

“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

© 2009 Probe Ministries

“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

“Where Does the Bible Say Jesus is 100% Man and 100% God?”

Where in the bible can I find that Jesus is 100% man and 100% God?

Thanks for your question. If you're looking for an exact quote, then I'm afraid that the Bible doesn't say this anywhere.

Why do Christians believe that Jesus was fully divine and fully human, then? Well, we look at what the Bible does teach and we seem to be compelled to adopt this view.

For example, Jesus claimed, “before Abraham was born, I am ” (John 8:58), clearly alluding to Exodus 3:14. He also claimed to be one with the Father (John 10:30-33). He acknowledged that he was the Christ, or Messiah (Mark 14:60-64; compare with Daniel 7:13-14). He also claimed that our eternal destinies hinged on our response to him (Luke 12:8-9).

In addition, Jesus is said to be the eternal word of God incarnate (John 1:1-3, 14). He is called the Creator and head of the church (Colossians 1:15-20). These are just a few of the passages which speak of Christ's deity or divinity.

Other passages speak of his humanity. For example, Jesus was conceived and born of a woman (Matthew 1:18-25). He thus had a human body. He experienced hunger, thirst and fatigue (Matt. 4:2; John 4:6; etc.). He suffered and died (John 19:34). He

could be heard, seen and touched (1 John 1:1). He evidenced the emotional and intellectual qualities of a human being (see Matt. 26:37 and Mark 9:21).

Again, there are plenty of other passages concerning Jesus' humanity. When theologians try to put all of this together, they conclude that the Bible teaches that Jesus was both divine and human.

Hope this is helpful.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2009 Probe Ministries

“Did Abraham Speak Hebrew?”

What language did Abraham speak? What I really want to know is, did Abraham speak Hebrew?

I honestly don't know for sure what language Abraham spoke. It would have surely been one of the ancient Semitic languages and thus would have been quite similar to ancient Hebrew in many respects. Easton's Bible Dictionary has this to say about the Hebrew language and the language of Abraham:

“It is one of the class of languages called Semitic, because they were chiefly spoken among the descendants of Shem.

When Abraham entered Canaan it is obvious that he found the language of its inhabitants closely allied to his own. Isaiah (19:18) calls it “the language of Canaan.” Whether this

language, as seen in the earliest books of the Old Testament, was the very dialect which Abraham brought with him into Canaan, or whether it was the common tongue of the Canaanitish nations which he only adopted, is uncertain; probably the latter opinion is the correct one...

The Hebrew is one of the oldest languages of which we have any knowledge. It is essentially identical with the Phoenician language... The Semitic languages, to which class the Hebrew and Phoenician belonged, were spoken over a very wide area: in Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Arabia, in all the countries from the Mediterranean to the borders of Assyria, and from the mountains of Armenia to the Indian Ocean. The rounded form of the letters, as seen in the Moabite stone, was probably that in which the ancient Hebrew was written down to the time of the Exile, when the present square or Chaldean form was adopted."

If you've never heard of the Biblical Studies Foundation website, I would strongly encourage you to check it out at www.netbible.com. They have hundreds of articles on biblical and theological issues.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“Why Did Jesus Have to be

Baptized?"

If Jesus is truly God, then why did he have to be baptized?

You ask a very good question. Indeed, John the Baptist also wondered about baptizing Jesus (Matthew 3:14). John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). But Jesus had no need for repentance or forgiveness (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5). Why, then, did Jesus seek to be baptized by John?

There may be a clue in how Jesus responds in Matthew 3:15: "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Baptism is a form of identification. Although Jesus had no sin to repent of, He seems to have wanted to be identified with John's message of the need for repentance. This seems to be supported by Jesus' own message (Matthew 4:17; Mark 2:15; etc.). Also, Jesus probably wanted to be identified with those receiving John's baptism, namely, sinners. After all, Jesus came to be identified with us, and to die as a substitute for our sins (see 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Interestingly, Jesus' death and resurrection, which is the basis for our forgiveness, is linked with baptism in passages like Romans 6:3-4.

At any rate, these are some of the reasons why I think Jesus sought to be baptized by John. I hope this information helps a bit.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“Does God Really Know ALL?”

Ex 16:4“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.’”

Deut 13:3“**You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.**”

I have a problem responding to those verses; at first glance, they seem to make his point because they seem to imply that God tests people so that He “might know” if they love Him. Deut. 13:3 is especially difficult for me. This does not seem to change in the different versions of the Bible I have referred to. Is there something about the definition of the terms or something else that I might be missing in the text?

There are two primary ways of responding to this issue. First, we must point out that other passages of Scripture speak of God’s omniscience, including His knowledge of the future (see Psalm 139:1-4, 16; Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 46:9-10; Acts 1:24; Romans 8:29-30; Hebrews 4:13; etc.). If Scripture does not contradict itself, then there must be some way to reconcile these apparent discrepancies.

Second, as Geisler and Howe point out in *When Critics Ask*, “What God knows by cognition, and what is known by demonstration, are different.” The Bible often speaks from a human perspective. Consider Geisler and Howe’s analogy: “A math teacher might say, ‘Let’s see if we can find the square root of 49,’ and then, after demonstrating it, declare, ‘Now we know that it is 7,’ even though she knew from the beginning

what the answer was" (p. 52). I think it's the same way with God.

Shalom,


Michael Gleghorn

© 2008 Probe Ministries

Reasonable Faith

Reasonable Faith

One of the finest Christian philosophers of our day is William Lane Craig. Although he's become very well known for his debates with atheists and skeptics, he's also a prolific writer. To date, he has authored or edited over thirty books and more than a hundred scholarly articles.^{1} His published work explores such fascinating topics as the evidence for the existence of God, the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, divine foreknowledge and human freedom, and God's relationship to time. In 2007 he started a web-based apologetics ministry called Reasonable Faith (www.reasonablefaith.org). The site features both scholarly and popular articles written by Craig, audio and video recordings of some of his debates, lectures, and interviews, answers to questions from his readers, and much more.

 But before he launched the Reasonable Faith Web site, Craig had also authored a book by the same title. One of the best apologetics books on the market, a revised and updated third edition was recently released. His friend and colleague, the philosopher J. P. Moreland, endorsed Craig's ministry with

these words:

It is hard to overstate the impact that William Lane Craig has had for the cause of Christ. He is simply the finest Christian apologist of the last half century, and his academic work justifies ranking him among the top one percent of practicing philosophers in the Western world. Besides that, he is a winsome ambassador for Christ, an exceptional debater, and a man with the heart of an evangelist. . . . I do not know of a single thinker who has done more to raise the bar of Christian scholarship in our generation than Craig. He is one of a kind, and I thank God for his life and work. [\[2\]](#)

Although the book has been described as “an admirable defense of basic Christian faith,” [\[3\]](#) many readers will find the content quite advanced. According to Craig, “*Reasonable Faith* is intended primarily to serve as a textbook for seminary level courses on Christian apologetics.” [\[4\]](#) For those without much prior training in philosophy, theology, and apologetics, this book will make for some very demanding reading in places. But for those who want to seriously grapple with an informed and compelling case for the truth of Christianity, this book will richly repay one’s careful and patient study.

Although we cannot possibly do it justice, in the remainder of this article we will briefly consider at least some of the reasons why Craig believes that biblical Christianity is an eminently reasonable faith.

The Absurdity of Life Without God

Imagine for a moment that there is no God. What implications would this have for human life? Science tells us that the universe is not eternal, but that it rather had a beginning. But if there is no God, then the universe must have come into being, uncaused, out of nothing! What’s more, the origin of

life is nothing more than an unintended by-product of matter, plus time, plus chance.{5} No one planned or purposed for life to arise, for if there is no God, there was no one to plan or purpose it. And human beings? We are just the unpredictable result of a long evolutionary process that never had us in mind. In fact, if one were to rewind the history of life to its beginning, and allow the evolutionary process to start anew, it's virtually certain that none of us would be here to think about it! After all, without an intelligent Agent guiding this long and complicated process, the chances that our species would accidentally emerge a second time is practically zero.{6}

Depressing as it is, this little thought experiment provides the appropriate backdrop for Craig's discussion of the absurdity of life without God. In his view, if God does not exist, then human life is ultimately without meaning, value, or purpose. After all, if human beings are merely the accidental by-products of the unintended forces of nature, then what possible meaning *could* human life have? If there is no God, then we were not created for a *purpose*; we were merely "coughed" into existence by mindless material processes.

Of course, some might wonder why we couldn't just create some meaning for our lives, or give the universe a meaning of our own. But as Craig observes, "the universe does not really acquire meaning just because *I* happen to give it one . . . for suppose I give the universe one meaning, and you give it another. Who is right? The answer, of course, is neither one. For the universe without God remains objectively meaningless, no matter how we regard it."{7}

Like it or not, if God does not exist, then the universe—and our very lives—are ultimately meaningless and absurd. The difficulty is, however, that no one can really live consistently and happily with such a view.{8} Although merely recognizing this fact does absolutely nothing to show that God actually exists, it should at least motivate us to sincerely

investigate the matter with an open heart and an open mind. So let's now briefly consider some of the *reasons* for believing that there really is a God.

The Existence of God

In the latest edition of *Reasonable Faith*, Craig offers a number of persuasive arguments for believing that God does, in fact, exist. Unfortunately, we can only skim the surface of these arguments here. But if you want to go deeper, his book is a great place to start.

After a brief historical survey of some of the major kinds of arguments that scholars have offered for believing that God exists, Craig offers his own defense for each of them. He begins with a defense of what is often called the *cosmological* argument. This argument takes its name from the Greek word *kosmos*, which means "world." It essentially argues from the existence of the cosmos, or world, to the existence of a First Cause or Sufficient Reason for the world's existence.^{9} Next he defends a *teleological*, or design, argument. The name for this argument comes from the Greek word *telos*, which means "end." According to Craig, this argument attempts to infer "an intelligent designer of the universe, just as we infer an intelligent designer for any product in which we discern evidence of purposeful adaptation of means to some end (*telos*)."^{10} After the design argument, he offers a defense of the *moral* argument. This argument "implies the existence of a Being that is the embodiment of the ultimate Good," as well as "the source of the objective moral values we experience in the world."^{11} Finally, he defends what is known as the *ontological* argument. Ontology is the study of being, and this much-debated argument "attempts to prove from the very concept of God that God exists."^{12}

Taken together, these arguments provide a powerful case for the existence of God. As Craig presents them, the cosmological

argument implies the existence of an eternal, immaterial, unimaginably powerful, personal Creator of the universe. The design argument reveals an intelligent designer of the cosmos. The moral argument reveals a Being who is the transcendent source and standard of moral goodness. And the ontological argument shows that if God's existence is even possible, then He must exist!

But suppose we grant that all of these arguments are sound. Why think that *Christianity* is true? Many *non-Christian* religions believe in God. Why think that Christianity is the one that got it right? In order to answer this question we must now confront the central figure of Christianity: Jesus of Nazareth.

The Son of Man

When the previous edition of *Reasonable Faith* was published in 1994, most New Testament scholars thought that Jesus had never really claimed to be the Messiah, or Lord, or Son of God. But a lot has happened in the intervening fourteen years, and "the balance of scholarly opinion on Jesus' use of Christological titles may have actually tipped in the opposite direction."[13](#)

For example, we have excellent grounds for believing that Jesus often referred to himself as "the Son of Man."[14](#) Although some believe that in using this title Jesus was merely referring to himself as a human being, the evidence suggests that he actually meant much more than that. Note, for example, that "Jesus did not refer to himself as 'a son of man,' but as '*the* Son of Man.'"[15](#) His use of the definite article is a crucially important observation, especially in light of Daniel 7:13-14.

In this passage Daniel describes a vision in which "one like a son of man" comes before God with the clouds of heaven. God

gives this person an everlasting kingdom and we are told that “all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him” (Dan. 7:14). It’s clear that Daniel’s “son of man” is much more than a human being, for he’s viewed as an appropriate object of worship. Since no one is worthy of worship but God alone (see Luke 4:8), the “son of man” must actually be divine, as well as human.

According to Mark, at Jesus’ trial the high priest pointedly asked him if he was the Christ (or Messiah), “the Son of the Blessed One.” Jesus’ response is astonishing. “I am,” he said, “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:61-62). Here Jesus not only affirms that he is the Messiah and Son of God, he also explicitly identifies himself with the coming Son of Man prophesied by Daniel.[{16}](#) Since we have excellent reasons for believing that Jesus actually made this radical claim at his trial, we’re once again confronted with that old trilemma: if Jesus really claimed to be divine, then he must have been either a lunatic, a liar, or the divine Son of Man!

Now most people would probably agree that Jesus was not a liar or a lunatic, but they might still find it difficult to accept his claim to divinity. They might wonder if we have any good reasons, independent of Jesus’ claims, for believing his claims to be true. As a matter of fact we do!

The Resurrection of Jesus

Shortly after Jesus’ crucifixion, on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter stood before a large crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem and made a truly astonishing claim: God had raised Jesus from the dead, thereby vindicating his radical personal claims to be both Lord and Messiah (see Acts 2:32-36). The reason this claim was so incredible was that the “Jews had no conception of a Messiah who, instead of triumphing over

Israel's enemies, would be shamefully executed by them as a criminal." [{17}](#) Indeed, according to the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, "anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse" (21:22-23). So how could a man who had been crucified as a criminal possibly be the promised Messiah? If we reject the explanation of the New Testament, that God raised Jesus from the dead, it's very difficult to see how early Christianity could have ever gotten started. So are there good reasons to believe that Jesus really was raised from the dead?

According to Craig, the case for Jesus' resurrection rests "upon the evidence for three great, independently established facts: the empty tomb, the resurrection appearances, and the origin of the Christian faith." [{18}](#) He marshals an extensive array of arguments and evidence in support of each fact, as well as critiquing the various naturalistic theories which have been proposed to avoid the resurrection. He concludes by noting that since God exists, miracles are possible. And once one acknowledges this, "it's hard to deny that the resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation of the facts." [{19}](#)

This brings us to the significance of this event. According to the German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg:

The resurrection of Jesus acquires such decisive meaning, not merely because someone . . . has been raised from the dead, but because it is Jesus of Nazareth, whose execution was instigated by the Jews because he had blasphemed against God. If this man was raised from the dead, then . . . God . . . has committed himself to him. . . . The resurrection can only be understood as the divine vindication of the man whom the Jews had rejected as a blasphemer. [{20}](#)

In other words, by raising Jesus from the dead, God has put His seal of approval (as it were) on Jesus' radical personal

claims to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and the divine Son of Man! This forces each of us to answer the same haunting question Jesus once asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15).

Notes

1. See "About William Lane Craig" at www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_william_lane_craig, accessed 22 August 2008.
2. J. P. Moreland, cited in William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008), 1.
3. C. Behan McCullagh, cited in Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 1.
4. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 12.
5. Ibid., 76.
6. In the minds of some people, this is a rather controversial claim. But it's been convincingly defended by naturalist authors like Stephen J. Gould and Michael Shermer. For a brief defense by Shermer, please see the articles on "Glorious Contingency" at www.metanexus.net/Magazine/ArticleDetail/tabid/68/tabid/72/Default.aspx?aid=27, accessed 4 September 2008.
7. Ibid., 79.
8. Ibid., 78.
9. Ibid., 98.
10. Ibid., 99-100.
11. Ibid., 104.
12. Ibid., 95.
13. Ibid., 301.
14. See Craig's discussion on pp. 315-318.
15. Ibid., 315.
16. Ibid., 317.
17. Ibid., 388.
18. Ibid., 360-61.
18. Ibid., 399.
20. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Jesu Geschichte und unsere

Geschichte," in *Glaube und Wirklichkeit* (Munche: Chr. Kaiser, 1975), 92-94; cited in Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 399.

© 2008 Probe Ministries

"Is Reiki Occultic?"

I recently pulled up your website when a friend of mine told me she has a counseling center that practices Reiki. Wondering what Reiki was, I began to search it out. Despite all the Christian voices that support it, I refuse to buy into it, and I feel it is the Holy Spirit working in me. I emailed my friend and told her of my concerns. One of her responses was, "In my mind healing is ultimately the result of God's love, whether it is a doctor doing a heart transplant or a Reiki master transmitting love through themselves." She feels it is "God's action occurring in and through people."

Is it the work of God to transport some energy through our hands to someone else? Doesn't sound right. What it all sounds like to me is an occult type practice that people have tried to squeeze into a Christian box and it's not quite fitting!

Thanks for your letter. I'm assuming you've already read my article on Reiki, but if not, here is a link to it: www.probe.org/reiki/.

I begin the article by briefly considering what Reiki is. I then look at whether or not there is scientific support for Reiki. I consider the success claims of Reiki, ask whether Christians should be concerned about it, and also whether all healing comes from God. If you haven't yet read the article, I would encourage you to do so.

Like you, I think there are reasons for Christians to be

concerned about Reiki. For one thing, as it's often represented, it has a very different understanding of "God" than biblical Christianity. Thus, when it claims that healing comes from "God," it is asserting something different from what a Christian would mean when he/she claims to have been healed by God. Second, the emphasis on spirit guides should cause us concern. The Bible never tells us to seek a spirit guide, but often warns us of deceptive and demonic spirits. Third, the Bible doesn't talk about a universal life force energy which we can learn to manipulate for health and healing. This sort of language is very foreign to a biblical worldview and is only at home (really) in an Eastern worldview, or one influenced by Eastern thought.

For these reasons and others (spelled out in my article), I think it's a mistake to get involved with Reiki. My perspective would really be the same as yours. Reiki sounds like "an occult type practice that people have tried to squeeze into a Christian box and it's not quite fitting."

I would gently challenge your friend to consider the many ways in which Reiki beliefs and practices seem so foreign (and even contrary) to the teachings of the Bible. For a bible-believing Christian, Reiki seems like a difficult practice to justify.

I hope this helps a bit. Please see my article for a bit more information.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“Where Are the References to Jesus From His Lifetime?”

I'm not a Christian but I have a great appreciation for a lot of the messages attributed to Jesus in the writings about him.

The idea that Jesus was, in fact, a real person seems to rely 100% on hearsay. I have read a lot of the strong arguments against a historical Christ and they all note the major flaw in the evidence you have put forth in your article: Not one of the men you named lived when Jesus supposedly did. All of their references to him are made by people born decades after the crucifixion supposedly happened. This holds true for every single reference I have ever seen. If there are any mentions of Jesus as a real person that were written or recorded during the time he supposedly lived, I would greatly appreciate you sending them to me. I say that not as a challenge to you but as someone who truly wants to know all there is to know about the subject. I am fascinated by this and I would hate to have made a decision without all of the available information.

I'm not disregarding any post mortem references to Jesus in history as being unimportant to the argument for his existence but I feel they would be excellent companions to support any actual contemporary evidence. I'm looking for any mention of him in the records of any historian living in his time. Such record keepers as Philo Judaeus or Pliny the Elder, who both lived in the area at the time that Jesus supposedly lived and died never mention him or any of the stories attributed to him in the New Testament. They are not the only reliable sources for such contemporary references but they certainly would have heard of Jesus Christ. Also, the Romans kept records but I have not heard of any mention of Jesus made by the Romans during his lifetime. This seems odd considering the fame and following Jesus is given in the stories of the Bible.

Thanks for your letter. I'm glad to see that you're researching this important issue and really taking it seriously.

I'll offer a few comments in response to your letter, but I will also list a few resources that will allow you to go much deeper than I can do over email. Also, although I have some knowledge in this area (and am interested in gaining more), I really don't have the same level of expertise as the resources that I will mention at the end of this letter.

First, by way of responding specifically to your main question, as far as I'm aware we have no written testimony regarding the life of Jesus that dates to his own lifetime.

On the other hand, I personally believe that it would be a rather unwarranted leap to draw the conclusion that, because of this, Jesus of Nazareth was not an actual historical person, or even to draw the conclusion that the information that we do have about him is therefore untrustworthy or unreliable. What many people don't realize is that the New Testament writings themselves, including the Gospels, constitute our earliest and best sources of historical information about the life and ministry of Jesus. And this fact is recognized not only by conservative scholars, but by the broad spectrum of religious and theological scholarship.

Moreover, even those scholars who doubt that the Gospels are historically reliable in all that they affirm would still acknowledge that they contain much reliable history about the life, ministry, and death of Jesus. With only a few exceptions, the vast majority of scholars qualified to comment on this issue would not hesitate for a moment to declare that Jesus of Nazareth was a real figure of history, nor would they hesitate to say that the Gospels give us much (or at least some) historically reliable information about him. To see this, one need only remember that even very radical New Testament scholars, like John Dominic Crossan, do not doubt

that Jesus was a real figure of history, nor do they doubt that the Gospels preserve at least some historically reliable information about him.

Additionally, some of the traditions about Jesus appear to be very early – far too early to have been contaminated by later, legendary developments. For example, the German commentator on Mark, Rudolph Pesch, has argued that the passion story in Mark's Gospel probably dates to within seven years of Jesus' death. This is because the High Priest is never mentioned by name in this section of the Gospel. It's as if I was to say something about what the "President" said today. You would know I was talking about George Bush (the current President). After the election, if I wanted to refer to something that George Bush said, I would have to specify that (for then a different President will be in power). Since Mark never mentions the High Priest by name, he is very likely referring to the High Priest that held power at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. But this was Caiphas, who ruled from A.D. 18 – 37. If Jesus was crucified in A.D. 30, then Mark's passion narrative must date to within seven years of Jesus death. This makes the legendary hypothesis extremely untenable – for legends simply do not arise that quickly.

Finally, please allow me to recommend some good books and articles. The questions raised in regard to Jesus must be dealt with in much more detail than I can do over email:

1. *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel
2. *The Historical Jesus* by Gary Habermas
3. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* by Craig Blomberg
4. *Reasonable Faith* (2008 edition) by William Lane Craig
5. *Reinventing Jesus* by Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace
6. William Lane Craig's website, www.reasonablefaith.org. Dr.

Craig has a number of scholarly articles on the historical Jesus available here:

www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer?pagename=scholarly_articles_historical_Jesus. Also, here is a link to a debate on the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection between Dr. Craig and Dr. Bart Ehrman:

www.holycross.edu/departments/crec/website/resurrection-debate-transcript.pdf. Dr. Ehrman is an ex-evangelical New Testament scholar and is a leading authority in his field. Hence, this debate will really give you two top scholars debating the historicity of Jesus' resurrection.

7. Articles about Jesus from the trustworthy Bible.org website: www.bible.org/topic.php?topic_id=6

Wishing you all the best in your continued research!

Michael Gleghorn

© 2008 Probe Ministries

“Will Greater Evil Merit Greater Punishment in Hell?”

Will those who have done greater evil on earth receive greater punishment in Hell?

I think so. Luke 12:47-48 seems to lend some justification to this view.

“That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.”

And consider Matthew 11:21-24:

“Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Of course, there is no reason that anyone need be sent to Hell. Even the most vile sinner can be cleansed and forgiven through genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16, etc.).

But for those who reject Christ and persist in their sin and disobedience, there does seem to be a biblical basis for believing that there are gradations of punishment in hell—just as there are different levels of reward in heaven (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, etc.).

Hope this helps.

Shalom in Him,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2008 Probe Ministries