba, bar Kokhba, ben Koziba, oblivion" (Barnett 169).

b. Gamaliel, a Pharisee speaking to the Sanhedrin, compares the Apostles to false "prophets" in Acts 5:36-39: "Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

5. If Christ did not rise, his followers would have stayed dispersed and he would have been forgotten like the rest of the false "messiahs" and "prophets." Instead, we see them moving from fear, scattering, and disillusionment at the crucifixion to courage, deep faith, boldness, and a willingness to die — not because they found another "Messiah" but because the Messiah had risen from the dead (N.T. Wright in video—Who Is This Jesus; Is He Risen?).

III. Extrabiblical Witness to the New Testament

Extrabiblical witnesses to the NT are ancient writers outside of the NT who make reference to Jesus Christ, events that take place in Scripture, or give corroborative evidence in support of Jesus and biblical events.

A. Dr. Gary Habermas makes the statement that within 20 different non-Christian sources, you can get 60-65 facts about Jesus' life, crucifixion, resurrection, and teachings. You can get a basic outline of his life and never even touch the New Testament (Video—Who Is This Jesus?). The following are some examples:

B. Josephus (37/38-97 A.D.) an important Jewish historian.

1. In his writings, Josephus makes reference to NT figures such as the "Herod family; the Roman emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero; Quirinius, the governor of Syria; Pilate, Felix, and Festus, the procurators of Judea; the high-priestly families — Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias, and the rest; the Pharisees and Sadducees; and so on. Against the background which Josephus provides we can read the New Testament with greater understanding and interest" (Bruce 104).

2. Aside from his account of John The Baptist and his death, Josephus also gives an account of the death of James the brother of Jesus: "As therefore Ananus was of such a disposition, he thought he had now a good opportunity, as Festus was now dead, and Albinus was still on the road; so he assembled a council of judges, and brought before it the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, whose name was James, together with some others, and having accused them as law-breakers, he delivered them over to be stoned" (Bruce quoting Josephus 107).

a. In regards to this passage, F.F. Bruce says "The account in Josephus is chiefly important because he calls James 'the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ,' in such a way as to suggest that he has already made some reference to Jesus (108).

b. I personally find it to be important that Josephus calls Jesus the "so-called Christ." By calling Jesus the "so-called Christ," Josephus, who was not a Christian, implies that others did believe Jesus to be the Christ. So from the pen of Josephus, we can infer that there was early belief that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

3. Hotly debated quote from Josephus in his Testimonium Flavianum: "And there arose about this time, a wise man, if indeed we should call him a man; for he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He led away many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. This man was the Christ.

And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease; for he appeared to them on the third day alive again, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him: and even now the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out" (Bruce quoting Josephus 108).

Note: the bolded statements in the above quote represent debatable matter. It is believed by many that the bolded are not statements from Josephus but later Christian interpolations as the text of Josephus was transmitted by Christians and not Jews. However, others accept some or all of the underlined to be from the pen of Josephus for various different reasons of which I will not get in to here. It is mostly certain that the remainder of the passage is from Josephus and that it gives us important verifying evidence concerning Jesus.

4. For more information on Josephus and these two quotes, see Bruce 102-112, Strobel 103-107, and McDowell 55-57.

C. Pliny the Younger: governor of Bithynia in northwest Turkey in early second century (100's A.D.). In a letter to the Emperor Trajan he wrote:

"I have asked them if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution; for, whatever the nature of their admission, I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy ought not go unpunished...They also declared the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery... This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths" (Strobel quoting Yamauchi 109-110).

Yamauchi explains the importance of this historical documentation: "It was probably written about A.D. 111, and it attests to the rapid spread of Christianity, both on the city and in the rural area, among every class of persons, slave women as well as Roman citizens, since he also says that he sends Christians who are Roman citizens to Rome for trial. And it talks about the worship of Jesus as God, that Christians maintained high ethical standards, and that they were not easily swayed from their beliefs" (110).

D. Cornelius Tacitus (born in 52/54 A.D.): the greatest Roman historian during the Roman Empire. He writes about the great fire of A.D. 64 which devastated Rome and how Nero blamed the Christians for the fire. It was widely rumored and believed that Nero started the fire in order to gain glory for himself by rebuilding the city (Bruce 117). In 115 A.D. Tacitus writes:

"Therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus [Christ], from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor; and the pernicious superstition was checked for a short time, only to break out afresh, not only in Judea, the home of the plague, but in Rome itself, where all the horrible and shameful things in the world collect and find a home" (Bruce quoting Tacitus 117).

Note: some scholars believe that the "pernicious superstition" that spread was the belief in the resurrection of Christ and this may very well be the case. However, Yamauchi makes a good point here: "Regardless of whether the passage had this specifically in mind, it does provide us with a very remarkable fact, which is this: crucifixion was the most abhorrent fate that anyone could undergo, and the fact that there was a movement based on a crucified man has to be explained" (Strobel quoting Yamauchi 108). I personally believe that it does refer to the resurrection. If not, what else could it be?

E. Thallus (writing in A.D. 52) is quoted by Julius Africanus in 221 A.D. in regards to the darkness that the Gospels report at the death of Christ.

1. "In this passage Julius Africanus says 'Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away the darkness as an eclipse of the sun — unreasonably, as it seems to me.' "

"Thallus apparently was saying yes, there had been darkness at the time of the crucifixion, and he speculated it had been caused by an eclipse. Africanus then argues that it couldn't have been an eclipse, given when the crucifixion occurred" (Strobel quoting Yamauchi 111).

2. Yamauchi quotes Dr. Paul Maier in this regard: "This phenomenon, evidently, was visible in Rome, Athens, and other Mediterranean cities. According to Tertullian...it was a 'cosmic' or 'world event.' Phlegon, a Greek author from Caria writing a chronology soon after 137 A.D., reported that in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad (i.e., 33 A.D.) there was 'the greatest eclipse of the sun' and that 'it became night in the sixth hour of the day [i.e., noon] so that stars even

appeared in the heavens. There was a great earthquake in Bithynia, and many things were overturned in Nicaea" (Strobel 111).

F. So, even without the New Testament, one can know about Jesus and what others believed about him from non-Christian sources outside of the Bible. This extrabiblical documentation affirms the history found and conveyed in the New Testament.

G. For more information in the area of extrabiblical witness to the New Testament, see Geisler 381-385, Strobel 95-121, Bruce 100-120, and McDowell 53-60. There is much more to consider in this area, such as early church Fathers and their writings and other early Jewish writings.

IV. Archaeology and the New Testament

It is true that the science of archaeology has shed great light on the events, people, and places of the Bible and that the past one hundred years, according to Walter Kaiser, president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, will go down in history as the great century of archaeological discovery.

Definition, Purpose, and Importance of Archaeology

A. Archaeology is the careful recovery and systematic study of the material remains of the past (Sheler 64).

B. Josh McDowell states that archaeology enhances the scientific study of the Bible, acts as a check in the area of critical studies (radical and conservative), helps to illustrate and explain various biblical passages, and helps to supplement areas not dealt with in the Bible (McDowell 370-371).

C. According to F.F. Bruce and Bargil Pixner, archaeology affords us a better understanding of the people and the culture of which the New Testament was written. Through this background, the Scriptures are illumined and become more understandable to us who do not live within that cultural framework.

1. "For the most part the service which archaeology has rendered to New Testament studies is the filling of the contemporary background, against which we can read the record with enhanced comprehension and appreciation. And this background is a first-century background. The New Testament narrative just will not fit into a second century background" (McDowell quoting Bruce 62).

2. "Five gospels record the life of Jesus. Four you will find in books and one you will find in the the land they call Holy. Read the fifth gospel and the world of the four will be open to you" (Sheler quoting Pixner 110).

It amazes me that this archaeologist feels so strongly about the importance and benefit of archaeology that he figuratively ascribes it to the status of one of the gospels.

D. Archaeology can help in establishing the trustworthiness of the biblical writers and the reliability of the history they convey.

"In a sense this is what archaeology accomplishes. The premise is that if an ancient historian's incidental details check out to be accurate time after time, this increases our confidence in other material that the historian wrote but that cannot be as readily cross-checked...the credibility of any ancient document is enhanced when you excavate and find that the author was accurate in talking about a particular place or event" (Strobel quoting McKay 128).

For example: many people thought Josephus to be incorrect in making the statement that the harbor of Herod the Great, in Caesarea, was as large as the one at Piraeus, a major harbor of Athens. After doing underwater excavations, it was discovered that Josephus was correct after all in his assessment of the two harbors (128-129).

E. Quotes concerning archaeology:

1. "On the whole, however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine" (McDowell quoting Burrows 62).

2. "The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history" (McDowell quoting Albright 61).

3. "Archaeology has not produced anything that is unequivocally [beyond any doubt] a contradiction to the Bible. On the contrary, as we've seen, there have been many opinions of skeptical scholars that have become codified into 'fact' over the years but that archaeology has shown to be wrong" (Strobel quoting McKay 134).

4. "I believe archaeology contributes to biblical criticism, not in the area of inspiration or revelation, but in confirming the historical accuracy and trustworthiness of the events recorded" (McDowell 374).

Limitations of Archaeology

A. Archaeology cannot prove that the Bible is the word of God.

1. "Archaeology has made some important contributions, but it certainly can't prove whether the New Testament is the word of God. If we dig in Israel and find ancient sites that are consistent with where the Bible said we'd find them, that shows that its history and geography are accurate. However, it doesn't confirm that what Jesus Christ said is right. Spiritual truths cannot be proved or disproved by archaeological discoveries" (Strobel quoting McKay 127).

2. "Archaeology does not prove the Bible to be the word of God. All it can do is confirm the basic historicity or authenticity of the narrative. It can show that a certain incident fits into the time it purports to be from" (McDowell quoting Wright 370).

B. Archaeology is not perfect.

1. "[Archaeology] has continued to cast light, whether implicitly or explicitly, on many of the Bible's customs, cultures, and settings during various periods of history. On the other hand, archaeology has also given rise to some real problems with regard to its findings. Thus, its work is an ongoing one that cannot be foreclosed too quickly or used merely as a confirming device. But despite its problems, archaeology has done much to further the cause of the reliability of the Bible" (Kaiser 98).

2. "One needs to realize that archaeology has not completely refuted the 'radical critics'. Burrows is quite clear on this point; 'It is even more untrue to say that the fundamental attitudes and methods of modern scientific criticism have been refuted'" (McDowell quoting Burrows 372).

C. See my three presuppositions at beginning of outline. They certainly apply here. I will restate just one here as it applies:

I believe that when in doubt, the Bible is correct. We are finite human beings who were not present during the recording of biblical history. We can't know all the details and events of biblical times. We are not able to see what the writers themselves saw. In addition, we must remember that oftentimes, further

archaeological discovery has solved a problem or resolved an apparent contradiction.

Archaeological Discoveries: Examples of Biblical Affirmation

A. Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts, is considered to be an extremely accurate historian by liberal and conservative scholars (Strobel quoting McKay 129). However, this was not always the case. For a while, people thought Luke to be off in his recording of details and such. It was only after archaeological research had shed light on Luke's writings that scholars changed their views of his accuracy. For example:

1. Luke 3:1 refers to Lysanias as the tetrarch of Abilene in around 27 A.D. For years scholars thought Luke was mistaken because Lysanias, as it was believed, was not a tetrarch but rather the ruler of Chalcis 50 years earlier. It was suggested that if Luke couldn't get this right, why trust him on other matters? However, an inscription was found later (from the time of Tiberius around 14 to 37 A.D.) naming Lysanias as tetrarch in Abila near Damascus just like Luke had written. It turned out that there were two government officials named Lysanias (Strobel 130).

2. After thirty years of study, Sir William Ramsay concluded "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy... this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians" (McDowell quoting Ramsay 63).

3. "Again archaeology had answered another challenge to Luke. And given the large portion of the New Testament written by him, it's extremely significant that Luke has been established to be a scrupulously accurate historian, even in the smallest details" (Strobel quoting McKay 131).

4. If it can be established that Luke is trustworthy in his details and geography, and it has, then this increases our level of trust in Luke regarding the rest of the history he tells us:

"Here is the bottom line: 'If Luke was so painstakingly accurate in his historical reporting...on what logical basis may we assume he was credulous or inaccurate in his reporting of matters that were far more important, not only to him but to others as well?'" (Strobel quoting McKay 132). "Matters, for example, like the resurrection of Jesus, the most influential evidence of his deity, which Luke says was firmly established by 'many convincing proofs' (Acts 1:3)" (Strobel 132).

5. For more details of Luke's accuracy and the archaeological evidence surrounding this author's historical writings, see McDowell 63-66 and Strobel 129-132.

B. Pool of Bethesda: Excavations in 1888 near St. Anne's Church in Jerusalem, in the quarter called Bezetha, revealed the remains of an ancient church building. Beneath this lay a crypt. On the north wall of the crypt were "distinguished traces of an old fresco representing the angel troubling the water. Clearly those who built this structure believed that it marked the site of the pool of Bethesda. And subsequent excavations below the crypt showed that they were right: a flight of steps was uncovered leading down to a pool with five shallow porticoes on its north side" (Bruce 94).

C. Yhohnn Yehohanan: (death around A.D. 70) In 1968 the skeletal remains of a crucified man were discovered in a burial cave outside of Jerusalem. It was a monumentous discovery and here is why: even though the Romans were known to have crucified thousands of victims, the remains of a crucified victim had never been discovered. "The condition of the remains unearthed...dramatically corroborated the Bible's description of the horrendous Roman method of execution. The bones were preserved in a stone burial box called an ossuary that was etched with the name Yhohnn Yehohanan... His open arms had been nailed to the crossbar, in the manner typically shown in crucifixion paintings. The knees had been doubled up and turned sideways, and a single large iron nail had been driven through both heels. The nail still lodged in the heel bone of one foot" (Sheler 110-111).

This discovery has also posed a powerful counter argument to the objection held by some scholars that the Gospels didn't get it right in regards to the burial of Jesus. The argument is that the Romans would usually bury crucified victims in a common grave or leave them on the cross to be eaten by birds and animals. Thus, skeptics would say, Jesus would not have been buried in a private tomb. However, along with affirming the Bible's account of how Romans executed their victims, this is clear evidence of a crucified man having been buried in a private grave just like Jesus. This is very consistent with the biblical account (Sheler 111).

D. Caiaphas: Workers building a water park two miles south of the Temple Mount in 1990 accidentally broke through the ceiling of an ancient burial chamber dating back to the first century. Inside this chamber was discovered twelve limestone burial boxes called ossuaries. Inside one of the ossuaries were the bones of a sixty- year-old man while the outside of the limestone box had the inscription Yehoseph bar Qayafa — Joseph, son of Caiaphas. "Experts identified the remains as almost certainly those of Caiaphas the high priest of Jerusalem, who according to the gospels, ordered the arrest of Jesus, interrogated him, and handed him over

to Pontius Pilate for execution. While the gospels refer to him merely as Caiaphas, the historian Josephus gives his complete name as "Joseph, who was called Caiaphas" — similar to the wording of the ossuary inscription. Never before had archaeologists recovered the actual remains of a New Testament figure" (Sheler 111-112).

E. Pontius Pilate: "In 1961 an Italian archaeologist, Antonio Frova, discovered an inscription at Caesarea Maritima on a stone slab which at the time of the discovery was being used as a section of steps leading into the Caesarea theater. The inscription in Latin contained four lines, three of which are partially readable. Roughly translated they are as follows: "Tiberium Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judea" (McDowell 67).

"The discovery of the so-called Pilate Stone has been widely acclaimed as a truly significant affirmation of biblical history. Although the writings of Josephus and Philo late in the first century have also attested to the existence of Pilate as procurator of Judea between 26 and 27 A.D., this is the first contemporary witness, and the only lithic inscription that bears his name and title. As archaeologists John Rousseau and Rami Arav observe: 'The inscription indisputably establishes Pilate's title, which has long been debated...' " (Sheler 112).

F. For more information on the Bible and archaeology, see Strobel 122-145, Geisler 46-52, Bruce 93-99, McDowell 61-68, 369-388.

V. Manuscript Evidence for the New Testament: Was the New Testament passed down to us accurately?

In this section I will address whether the New Testament that we read is the same thing that was originally written down almost two thousand years ago. I have heard people ask, "How do I know that the Bible I read today is the same that was written two-thousand years ago?" or "How can I know that people didn't add or take anything from the Scriptures as they were copying it?" These are good questions that are intricately connected to the manuscript evidence for the New Testament, my next area of discussion.

Some Quotes Regarding the Manuscript Evidence for the New Testament

A. "To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament" (McDowell quoting Montgomery 36).

B. "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament" (McDowell quoting Bruce 37).

C. "In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the document, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity" (McDowell quoting Zacharias 38).

D. "The works of several ancient authors are preserved to us by the thinnest possible thread of transmission...in contrast...the textual critic of the New Testament is embarrassed by the wealth of his material" (McDowell quoting Metzger 42).

New Testament Manuscripts

Stated above are some bold claims. I will address here why such confidence is rightly due the New Testament.

A. First of all, note that the New Testament was written down in the Greek language and the materials used for the Old and New Testaments were:

1. Papyrus made from the papyrus plant. The oldest papyrus fragment dates back to 2,400 B.C. (McDowell 18).

2. Vellum is calf skin. The oldest leather scrolls date back to 1,500 B.C. (18).

3. Parchment is the name given to "prepared skins of sheep, goats, antelope and other animals" that were shaved and scraped (18).

B. Number of Greek manuscripts: over 5,500 Greek manuscripts, in whole or in fragments, exist for the New Testament (Strobel quoting Metzger 81).

This is amazing when one considers that the next best attested ancient writing in terms of manuscript testimony is Homer's Iliad, the Bible to the Greeks, with less than 650 total copies (78).

C. It must also be known that no original manuscripts exist for the New Testament (or Old Testament). This is certainly not unique to the Bible.

D. Examples of Greek manuscripts that exist:

1. Papyrus manuscripts — 99 exist. These are the earliest fragments that contain one or more passages or books of the New Testament (Strobel quoting Metzger 78).

a. The most important papyri are the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri discovered in 1930. "Of these, Beatty Biblical Papyrus number one contains portions of the four gospels and the book of Acts, and it dates from the third century [A.D. 200]. Papyrus number two contains large portions of eight letters of Paul, plus portions of Hebrews, dating about the year 200 [A.D.]. Papyrus number three has a sizable section of the book of Revelation, dating from the third century" (Strobel quoting Metzger 79, McDowell 39).

b. The Bodmer Papyri are also very important. "The earliest of these, dating from about 200 [A.D.], contains about two-thirds of the gospel of John. Another papyrus, containing portions of the gospels of Luke and John, dates from the third century" (Strobel quoting Metzger, McDowell 39). In this collection is also included the earliest copy of the book of Jude and I and II Peter (McDowell 39).

c. John Rylands Papyri — 100-150 A.D. See earlier on this outline. Very important discovery.

d. At this point it is clear that these manuscripts were very close in date to that of the original New Testament documents (Strobel 79). Remember: the New Testament books were completed between 50-100 A.D.

2. Uncial manuscripts (written in all capital letters) — 306 exist. Several of these date back to the 200s A.D. (Strobel quoting Metzger 81).

The most important of these is the Codex Sinaiticus (codex meaning an ancient book rather than scroll). This is the only complete New Testament in uncial letters. It also contains half of the Old Testament. Codex Vaticanus is an incomplete New Testament. Both date back to about 350 A.D. (81, McDowell 39-40) For the amazing account of how Codex Sinaiticus was discovered see McDowell 40.

3. Minuscule manuscripts — 2,856 exist. Emerged around 800 A.D. and was a newer style of writing, more cursive in nature (81).

4. Lectionaries of the early church — 2,403 exist. These "contain New Testament Scripture in the sequence it was to be read in the early churches at appropriate times during the year" (81). "The earliest lectionary fragments are from the sixth

century, while complete MSS [manuscripts] date from the eighth century and later" (McDowell quoting Greenlee 42).

****Please note that the number of manuscripts documented will vary slightly between scholars "depending on how small fragments were to be considered manuscripts..." (McDowell 36).**

E. Other New Testament manuscripts:

1. "In addition to the Greek documents, he said, there are thousands of other ancient New Testament manuscripts in other languages. There are 8,000 to 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts, plus a total 8,000 in Ethiopic, Slavic, and Armenian. In all, there are about 24,000 manuscripts in existence" (Strobel quoting Metzger 81).

2. "Even if we had no Greek manuscripts today, by piecing together the information from these translations [other languages] from a relatively early date, we could actually reproduce the contents of the New Testament. In addition to that, even if we lost all the Greek manuscripts and the early translations, we could still reproduce the contents of the New Testament from the multiplicity of quotations in commentaries, sermons, letters, and so forth of the early church fathers" (76).

Quotes from Justin Martyr (133 A.D.), Irenaeus, Clement (150-212 A.D.), Origen (185-253/54 A.D.), Tertullian (160-220 A.D.), Hippolytus (170-235 A.D.), and Eusebius alone number 36,289 (McDowell 43). This is not exhaustive!

3. For more information on this see Strobel 76, 81, McDowell 41-45.

F. Comparing the various Greek manuscripts with each other:

1. "The more often you have copies that agree with each other, especially if they emerge from different geographical areas, the more you can cross-check them to figure out what the original document was like" (Strobel quoting Metzger 76).

2. When scholars compare and cross-check these manuscripts from different time periods, languages, and geographical locations, they discover that the manuscripts agree — they say almost exactly the same thing. The message does not differ or change in any significant way through out the centuries of transmission. If anyone changed the text it would show up in the manuscripts.

Errors in the Texts and the Transmission?

A. It is known that there are tens of thousands of variations or "copy errors" in the Greek manuscripts (Strobel 83). I have personally learned, as is also stated by Strobel, that there are over 200,000 textual variations (or textual variants) in the manuscripts (84).

B. Metzger goes on to explain this: "For example, sometimes the scribe's memory would play tricks on him. Between the time it took for him to look at the text and then write down the words, the order of the words might get shifted. He may write down the right words but in the wrong sequence. This is nothing to be alarmed at because Greek, unlike English, is an inflected language...one word functions as the subject of the sentence regardless of where it stands in the sequence; consequently, the meaning of the sentence isn't distorted if the words are out of what we consider to be the right order. So, yes, some variations among manuscripts exist, but generally they're inconsequential variations like that. " (83-84).

No matter how you arrange a sentence in Greek, it says the same thing. Metzger gives the example of "dog bites man." In English, the meaning of the sentence changes if you were to switch the wording to "man bites dog." Not true of Greek. No matter how you arrange the sentence, it will always read "dog bites man" (83). Copy errors like this are easily detected.

C. Spelling differences are another example of textual variations (84). Accidentally skipping or rewriting a word twice is another example of the variants that exist (Metzger XV). These mistakes represent innocent mistakes: errors that were not intentional.

Example of innocent mistake: Matthew 8:8 states "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed" (NIV). There are several Greek manuscripts that do not include the word "servant" in this verse, although most do. It is believed that the copyist who omitted the word did so on the basis that the word before and after "my servant" have the same Greek ending, making it easy to skip the word in between (Metzger 20). Note: even if the word "my servant" was taken out, it would not change the meaning of the text at all because "my servant" is implied in "will be healed."

D. At other times, scribes would intentionally add minor variation to the text. "Other divergencies in wording arose from deliberate attempts to smooth out grammatical or stylistic harshness, or to eliminate real or imagined obscurities of meaning in the text. Sometimes a copyist would substitute or would add what seemed to him to be a more appropriate word or form, perhaps derived from a

parallel passage... (Metzger XVI). These are often easily detected by New Testament scholars.

1. Example of intentional divergence: Matthew 5:22a states "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." If you look at the NIV textual variant at the bottom of the page, it states that some manuscripts say "brother without cause." So, some manuscripts read "anyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be subject to judgment." Other manuscripts do not have the two words, thus scholars believe that the "without cause" was added to make the concept of not being angry at a brother easier to follow.

"Although the reading with eike [English spelling of the Greek "without cause"] is widespread from the second century onwards, it is likely that the word was added by copyists in order to soften the rigor of the precept, than omitted as unnecessary" (Metzger 13).

2. For more information on the area of manuscript variants and what they actually are, see Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament by Bruce M. Metzger. The intro in this book is a good starting point.

E. Scholars are scrupulously honest about the textual variants. In most cases the variants, especially anything significant, are included in any good Bible translation, such as the NIV or NRSV. The word or verse in the Bible text will be followed by a lower case letter. Look at the bottom of the text, find the letter, and you will see the variant reading.

F. It is important to know that how the variants are counted is misleading. "If a single word is misspelled in two thousand manuscripts, that's counted as two thousand variants" (Strobel 84). So it is one mistake counted 2,000 times.

G. All in all, these variants do not change the meaning of the text nor do they change any doctrine of the church.

1. When asked by Strobel if he knew of any doctrines of the church that were in jeopardy as a result of the variants, Metzger responded: "I don't know of any doctrine that is in jeopardy... None" (Strobel quoting Metzger 84).

2. "The more significant variations do not overthrow any doctrine of the church. Any good Bible will have notes that will alert the reader to variant readings of any consequence. But, again, these are rare" (85).

3. "The New Testament, then, has not only survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity, but it has survived in a purer form than any other great book — a form that is 99.5 percent pure" (Strobel quoting Geissler and Nix 85).

I have learned this percentage to be from 97-99.5% pure.

4. "It must be said that the amount of time between the original composition and the next surviving manuscript is far less for the New Testament than for any other work in Greek literature....

Although there are certainly differences in many of the New Testament manuscripts, not one fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading" (McDowell quoting Dockery 35).

Comparison to Other Ancient Writings

How does the manuscript evidence for the New testament compare with other ancient writings in number and the time between the original and the earliest copy? This is the issue I will address here:

A. "The manuscript evidence for the New Testament was overwhelming when juxtaposed against other revered writings of antiquity — works that modern scholars have absolutely no reluctance treating as authentic" (Strobel 78).

B. "The number of available manuscripts of the New Testament is overwhelmingly greater than those of any other work of ancient literature...the earliest extant manuscripts of the New Testament were written much closer to the date of the original writing than is the case in almost any other piece of ancient literature" (McDowell quoting Greenlee 36).

C. "No one questions the authenticity of the historical books of antiquity because we do not possess the original copies. Yet we have far fewer manuscripts of these works than we possess of the New Testament" (McDowell quoting Glenn 36).

D. See chart in Josh McDowell's *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* page 38 for a comparison of the New Testament with several other ancient documents.

Conclusion

In summary, it is seen that the sheer number of manuscripts outweighs that of any other ancient document, that the time gap between the originals and the earliest copies is almost a nonissue considering the relatively short distance between the two, also in comparison to other ancient documents, and that the

transmission of the New Testament, God's word to us, has been carefully and accurately passed down to us through the many centuries.

A. "The last foundation for any doubt that the scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed" (Strobel quoting Kenyon 82).

B. "The importance of the sheer number of manuscript copies cannot be overstated. As with other documents of ancient literature, there are no known extant (currently existing) original manuscripts of the Bible. Fortunately, however, the abundance of manuscript copies make it possible to reconstruct the original with virtually complete accuracy" (McDowell quoting Geisler 35).

C. "Since scholars accept as generally trustworthy the writings of ancient classics even though the earliest manuscripts were written so long after the original writings and the number of extant manuscripts is in many instances so small, it is clear that the reliability of the text of the New Testament is likewise assured (McDowell quoting Greenlee 37).

D. "We can have great confidence in the fidelity with which this material has come down to us, especially compared with any other ancient literary work" (Strobel quoting Metzger 82).

E. For more information on the manuscript evidence see Strobel 70-85 and McDowell 33-45.

Conclusion

Throughout the pages of this outline, I have tried to make a case for the historical reliability of the New Testament, a case I believe to be well established. The New Testament displays integrity historically, has been passed on to us without significant alteration, has overwhelming manuscript attestation, especially in comparison to other ancient documents, has ancient extrabiblical witnesses corroborating New Testament events, figures, and beliefs, and has strong affirmation from archaeology in terms of New Testament culture, people, places, and events.

I do wish that hearing this information not simply be an academic exercise. If the information in this outline is true, then it means something for all of us, something much more than obtaining interesting knowledge. The Scriptures were not fashioned simply to tell an interesting story or to entertain us, although they may very well do that. They were recorded to preserve a message that is profound and yet simple — one that is applicable to and needed by every human heart. This

message is one that speaks to our disappointments, struggles, and sorrows, and yet to the surpassing beauty and delight that we find in and around us as well. It is only within the light of the coming Messiah for which the Old Testament longs and the rising from the dead of this Messiah in the New Testament, that we can find meaning, purpose, and hope amidst those disappointments and delights.

The Old Testament points to the coming Messiah, while the New Testament expounds on the message of that Messiah who came, died for us, and rose from the dead: Jesus Christ. The Bible simply does not paint a picture of Jesus Christ that indicates him to be a mere prophet or a good human teacher, as some would think. The Bible strongly portrays Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God, and God Himself. In light of what the Scriptures say about Jesus, everyone has the responsibility to make a decision about what they will think about Jesus and how they will respond to him — a decision not to be taken lightly. Here is a challenging thought to consider by C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' This is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to" (Lewis 52).

As you consider the information in this outline, it is my hope that you will be able to see Jesus Christ more clearly and that you will pursue him with a deeper faith and eagerness.

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