

“Why Did the Jews Not Say God’s Name Aloud When He Never Said Not To?”

Today I read an article on your website where a question was asked, [“If Jehovah Isn’t the Real Name of God, What Is?”](#) Jimmy Williams explained that even prior to Christ, it was Jewish tradition to substitute Adonai for the Tetragrammaton due to their ancient practice of not uttering the sacred name of God. However, this tradition was man’s tradition, the Jews’ tradition. Am I correct in saying that it was not God’s tradition? Did God ever command man not to vocalize his name? If He didn’t want us to call on him by his name, why did He even mention His name to Moses? Why did he tell Moses what to say when inquired of who sent him if He didn’t want people to know His name and use it? The Bible reveals to us that the Pharisees were corrupt even before Christ, so why do we carry on their tradition if we are followers of Christ? If He gave us His name in the ancient texts, what right does man have in taking it away?

You ask a very good question! On the one hand, you are quite correct in noting that God never explicitly commanded man not to vocalize His name. This was, as you observe, part of Jewish tradition—and not the commandment of God.

So why did this tradition arise? Largely because of one of God’s commandments! In Exodus 20:7 (one of the Ten Commandments) we read the following: “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”

It was because the Jews were so concerned not to misuse the name of God that this tradition arose. The Jews wanted to be absolutely certain that they did not misuse the name of the

Lord and so they read Adonai in place of YHWH. Thus, there was a good motive behind the tradition, even though the practice was never explicitly commanded by God. God's command was not to misuse His name—and clearly one can reverently speak (or pray) the name of the Lord in a way that does not constitute misuse. However, as we readily discern even in our own day, many people are only all too ready to misuse the name of the Lord. And this, I think, is partly why this Jewish tradition arose. It provides a “fence around the Law,” which keeps people from violating God's commandment. But constructing the fence itself was never actually commanded by God.

I hope this is helpful.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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See Also *Probe Answers Our Email*:

- [“If Jehovah Isn’t the Real Name of God, What Is?”](#)
 - [“Is It Wrong to Speak of God as Jehovah?”](#)
 - [“Jehovah Is the Only Name of God!”](#)

“Were Those Who Fell Away Ever Saved or Did They Lose Salvation?”

In referencing II Thess. 2:3, II Timothy 3:1-8 regarding the apostasy of professing church (Body of Christ?) and falling

away at the end time by seducing spirits, how does that correlate with Hebrews 6: 4-6? Are these people believers or not? Are they saved and God's elect or not? ...Are they eternally lost because they cannot crucify Christ again and put Him to an open shame? I was taught (once saved, always saved). Please enlighten, as I am puzzled. Thank you for your time and information.

Thanks for your letter. These are complicated questions and good Christian people (including scholars) often disagree about the details. I personally lean toward the view that the true believer is eternally secure in her relationship with Christ. But not all Christians (indeed, not all evangelical Christians) hold this view. Some believe that a genuine Christian can indeed fall away and be lost. Hebrews 6:4-6 is a passage often cited in this regard. But notice that, strictly speaking, this passage does not say that a true believer can lose her salvation. What it says is that if such a person falls away (i.e., commits willful apostasy) it is impossible to renew that person again to repentance. This may mean that the person has sinned so grievously, and their heart has been so hardened in the process, that they simply will not repent. But their failure to repent does not necessarily mean that they are therefore eternally lost. Thus, I personally do not see this passage as decisive in this debate.

Ultimately, one must weigh all of the biblical evidence pertaining to this issue. It is my view that the evidence, considered in its entirety, is more consistent with the eternal security of the believer, than with the notion that one of God's elect might ultimately fall away and be eternally lost. Here, it seems to me, that Romans 8:28-39 and John 6:35-40 are particularly strong promises regarding the security of the believer.

Hope this helps. Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

“How Can I Have a Better Relationship With Angels?”

Dear Sir / Madam,

I live in Ghana [West Africa] and am a Christian who is seriously looking for a possible and better way to strengthening my relationships with the Angels. I actually want to have a physical angelic encounter, even though I might have had a spiritual experience, however, I wish that my physical encounter with the Angel will enable them act swiftly when I call upon them.

May I also know why is it that sometimes when we call the Angels in times of trouble they do not appear? Please do help me to have an encounter and also to have their swift response.

Dear _____,

Thanks for your letter. I want to strongly discourage you from attempting to contact angels. As a Christian, you should seek to strengthen and develop your relationship with the Lord—not with angels. The Bible nowhere tells us to seek to contact angels, and indeed, seeking such contacts may lead you to actually contact demons. If God wants to send an angelic messenger your way, He is fully able to do so. You do not need to seek contact with angels. Work on developing your relationship with the Lord through daily Bible reading, prayer, fellowship with other Christians who love and follow the Lord, etc. The Lord is fully able to meet all your needs as you look to Him and trust in Him. You shouldn't busy

yourself with trying to contact angels. If God wanted us to do such things, He would have told us to do so in the Bible. But He did not. He wants us to seek Him alone. Remember, Satan can masquerade as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Seeking to contact angels could lead to demonic deception. And believe me, you don't want to get involved with demons! So please, for your own spiritual well-being, focus your spiritual energies on developing your relationship with the One who created the angels—the Lord God almighty.

For more information on angels from the Probe website, please use the Search function at Probe.org to search the term “angels.”

I hope this advice is helpful and well-received.

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn, Probe Ministries

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“Did God Really Want Abraham to Sacrifice Isaac?”

When God originally told Abraham to sacrifice his son on the mountain did he mean it or was he just testing Abraham?

Genesis 22 indicates that God tested Abraham by telling him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering. Of course, God never intended to allow Abraham to actually follow through with the sacrifice. But it's important to remember that Abraham had no way of knowing (in advance) that God would stop him from actually sacrificing his son. Abraham apparently thought (and surely hoped) that this indeed might be the case

(v. 8—*Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.*).

On the other hand, he may have thought that God would have him follow through with it, and then subsequently raise Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19—*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.” He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*). Thus, from Abraham’s perspective this was a very real (and terrible) test, even though God never intended to allow Abraham to actually carry out the deed.

Hope this helps.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“How Can Elijah and Enoch Be Killed in Glorified Bodies?”

Elijah and Enoch were taken by God. [In Genesis 5:24, Enoch “walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” In 2 Kings 2:11, Elijah “went up by a whirlwind to heaven.”] **Therefore, I assume they are in a glorified body. How can they be killed if they are in a glorified body?**

Thanks for your question. I'm guessing that you're assuming that Enoch and Elijah will be the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11. This interpretation may (or may not) be correct. The two witnesses are never named, and there is no way to know whether these two individuals are Enoch and Elijah or not. They may be two entirely different people, who come in the spirit and power of Enoch and Elijah, say, without actually being those two men. This would be similar to the ministry of John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah (see Luke 1:17). This actually makes more sense to me.

However, if Enoch and Elijah are the two witnesses then, yes, they will have to be in non-glorified bodies that are still subject to death. But we shouldn't think that Enoch and Elijah have already received glorified bodies. After all, the resurrection of the righteous dead has not yet taken place (except for Jesus). Enoch and Elijah, along with all the other saints, are still waiting to receive their glorified bodies. This won't happen until the resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20. Finally, since Enoch and Elijah never actually died, if this interpretation is correct, then we might view this as their time to do so. Thus, while I am personally inclined to take the former view (above), I do not think there is any problem adopting the latter view I've just enunciated. Of course, the truth may be different than either of these views, but we don't need to concern ourselves with that right now.

Hope this helps.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

“Your Article on Edgar Cayce Can Hurt Christian Believers!”

I had previously ignored the anti-Cayce article on your web site, assuming that you had a right to your opinion and that you probably would not want to hear mine. It has come to my attention, however, that this propaganda has the potential to create harm and confusion for believers who might otherwise be helped by the Edgar Cayce readings.

While some of the things in your article are relatively true, some of your facts are patently false. It is shameful for a ministry that claims to do research to post an article that relies almost exclusively on secondary sources while completely ignoring what was actually said in the Cayce readings-a body of information that is readily available to anyone.

Probably the most egregious statement is: Cayce came to believe that Jesus was not the unique Son of God. Here is a quote (similar to thousands of other quotes) from a typical reading:

As to how to meet each problem: Take it to Jesus! He is thy answer. He is Life, Light and Immortality. He is Truth, and is thy elder brother. Will ye open and let Him in? For in Him is strength, not in the law, not in the man, not in the multitudes of men, nor of conditions or circumstance. For He ruleth, He maketh them-every one. For hath it not been given or told thee, hath it not been known in thine experience that “He is the Word, He maketh all that was made, and without Him there was nothing made that was made”? And He liveth in the

hearts and the souls of those who seek to do His biddings. This, then, is not idealistic-but an ideal! What would Jesus have me do regarding every question in thy relationships with thy fellow man, in thy home, in thy problems day by day. This rather should be the question, rather than What shall I do? Cayce reading #1326-1

I believe that thousands of people have come to a closer walk with Jesus through the encouragement given in these readings. I would agree that these things should be approached with a gift of discernment and tested for their fruits. But how can you shamelessly attempt to associate this work (as many others have done) with occultic, Spiritualistic, channeling, doctrines of demons, etc,? Surely you dont need to be warned not to speak against gifts of the Spirit. If Cayces gift was actually a gift of the Holy Spirit, then to call it demonic or Satanic would put a person in danger of being like those who accused Jesus of being demon possessed. You might at least invoke the wisdom of old Gamaliel (See Acts 5:22-42) and be careful that you are not fighting against God.

You have a wonderful opportunity to speak to many people. If you do keep Lou Whitworths article on your web site I would urge you to at least post this message along with those of others who have responded to it. I will be looking forward to hearing from you.

Wishing you many blessings in Christ,

Thank you for your letter. And thank you for the respect with which it is written. Lou Whitworth is no longer with Probe Ministries. However, I am sending your letter to someone who can decide whether or not to keep Lou's article on our website. This is not a decision that I can make.

I have also written an article entitled, ["The Worldview of Edgar Cayce"](#). Although I also had to rely on some secondary source material, this material was almost entirely from a

“pro-Cayce” perspective. And all of it (I think) would be endorsed by the A.R.E.

I’m sure you’ve done a great deal of research in this area. However, my own study convinced me that the only way I could affirm that the worldview revealed in the Edgar Cayce readings was Christian would be to redefine “Christianity” to mean something other than what all the orthodox creeds and confessions of the Christian church have understood it to mean. I’m afraid that I honestly do not believe that the worldview of the readings is consistent with biblical Christianity.

If you happen to embrace an “unorthodox” understanding of Christianity (defined relative to the historic orthodoxy represented in the creeds and confessions shared by virtually all conservative Christian denominations – e.g. Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and the various Protestant groups), then of course our disagreement will really be about Christianity – not Edgar Cayce. If this is the case, I’m afraid there won’t be much point in dialogue. I’m already convinced that the “orthodox” understanding of Christianity is true (e.g. The Nicene Creed, etc.) – and am already quite familiar with the unorthodox forms and expressions of “Christianity.”

Thanks again for writing. I sincerely wish you well.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

“Christianity Teaches Four Gods, Right?”

The Bible clearly states that there is only one God. Deuteronomy 6:4 states, “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.” The Father is obviously called God as seen throughout the Bible. No one will argue that point. So there is one member of the Trinity, the Father.

Jesus the Son, is a separate person but He is also called God. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Holy Spirit is also a separate person, and He is also called God.

Let me see if I got this right. Please correct me if I’m wrong.

God is a trinity, composed of three divine persons, namely, the Father, Son, and holy spirit. God is also the Father, the first person of the first God who is a trinity. God is also the Son, the second person of the first God who is a trinity. God is also the holy spirit, the third person of the first God who is a trinity.

All of this means that there are four Gods. One three-person God and three single-person Gods. But to avoid the stigma of polytheism, all four Gods are really one God.

Did I get that right?

I don’t know if you really wanted a response or not, since it seems like you may have just been trying to have some fun. But obviously no orthodox trinitarian Christian would subscribe to the doctrine as you have characterized it.

Actually, you basically got it right when you wrote: “God is a

trinity, composed of three divine persons, namely, the Father, Son, and holy spirit." In other words, God just "is" the unity of the three divine persons. Traditionally, this has been expressed by saying that God is one in essence, three in subsistence. Trinitarian Christians do not propose the absurd (and logically contradictory) notion that there is only one God, and yet (somehow) there are three Gods. That would clearly be incoherent. Rather, we maintain that there is only one God (monotheism) who mysteriously subsists as three distinct persons (Trinitarianism).

Consider an analogy (which I take from the Christian philosopher William Lane Craig). Cerberus was a three-headed dog that guarded the entrance to Hades in Greek mythology. Cerberus, therefore, was one dog with three heads. Now we could imagine that each head constituted a distinct center of consciousness. We could even give them names, say, Spike, Bowser, and Rover. Spike would be conscious of being Spike, but also of being Cerberus. He would also be conscious of not being either Bowser or Rover. The same could be said, in an appropriate way, regarding the conscious experience of both Bowser and Rover. Now consider Cerberus as a spiritual, disembodied entity. You have one being, Cerberus, who has three distinct centers of consciousness (i.e. Spike, Bowser, and Rover). This is something akin, I think, to what the Trinitarian maintains about the nature of God, recognizing, of course, that God is an infinitely higher being than any merely finite being. I could write more, but you get the idea. Hopefully this analogy will help you better understand what Christians maintain about the nature of God. Of course, it's only an analogy—and to ridicule it for that reason would really be rather petty. I offer it solely as a way of making this doctrine a bit more comprehensible, while nonetheless acknowledging that there is genuine mystery here as well.

Best wishes as you continue to explore and examine Christian doctrine!

“What About Ghosts in a Haunted House?”

I've found your site helpful as I create a bible study on spirituality and dangerous "spiritualties." I read over Michael Gleghorn's ["Communicating with the Dead,"](#) but I felt it didn't deal directly with my question for my Sunday School class this week: What does the Bible want us to think about ghosts and supposed ghostly encounters? Several people in our church have experienced what they call ghosts in their homes, and I want to explore what the Bible says about that during our class. Michael's essay spoke about the small chance that souls from heaven, like Lazarus's and Abraham's, could return for very special occasions; what about the weird things that fall outside of human experience in a so-called haunted house? Should we always assume those are evil spirits parading as ghosts? What Bible verses help us to understand those things?

As I argue in my article, the Bible seems to suggest that it is a very rare event for a person who has died to return to earth to communicate some message to those still living. Also, given that the rich man was not able to return to warn his brothers (even though he wanted to), it seems that a dead person could only return with the permission of God (as one supposes was the case with Samuel returning to Saul to pronounce God's judgment upon him, or with Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration). If this is correct, then I think that we would have to regard the vast majority of ghostly sightings, etc., to be either visions

(caused by God or some other power), or hallucinations (caused by drugs, lack of sleep, sickness, psychological problems, a close emotional bond with the deceased, etc.), or demons. Of course, as I said, there may also be the rare instance when God allows a deceased person to return for some reason. In addition, I suppose a ghostly encounter could also be explained in terms of an angelic visitation.

The bottom line, I think, is this: when it comes to questions of this sort, I don't think the Bible speaks clearly (or explicitly) enough to the issue for us to be dogmatic. There are many possible options for the sort of phenomena you mention—and each would have to be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis.

Morally and spiritually speaking, the Bible seems much more concerned to warn us against trying to communicate with the dead than it does in answering our questions about the nature of ghostly encounters, etc. This, I think, is the really important point: we are forbidden to attempt to make contact with the dead. If God wants to send someone back with a message, that's His business. Ours is to obey His commands. Having said this, however, I personally think that most ghostly sightings are probably either visions or hallucinations. Some may be demonic, others angelic. Rarest of all, I think, is the actual return of a dead person, but even this (as I've said) is not impossible—assuming that God commands it for some reason.

I hope this helps a little.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“Couldn’t Jesus’ Disciples Have Just Fabricated Fulfilled Prophecy Claims?”

First of all I’d like to thank you for helping me so much. You have really cleared up a lot of questions I’ve had about my faith in Christ and have given me some great answers. I have another question for you that I have been struggling with. Couldn’t the disciples have made it look like Jesus fulfilled all those prophecies, and simply fabricated them?

This may seem possible in some instances, but in many others it becomes very difficult to believe. For example, consider those prophecies which were fulfilled during the last week of Jesus’ life (i.e. from the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem through His death by crucifixion). Quite frankly, these events were observed by too many people for the disciples to have fabricated them. Not only did Jesus’ loyal followers witness these events, but so did unbelieving Jews and Romans (the very people responsible for executing Jesus). These events are too well-established historically for anyone to seriously suggest that the disciples fabricated them. What the skeptic will typically do, therefore, is simply deny that such Old Testament texts are truly prophetic. They’ll argue that the disciples misinterpreted these texts when they applied them to Jesus. It would be unusual to seriously argue that the disciples made up stories about how Jesus fulfilled these prophecies. In this sense, the debate really tends to be over how these Old Testament passages should be interpreted, and whether such texts can be fairly applied to Jesus’ life and ministry. Although this is a technical and complicated debate, I’m convinced that these texts do accurately prophesy certain

things about the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Hope this helps.

Michael Gleghorn, Probe Ministries

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“How Do We Know Eyewitnesses to Jesus’ Ministry Ever Existed?”

I came across your website and looking for first-hand eyewitness evidence of Jesus’ ministry. I wish to quote a line you [wrote](#):

In the early years of the church the story of Jesus was being told and retold by eyewitnesses of these events.

My question is, where are the original source documents that cite (at least some of) these eyewitnesses? Many Christian apologetics claim that there were many eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus. The question is, what evidence do we have that such eyewitnesses even existed?

Thanks for your question; it’s a good one. My first observation may sound a bit silly, although I don’t intend it to be so. But when I think about it, if there were no eyewitnesses to Jesus’ ministry, if literally no one witnessed anything of his teachings, miracles, etc., then it seems that

we would simply have no record of these events at all (for no one would have witnessed them). But in fact, conservative scholars agree that we have a great deal of eyewitness testimony recorded in the New Testament documents themselves. For instance, the gospels of Matthew and John were written by two of Jesus' original disciples. So both of these gospels are based on eyewitness testimony. Early church tradition claims that Mark's gospel was based on the preaching of the apostle Peter (another eyewitness of Jesus' life and ministry). And Luke's gospel begins by noting the importance of eyewitness testimony to the ministry of Jesus:

Luke 1:1-4 says,

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.

In addition, Peter (in his second epistle) wrote: "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."

Similarly, the apostle John begins his first letter this way:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 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 (1 John 1:1-4).

Finally, Paul writes of seeing Jesus after his resurrection: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?" (1 Corinthians 9:1)

These are just a few examples. Others could be offered as well. But these are sufficient (I think) to show that the earliest records we have of the life and ministry of Jesus claim to be solidly grounded in eyewitness testimony.

I hope this is helpful.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

Thank you for your reply, and I thank you for your efforts to answer my question. I appreciate that you took time out of your life to answer it.

However, what I am really after is a list of non-Biblical sources that back up the Biblical sources. If the events of Jesus really happened, it would be logical to assume that there would be plenty more writings of this event. Well, this would at least appear logical in my mind.

I know there were at least two historians, Josephus and Tacitus, and also the Jewish writings of the Talmud. Why did these historians and sources only write a small amount? If Jesus really did turn water into wine, or fed 5,000 with two fishes, then this would attracted an incredible amount of attention.

It appears to me, and perhaps you can shed some light on this matter, that Christianity begun as a political movement whose ulterior motive was social control. It is only the fear of

Hell that ultimately connects people to the Christian view, including mine.

Anyway, any correspondence would be appreciated. I'm not trying to debate you, but seek earnestly for answers.

Good questions! I've written a brief article which deals with some of the evidence you're asking for. You can find it [here](#).

One of the best book-length treatments that I'm aware of is Gary Habermas's [*The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ.*](#)

Other helpful resources would be Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*, Craig Evans' *Fabricating Jesus*, and Robert Bowman and J. Komoszewski's *Putting Jesus in His Place*.

Finally, I would highly recommend the articles dealing with the Historical Jesus by William Lane Craig, which you can find [here](#).

These recommendations are all of high quality (some popular, some scholarly).

It's important to understand that the New Testament documents are our earliest and best sources of information about Jesus. Many people don't realize this, but it's a fact that even liberal scholars don't dispute. The New Testament was not originally written as a single volume. Rather, each book is an independent source of information about Jesus and early Christianity. In other words, what we have in the New Testament is not one source, but rather twenty-seven sources. Granted, many of these sources are authored by one individual (the apostle Paul), but my point is that these documents were originally separate, independent, sources of information. That's an important point to bear in mind.

After the New Testament documents (and assuming you don't include early Christian sources outside the Bible), the

earliest non-Christian testimony about Jesus that survives is that of the Jewish historian, Josephus (near the end of the first century). After Josephus, there is Tacitus (a Roman historian) and so on. Three things must be borne in mind here:

1. Most of the written sources from the first and second centuries are simply lost to history. Only a fraction of what was written at this time survives to our own day. Thus, there could have been other sources of information about Jesus which are simply not available to us 2000 years later.

2. It's really not strange that more non-Christian sources don't record information about Jesus. After all, Jesus was a poor Jewish teacher who spent most of his time outside Jerusalem. Since most non-Christian historians of that time focused their writings on great political figures, military leaders, etc., it's really not surprising that they wouldn't mention someone like Jesus. Indeed, what's actually surprising is that he IS mentioned by Josephus, Tacitus, etc. My point is this: Although Jesus is a hugely significant figure today, he was little known in the first century. The church is a worldwide phenomenon in our day, but it began as a very small offshoot of the Jewish religion. We shouldn't think that Jesus' name was a household term in the ancient world like it is today. The spread of Christianity took place over many centuries and continues today.

3. The Gospels (and other New Testament documents) should not be immediately discounted as reliable historical sources of information about Jesus. As I said, these are our earliest and best sources about Jesus. What's more, we have good reason to consider these sources as reliable sources of information about Jesus. In addition to the resources recommended previously, see also Craig Blomberg's *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*.

Finally, I can only give a very brief response by email. Please be sure to check out some of the resources I've

recommended above.

Michael Gleghorn

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