

The Case for Christ - Reasons to Believe in the Reality of Christ

Dr. Ray Bohlin

Dr. Ray Bohlin summarizes the evidence found by Lee Strobel when researching the question: Is Jesus Christ really who the Bible says He is? He shows that we have strong evidence on every front that backs up our belief in Jesus as the Son of God. This important apologetic argument helps us understand the enduring value of Christianity.

Sometimes the Evidence Doesn't Stack Up

Skeptics around the world claim that Jesus either never said He was God or He never exemplified the activities and mindset of God. Either way they rather triumphantly proclaim that Jesus was just a man. Some will go so far as to suggest that He was a very moral and special man, but a man nonetheless. Well, Lee Strobel was just such a skeptic. For Strobel, there was far too much evidence against the idea of God, let alone the possibility that God became a man. God was just mythology, superstition, or wishful thinking.

As a graduate of Yale Law School, an investigative reporter, and eventual legal affairs editor for the *Chicago Tribune*, Strobel was familiar with the weighing of evidence. He was familiar with plenty of university professors who knew Jesus as an iconoclastic Jew, a revolutionary, or a sage, but not God. He had read just enough philosophy and history to support his skepticism.

As Strobel himself says,

As far as I was concerned, the case was closed. There was enough proof for me to rest easy with the conclusion that the divinity of Jesus was nothing more than the fanciful invention of superstitious people. Or so I thought. [\[1\]](#)

That last hesitation came as a result of his wife's conversion. After the predictable rolling of the eyes and fears of his wife being the victim of a bait and switch scam, he noticed some very positive changes he found attractive and intriguing. The reporter in him eventually wanted to get to the bottom of this and he launched his own personal investigation. Setting aside as best he could his own personal interest and prejudices, he began reading and studying, interviewing experts, examining archaeology and the Bible.

Over time the evidence began to point to the previously unthinkable. Strobel's book *The Case for Christ* is a revisiting of his earlier quest. He interviews a host of experts along three lines of evidence. In the first section Strobel investigates what he calls the record. What did the eyewitnesses say they saw and heard? Can they be trusted? Can the gospel accounts be trusted? What about evidence from outside the Bible? Does archaeology help or hurt the case for Christ? Strobel puts tough questions to his experts and their answers will both surprise and exhilarate.

In the third section of the book, Strobel investigates the resurrection. He examines the medical evidence, explores the implications of the empty tomb, the reliability of the appearances after the resurrection, and the wide-ranging circumstantial evidence.

However, here we'll focus on the middle section of the book, the analysis of Jesus Himself. Did Jesus really think He was God? Was He crazy? Did He act like He was God? And did He truly match the picture painted in the Old Testament of the Messiah?

Was Jesus Really Convinced that He Was the Son of God?

The psychological profiler is a new weapon in the arsenal of criminal investigators. They understand that behavior reflects personality. These highly trained professionals examine the actions and words of criminals and from these

clues construct a psychological and sometimes historical profile of the likely perpetrator.

These same skills can be applied to our question of whether Jesus actually thought He was God. We can learn a great deal about what Jesus thought of Himself, not just from what He said, but what He did and how He did it.

Ben Witherington was educated at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M. Div.) and the University of Durham in England (Th. D.). He has taught at several universities and seminaries and authored numerous books and articles about the person of Jesus.

Strobel began his interview by stating that Jesus wasn't very forthcoming about His identity in public, even mysterious. He didn't come right out and say He was the Son of God or the Messiah. Couldn't it be that Jesus simply didn't see Himself that way?

Witherington points out that Jesus needed to operate in the context of His day. To boldly state that He was God would have at first confused and then maddened the Jews of His day. Blasphemy was not treated lightly. Therefore He was very careful, especially at first, of what He said publicly.

There are other clues to Jesus' self-identity as God. He chose twelve disciples, as God chose the twelve nations of Israel. He called John the Baptist the greatest man on earth; yet He went on to do even greater things in His miracles. He told the Pharisees, in contradiction to much of the Old Testament law, that what defiled a man was what came out of his mouth, not what he put in it. "We have to ask, what kind of person thinks he has the authority to set aside the divinely inspired Jewish Scriptures and supplant them with his own teaching." {2} Even the Romans labeled Him King of the Jews. Either Jesus actually said that or someone thought He did.

Since Jesus' followers called Him Rabboni or Rabbi, it seems they just thought of

Him as a teacher and nothing more. But Witherington reminds us that Jesus actually taught in a radical new way. In Judaism, the authority of two or more witnesses was required for the proclamation of truth. But Jesus frequently said, “Amen I say to you,” or in modern English, “I swear in advance to the truthfulness of what I am about to say.” Jesus attested to the truth of what He was saying on His own authority. This was truly revolutionary.

The evidence that Jesus believed that He stood in the very place of God is absolutely convincing. Maybe He was just crazy. We’ll explore that question next.

Was Jesus Crazy When He Claimed to be the Son of God?

There’s considerable doubt in the general public about the usefulness of psychological testimony in the courtroom. It seems that you can find some psychologist to testify to just about anything concerning someone’s state of mind at the time a crime was committed. But while abuses can occur, most people recognize that a trained and experienced psychologist can offer helpful insights into a person’s state of mind while examining his words and actions.

In our investigation of Jesus, if He really believed He was God, can we determine if He was crazy or insane? You can visit just about any mental health facility and be introduced to people who think they are Julius Caesar or Napoleon or even Jesus Christ. Could Jesus have been deluded?

Not so, according to Gary Collins, a psychologist with a doctorate in clinical psychology from Purdue and the author of numerous books and articles in popular magazines and professional journals. Disturbed individuals often show signs of depression or anxiety or explosive anger. But Jesus never displays inappropriate emotions.

He does get angry, but this is clearly appropriate—in the temple, for instance,

when He saw the misuse of the temple courtyard and that the moneychangers were taking advantage of the poor. He didn't just get ticked off because someone was annoying Him. In fact, Jesus seems at His most composed when being challenged. In a beautiful passage, Collins describes Jesus as he would an old friend:

He was loving but didn't let his compassion immobilize him; he didn't have a bloated ego, even though he was often surrounded by adoring crowds; he maintained balance despite an often demanding lifestyle; he always knew what he was doing and where he was going; he cared deeply about people, including women and children, who weren't seen as being important back then; he was able to accept people while not merely winking at their sin; he responded to individuals based on where they were at and what they uniquely needed. All in all I just don't see signs that Jesus was suffering from any known mental illness.[{3}](#)

OK, so maybe Jesus wasn't mentally disturbed, but maybe He used psychological tricks to perform His miracles. Many illnesses are psychosomatic, so maybe His healings were just by the power of suggestion. Collins readily admits that maybe some of Jesus' miracles were of this very type, but they were still healed. And some of His miracles just can't fit this description. Jesus healed leprosy and people blind since birth, both of which would be difficult to pull off as a psychological trick. His miracles over nature also can't be explained psychologically, and raising Lazarus from the dead after being in the tomb for a few days is not the stuff of trickery. No, Jesus wasn't crazy.

Did Jesus Fulfill the Attributes of God?

Modern forensics utilizes artists who are able to sketch the appearance of a criminal based on the recollections of the victims. This is an important tool to be able to alert the public as to the appearance of a usually violent offender. In Lee Strobel's investigation of the evidence for Jesus, he uses the Old Testament as a

sketch of what God is supposed to be like. If Jesus claims to be God, then what we see of Him in the Gospels should mirror the picture of God in the Old Testament.

For this purpose, Strobel interviewed Dr. D. A. Carson, research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Carson can read a dozen languages and has authored or edited over forty books about Jesus and the New Testament.

At the start of the interview, Strobel asks Carson, “What did Jesus say or do that convinces you that Jesus is God?” The answer was a little surprising. Jesus forgave sins.

We all see ourselves as having the power and authority to forgive someone who has wronged us. Jesus forgave people for things they did that didn’t involve Jesus at all. This was startling for that time and even today. Only God can truly forgive sins, and Jesus specifically does so on a number of occasions. [{4}](#)

In addition, Jesus considered himself to be without sin. Historically, we consider people to be holy who are fully conscious of their own failures and are fighting them honestly in the power of the Holy Spirit. But Jesus gave no such impression. In that wonderful chapter, John 8, Jesus asks if anyone can convict Him of sin (John 8:46). The question itself is startling, but no one answers. Sinlessness is another attribute of deity.

This chapter is a wonderful interview with Carson, covering other questions, such as: how could Jesus be God and actually be born; or say that the Father was greater than He; or not speak out strongly against the slavery of the Jewish and Roman culture; or believe in and send people to Hell? I’ll leave you to explore those fascinating questions on your own in the book.

Strobel concludes that the Bible declares several attributes for God and applies them to Jesus. John 16:30 records one of the disciples saying, “Now we can see that you know all things.” Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, “Surely I am with you

even unto the end of the age.” And in Matthew 18:20 He says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them.” All authority was given Him (Matthew 28:18) and Hebrews tells us that He is the same yesterday and today. So Jesus is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and immutable. In John 14:7, Jesus says, “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.”

Did Jesus—and Jesus Alone—Match the Identity of the Messiah?

So far in Strobel’s interviews with scholars we have affirmed that Jesus did claim to be God, He wasn’t insane or emotionally disturbed, and He did things that only God would do. Now we want to review Strobel’s interview with Louis Lapidès, a Jewish believer as to whether Jesus actually fit the Old Testament picture of what the Messiah would be like.

One of the important pieces of evidence that convinced Lapidès that Jesus was the long-looked-for Messiah was the fulfillment of prophecy. There are over forty prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled every one. Some say this is just coincidence. But, the odds of just one person fulfilling even five of these prophecies is less than one chance in one hundred million billion—a number millions of times greater than the number of all people who have ever lived on earth.[\[5\]](#)

But maybe this isn’t all it seems. Objections to the correlation of Jesus’ life to the prophecies of the Messiah fall into four categories. The first is the coincidence argument, which we just dispelled. Perhaps the most frequently heard argument is that the gospel writers fabricated the details to make it appear that Jesus was the Messiah. But the gospels were written close enough in time to the actual events that, if false, critics could have exposed the details. Certainly this is true of those in the Jewish community who had every reason to squash this new religion before it got started.

Third, there is the suggestion that Jesus intentionally fulfilled these many prophecies so as to make Himself appear as the Messiah. That's conceivable for some of the prophecies, such as Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, but for others it's impossible. How could Jesus arrange for his ancestry, or place of birth, or the method of execution, or that soldiers would gamble for his clothing? The list goes on.

Fourth, perhaps Christians have just ripped these so-called prophecies out of context and have misinterpreted them. When asked, Lapidés sighed and replied:

You know, I go through books that people write to try to tear down what we believe. That's not fun to do, but I spend the time to look at each objection individually and then to research the context and the wording in the original language. And every single time, the prophecies have stood up and shown themselves to be true. [{6}](#)

What I found most intriguing about the interviews was the combination of academic integrity on the part of these scholars alongside a very evident love for the One of whom they were speaking. For these scholars, finding the historical Jesus was not just an academic exercise, but also a life-changing personal encounter with Jesus. Perhaps it can be for you too.

Notes

1. Lee Strobel, 1998, *The Case for Christ*, Grand Rapids Michigan/Zondervan Publishing House, p. 13.
2. Ben Witherington, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 135.
3. Gary Collins, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 147.
4. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 157-158.
5. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 183.
6. Louis Lapidés, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 185.

The Historical Reliability of the Gospels - An Important Apologetic for Christianity

Dr. Patrick Zukeran

Dr. Pat Zukeran provides a succinct argument for the reliability of our current copies of the four gospels. This data is an important part of any apologetic argument, i.e. defense of the veracity of the Christian faith.

This article is also available in [Spanish](#).



Differences Between the Four Gospels

Skeptics have criticized the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, as being legendary in nature rather than historical. They point to alleged contradictions between Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They also maintain the Gospels were written centuries after the lifetimes of the eyewitnesses. The late date of the writings allowed legends and exaggerations to proliferate, they say.

Are the Gospels historical or mythological?

The first challenge to address is how to account for the differences among the four Gospels. They are each different in nature, content, and the facts they include or exclude. The reason for the variations is that each author wrote to a different audience and from his own unique perspective. Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience to prove to them that Jesus is indeed their Messiah. That's why Matthew includes many of the teachings of Christ and makes numerous

references to Old Testament prophecies. Mark wrote to a Greek or Gentile audience to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. Therefore, he makes his case by focusing on the events of Christ's life. His gospel moves very quickly from one event to another, demonstrating Christ's lordship over all creation. Luke wrote to give an accurate historical account of Jesus' life. John wrote after reflecting on his encounter with Christ for many years. With that insight, near the end of his life John sat down and wrote the most theological of all the Gospels.

We should expect some differences between four independent accounts. If they were identical, we would suspect the writers of collaboration with one another. Because of their differences, the four Gospels actually give us a fuller and richer picture of Jesus.

Let me give you an example. Imagine if four people wrote a biography on your life: your son, your father, a co-worker, and a good friend. They would each focus on different aspects of your life and write from a unique perspective. One would be writing about you as a parent, another as a child growing up, one as a professional, and one as a peer. Each may include different stories or see the same event from a different angle, but their differences would not mean they are in error. When we put all four accounts together, we would get a richer picture of your life and character. That is what is taking place in the Gospels.

So we acknowledge that differences do not necessarily mean errors. Skeptics have made allegations of errors for centuries, yet the vast majority of charges have been answered. New Testament scholar, Dr. Craig Blomberg, writes, "Despite two centuries of skeptical onslaught, it is fair to say that all the alleged inconsistencies among the Gospels have received at least plausible resolutions." [\[1\]](#) Another scholar, Murray Harris, emphasizes, "Even then the presence of discrepancies in circumstantial detail is no proof that the central fact is unhistorical." [\[2\]](#) The four Gospels give us a complementary, not a contradictory, account.

The Date of the New Testament Writings: Internal Evidence

Critics claim that the Gospels were written centuries after the lifetimes of the eyewitnesses. This would allow for myths about Jesus' life to proliferate. Were the Gospels written by eyewitnesses as they claim, or were they written centuries later? The historical facts appear to make a strong case for a first century date.

Jesus' ministry was from A.D. 27-30. Noted New Testament scholar, F.F. Bruce, gives strong evidence that the New Testament was completed by A.D. 100.^{3} Most writings of the New Testament works were completed twenty to forty years before this. The Gospels are dated traditionally as follows: Mark is believed to be the first gospel written around A.D. 60. Matthew and Luke follow and are written between A.D. 60-70; John is the final gospel, written between A.D. 90-100.

The internal evidence supports these early dates for several reasons. The first three Gospels prophesied the fall of the Jerusalem Temple which occurred in A.D. 70. However, the fulfillment is not mentioned. It is strange that these three Gospels predict this major event but do not record it happening. Why do they not mention such an important prophetic milestone? The most plausible explanation is that it had not yet occurred at the time Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written.

In the book of Acts, the Temple plays a central role in the nation of Israel. Luke writes as if the Temple is an important part of Jewish life. He also ends Acts on a strange note: Paul living under house arrest. It is strange that Luke does not record the death of his two chief characters, Peter and Paul. The most plausible reason for this is that Luke finished writing Acts before Peter and Paul's martyrdom in A.D. 64. A significant point to highlight is that the Gospel of Luke precedes Acts, further supporting the traditional dating of A.D. 60. Furthermore, most scholars agree Mark precedes Luke, making Mark's Gospel even earlier.

Finally, the majority of New Testament scholars believe that Paul's epistles are

written from A.D. 48-60. Paul's outline of the life of Jesus matches that of the Gospels. 1 Corinthians is one of the least disputed books regarding its dating and Pauline authorship. In chapter 15, Paul summarizes the gospel and reinforces the premise that this is the same gospel preached by the apostles. Even more compelling is that Paul quotes from Luke's Gospel in 1 Timothy 5:18, showing us that Luke's Gospel was indeed completed in Paul's lifetime. This would move up the time of the completion of Luke's Gospel along with Mark and Matthew.

The internal evidence presents a strong case for the early dating of the Gospels.

The Date of the Gospels: External Evidence

Were the Gospels written by eyewitnesses of the events, or were they not recorded until centuries later? As with the internal evidence, the external evidence also supports a first century date.

Fortunately, New Testament scholars have an enormous amount of ancient manuscript evidence. The documentary evidence for the New Testament far surpasses any other work of its time. We have over 5000 manuscripts, and many are dated within a few years of their authors' lives.

Here are some key documents. An important manuscript is the Chester Beatty Papyri. It contains most of the N.T. writings, and is dated around A.D. 250.

The Bodmer Papyri contains most of John, and dates to A.D. 200. Another is the Rylands Papyri that was found in Egypt that contains a fragment of John, and dates to A.D. 130. From this fragment we can conclude that John was completed well before A.D. 130 because, not only did the gospel have to be written, it had to be hand copied and make its way down from Greece to Egypt. Since the vast majority of scholars agree that John is the last gospel written, we can affirm its first century date along with the other three with greater assurance.

A final piece of evidence comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls Cave 7. Jose Callahan

discovered a fragment of the Gospel of Mark and dated it to have been written in A.D. 50. He also discovered fragments of Acts and other epistles and dated them to have been written slightly after A.D. 50. [\[4\]](#)

Another line of evidence is the writings of the church fathers. Clement of Rome sent a letter to the Corinthian church in A.D. 95. in which he quoted from the Gospels and other portions of the N.T. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, wrote a letter before his martyrdom in Rome in A.D. 115, quoting all the Gospels and other N.T. letters. Polycarp wrote to the Philippians in A.D. 120 and quoted from the Gospels and N.T. letters. Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) quotes John 3. Church fathers of the early second century were familiar with the apostle's writings and quoted them as inspired Scripture.

Early dating is important for two reasons. The closer a historical record is to the date of the event, the more likely the record is accurate. Early dating allows for eyewitnesses to still be alive when the Gospels were circulating to attest to their accuracy. The apostles often appeal to the witness of the hostile crowd, pointing to their knowledge of the facts as well (Acts 2:22, 26:26). Also, the time is too short for legends to develop. Historians agree it takes about two generations, or eighty years, for legendary accounts to establish themselves.

From the evidence, we can conclude the Gospels were indeed written by the authors they are attributed to.

How Reliable was the Oral Tradition?

Previously, I defended the early dating of the Gospels. Despite this early dating, there is a time gap of several years between the ascension of Jesus and the writing of the Gospels. There is a period during which the gospel accounts were committed to memory by the disciples and transmitted orally. The question we must answer is, Was the oral tradition memorized and passed on accurately? Skeptics assert that memory and oral tradition cannot accurately preserve

accounts from person to person for many years.

The evidence shows that in oral cultures where memory has been trained for generations, oral memory can accurately preserve and pass on large amounts of information. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 reveals to us how important oral instruction and memory of divine teaching was stressed in Jewish culture. It is a well-known fact that the rabbis had the O.T. and much of the oral law committed to memory. The Jews placed a high value on memorizing whatever writing reflected inspired Scripture and the wisdom of God. I studied under a Greek professor who had the Gospels memorized word perfect. In a culture where this was practiced, memorization skills were far advanced compared to ours today. New Testament scholar Darrell Bock states that the Jewish culture was “a culture of memory.”^{5}

Rainer Reisner presents six key reasons why oral tradition accurately preserved Jesus’ teachings.^{6} First, Jesus used the Old Testament prophets’ practice of proclaiming the word of God which demanded accurate preservation of inspired teaching. Second, Jesus’ presentations of Himself as Messiah would reinforce among His followers the need to preserve His words accurately. Third, ninety percent of Jesus’ teachings and sayings use mnemonic methods similar to those used in Hebrew poetry. Fourth, Jesus trained His disciples to teach His lessons even while He was on earth. Fifth, Jewish boys were educated until they were twelve, so the disciples likely knew how to read and write. Finally, just as Jewish and Greek teachers gathered disciples, Jesus gathered and trained His to carry on after His death.

When one studies the teachings of Jesus, one realizes that His teachings and illustrations are easy to memorize. People throughout the world recognize immediately the story of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Lord’s Prayer.

We also know that the church preserved the teachings of Christ in the form of hymns which were likewise easy to memorize. Paul’s summary of the gospel in 1

Corinthians 15 is a good example of this.

We can have confidence then that the oral tradition accurately preserved the teachings and the events of Jesus' life till they were written down just a few years later.

The Transmission of the Gospel Texts

When I am speaking with Muslims or Mormons, we often come to a point in the discussion where it is clear the Bible contradicts their position. It is then they claim, as many skeptics, do that the Bible has not been accurately transmitted and has been corrupted by the church. In regards to the Gospels, do we have an accurate copy of the original texts or have they been corrupted?

Previously, we showed that the Gospels were written in the first century, within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses. These eyewitnesses, both friendly and hostile, scrutinized the accounts for accuracy.

So the original writings were accurate. However, we do not have the original manuscripts. What we have are copies of copies of copies. Are these accurate, or have they been tampered with? As shown earlier, we have 5000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. When you include the quotes from the church fathers, manuscripts from other early translations like the Latin Vulgate, the Ethiopic text, and others, the total comes out to over 24,000 ancient texts. With so many ancient texts, significant alterations should be easy to spot. However, those who accuse the New Testament of being corrupted have not produced such evidence. This is significant because it should be easy to do with so many manuscripts available. The truth is, the large number of manuscripts confirm the accurate preservation and transmission of the New Testament writings.

Although we can be confident in an accurate copy, we do have textual discrepancies. There are some passages with variant readings that we are not sure of. However, the differences are minor and do not affect any major

theological doctrine. Most have to do with sentence structure, vocabulary, and grammar. These in no way affect any major doctrine.

Here is one example. In our Bibles, Mark 16:9-20 is debated as to whether it was part of the original writings. Although I personally do not believe this passage was part of the original text, its inclusion does not affect any major teaching of Christianity. It states that Christ was resurrected, appeared to the disciples, and commissioned them to preach the gospel. This is taught elsewhere.

The other discrepancies are similar in nature. Greek scholars agree we have a copy very accurate to the original. Westcott and Hort state that we have a copy 98.33% accurate to the original.[{7}](#) A.T. Robertson gave a figure of 99% accuracy to the original.[{8}](#) As historian Sir Fredric Kenyon assures us, "...the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."[{9}](#)

Do Miracles Discredit the Gospels?

Skeptics question the accuracy of the Gospels because of the miracles. However, this is an issue of worldviews. Those who hold to a naturalistic worldview do not believe an omnipotent creator exists. All that exists is energy and matter. Therefore, miracles are impossible. Their conclusion, then, is that the miracle accounts in the Gospels are exaggerations or myths.

Those who hold to a theistic worldview can accept miracles in light of our understanding of God and Christ. God can intervene in time and space and alter the natural regularities of nature much like finite humans can in smaller limited ways. If Jesus is the Son of God, we can expect Him to perform miracles to affirm His claims to be divine. But worldviews are not where this ends. We also need to take a good look at the historical facts.

As shown previously, the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses to the events of the life of Christ. Early dating shows eyewitnesses were alive when Gospels were circulating and could attest to their accuracy. Apostles often appeal to the witness of the hostile crowd, pointing out their knowledge of the facts as well (Acts 2:22, Acts 26:26). Therefore, if there were any exaggerations or stories being told about Christ that were not true, the eyewitnesses could have easily discredited the apostles accounts. Remember, they began preaching in Israel in the very cities and during the lifetimes of the eyewitnesses. The Jews were careful to record accurate historical accounts. Many enemies of the early church were looking for ways to discredit the apostles' teaching. If what the apostles were saying was not true, the enemies would have cried foul, and the Gospels would not have earned much credibility.

There are also non-Christian sources that attest to the miracles of Christ. Josephus writes, "Now there was about that time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew to him both many of the Jews and many of the gentiles." The Jewish Talmud, written in the fifth century A.D., attributes Jesus' miracles to sorcery. Opponents of the Gospels do not deny He did miracles, they just present alternative explanations for them.

Finally, Christ's power over creation is supremely revealed in the resurrection. The resurrection is one of the best attested to events in history. For a full treatment, look up the article [Resurrection: Fact or Fiction](#) here at Probe.org.

Notes

1. Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 10.
2. *Ibid.*, 9.
3. F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* 5th ed.

(Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 14.

4. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2002), 530.

5. Michael Wilkins and J.P. Moreland, *Jesus Under Fire*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1995), 80.

6. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 27-28.

7. Geisler, 474.

8. Ibid.

9. Quoted by Norman Geisler, *General Introduction to the Bible*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 405.

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Ancient Evidence for Jesus from Non-Christian Sources

Dr. Michael Gleghorn



Dr. Michael Gleghorn examines evidence from ancient non-Christian sources for

the life of Jesus, demonstrating that such sources help confirm the historical reliability of the Gospels.

Evidence from Tacitus

Although there is overwhelming evidence that the New Testament is an accurate and trustworthy historical document, many people are still reluctant to believe what it says unless there is also some independent, non-biblical testimony that corroborates its statements. In the introduction to one of his books, F.F. Bruce tells about a Christian correspondent who was told by an agnostic friend that “apart from obscure references in Josephus and the like,” there was no historical evidence for the life of Jesus outside the Bible.^{1} This, he wrote to Bruce, had caused him “great concern and some little upset in [his] spiritual life.”^{2} He concludes his letter by asking, “Is such collateral proof available, and if not, are there reasons for the lack of it?”^{3} The answer to this question is, “Yes, such collateral proof is available,” and we will be looking at some of it in this article.

Let’s begin our inquiry with a passage that historian Edwin Yamauchi calls “probably the most important reference to Jesus outside the New Testament.”^{4} Reporting on Emperor Nero’s decision to blame the Christians for the fire that had destroyed Rome in A.D. 64, the Roman historian Tacitus wrote:

Nero fastened the guilt . . . on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of . . . Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome. . . .^{5}

What all can we learn from this ancient (and rather unsympathetic) reference to Jesus and the early Christians? Notice, first, that Tacitus reports Christians derived their name from a historical person called Christus (from the Latin), or

Christ. He is said to have “suffered the extreme penalty,” obviously alluding to the Roman method of execution known as crucifixion. This is said to have occurred during the reign of Tiberius and by the sentence of Pontius Pilatus. This confirms much of what the Gospels tell us about the death of Jesus.

But what are we to make of Tacitus’ rather enigmatic statement that Christ’s death briefly checked “a most mischievous superstition,” which subsequently arose not only in Judaea, but also in Rome? One historian suggests that Tacitus is here “bearing indirect . . . testimony to the conviction of the early church that the Christ who had been crucified had risen from the grave.” {6} While this interpretation is admittedly speculative, it does help explain the otherwise bizarre occurrence of a rapidly growing religion based on the worship of a man who had been crucified as a criminal. {7} How else might one explain *that*?

Evidence from Pliny the Younger

Another important source of evidence about Jesus and early Christianity can be found in the letters of Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan. Pliny was the Roman governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor. In one of his letters, dated around A.D. 112, he asks Trajan’s advice about the appropriate way to conduct legal proceedings against those accused of being Christians. {8} Pliny says that he needed to consult the emperor about this issue because a great multitude of every age, class, and sex stood accused of Christianity. {9}

At one point in his letter, Pliny relates some of the information he has learned about these Christians:

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to

separate, and then reassemble to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.[{10}](#)

This passage provides us with a number of interesting insights into the beliefs and practices of early Christians. First, we see that Christians regularly met on a certain fixed day for worship. Second, their worship was directed to Christ, demonstrating that they firmly believed in His divinity. Furthermore, one scholar interprets Pliny's statement that hymns were sung to Christ, *as to a god*, as a reference to the rather distinctive fact that, "unlike other gods who were worshipped, Christ was a person who had lived on earth." [{11}](#) If this interpretation is correct, Pliny understood that Christians were worshipping an actual historical person as God! Of course, this agrees perfectly with the New Testament doctrine that Jesus was both God and man.

Not only does Pliny's letter help us understand what early Christians believed about Jesus' *person*, it also reveals the high esteem to which they held His *teachings*. For instance, Pliny notes that Christians *bound themselves by a solemn oath* not to violate various moral standards, which find their source in the ethical teachings of Jesus. In addition, Pliny's reference to the Christian custom of sharing a common meal likely alludes to their observance of communion and the "love feast." [{12}](#) This interpretation helps explain the Christian claim that the meal was merely *food of an ordinary and innocent kind*. They were attempting to counter the charge, sometimes made by non-Christians, of practicing "ritual cannibalism." [{13}](#) The Christians of that day humbly repudiated such slanderous attacks on Jesus' teachings. We must sometimes do the same today.

Evidence from Josephus

Perhaps the most remarkable reference to Jesus outside the Bible can be found in the writings of Josephus, a first century Jewish historian. On two occasions, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, he mentions Jesus. The second, less revealing, reference

describes the condemnation of one “James” by the Jewish Sanhedrin. This James, says Josephus, was “the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ.” {14} F.F. Bruce points out how this agrees with Paul’s description of James in Galatians 1:19 as “the Lord’s brother.” {15} And Edwin Yamauchi informs us that “few scholars have questioned” that Josephus actually penned this passage. {16}

As interesting as this brief reference is, there is an earlier one, which is truly astonishing. Called the “Testimonium Flavianum,” the relevant portion declares:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he . . . wrought surprising feats. . . . He was the Christ. When Pilate . . . condemned him to be crucified, those who had . . . come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared . . . restored to life. . . . And the tribe of Christians . . . has . . . not disappeared. {17}

Did Josephus really write this? Most scholars think the core of the passage originated with Josephus, but that it was later altered by a Christian editor, possibly between the third and fourth century A.D. {18} But why do they think it was altered? Josephus was not a Christian, and it is difficult to believe that anyone but a Christian would have made some of these statements. {19}

For instance, the claim that Jesus was a wise man seems authentic, but the qualifying phrase, “*if indeed one ought to call him a man,*” is suspect. It implies that Jesus was more than human, and it is quite unlikely that Josephus would have said *that!* It is also difficult to believe he would have flatly asserted that Jesus was the Christ, especially when he later refers to Jesus as “the so-called” Christ. Finally, the claim that on the third day Jesus appeared to His disciples restored to life, inasmuch as it affirms Jesus’ resurrection, is quite unlikely to come from a non-Christian!

But even if we disregard the questionable parts of this passage, we are still left with a good deal of corroborating information about the biblical Jesus. We read

that he was a wise man who performed surprising feats. And although He was crucified under Pilate, His followers continued their discipleship and became known as Christians. When we combine these statements with Josephus' later reference to Jesus as "the so-called Christ," a rather detailed picture emerges which harmonizes quite well with the biblical record. It increasingly appears that the "biblical Jesus" and the "historical Jesus" are one and the same!

Evidence from the Babylonian Talmud

There are only a few clear references to Jesus in the Babylonian Talmud, a collection of Jewish rabbinical writings compiled between approximately A.D. 70-500. Given this time frame, it is naturally supposed that earlier references to Jesus are more likely to be historically reliable than later ones. In the case of the Talmud, the earliest period of compilation occurred between A.D. 70-200.[{20}](#) The most significant reference to Jesus from this period states:

On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald . . . cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy." [{21}](#)

Let's examine this passage. You may have noticed that it refers to someone named "Yeshu." So why do we think this is Jesus? Actually, "Yeshu" (or "Yeshua") is how Jesus' name is pronounced in Hebrew. But what does the passage mean by saying that Jesus "was hanged"? Doesn't the New Testament say he was crucified? Indeed it does. But the term "hanged" can function as a synonym for "crucified." For instance, Galatians 3:13 declares that Christ was "hanged", and Luke 23:39 applies this term to the criminals who were crucified with Jesus.[{22}](#) So the Talmud declares that Jesus was crucified on the eve of Passover. But what of the cry of the herald that Jesus was to be stoned? This may simply indicate what the Jewish leaders were *planning* to do.[{23}](#) If so, Roman involvement changed their plans![{24}](#)

The passage also tells us *why* Jesus was crucified. It claims He practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy! Since this accusation comes from a rather hostile source, we should not be too surprised if Jesus is described somewhat differently than in the New Testament. But if we make allowances for this, what might such charges *imply* about Jesus?

Interestingly, both accusations have close parallels in the canonical gospels. For instance, the charge of sorcery is similar to the Pharisees' accusation that Jesus cast out demons "by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." [{25}](#) But notice this: such a charge actually tends to confirm the New Testament claim that Jesus performed miraculous feats. Apparently Jesus' miracles were too well attested to deny. The only alternative was to ascribe them to sorcery! Likewise, the charge of enticing Israel to apostasy parallels Luke's account of the Jewish leaders who accused Jesus of misleading the nation with his teaching. [{26}](#) Such a charge tends to corroborate the New Testament record of Jesus' powerful teaching ministry. Thus, if read carefully, this passage from the Talmud confirms much of our knowledge about Jesus from the New Testament.

Evidence from Lucian

Lucian of Samosata was a second century Greek satirist. In one of his works, he wrote of the early Christians as follows:

The Christians . . . worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. . . . [It] was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. [{27}](#)

Although Lucian is jesting here at the early Christians, he does make some significant comments about their founder. For instance, he says the Christians worshipped a *man*, "who introduced their novel rites." And though this *man's*

followers clearly thought quite highly of Him, He so angered many of His contemporaries with His teaching that He “was crucified on that account.”

Although Lucian does not mention his name, he is clearly referring to Jesus. But what did Jesus teach to arouse such wrath? According to Lucian, he taught that all men are brothers from the moment of their conversion. That’s harmless enough. But what did this conversion involve? It involved denying the Greek gods, worshipping Jesus, and living according to His teachings. It’s not *too* difficult to imagine someone being killed for teaching *that*. Though Lucian doesn’t say so explicitly, the Christian denial of other gods combined with their worship of Jesus implies the belief that Jesus was more than human. Since they denied other gods in order to worship Him, they apparently thought Jesus a greater God than any that Greece had to offer!

Let’s summarize what we’ve learned about Jesus from this examination of ancient non-Christian sources. First, both Josephus and Lucian indicate that Jesus was regarded as wise. Second, Pliny, the Talmud, and Lucian imply He was a powerful and revered teacher. Third, both Josephus and the Talmud indicate He performed miraculous feats. Fourth, Tacitus, Josephus, the Talmud, and Lucian all mention that He was crucified. Tacitus and Josephus say this occurred under Pontius Pilate. And the Talmud declares it happened on the eve of Passover. Fifth, there are possible references to the Christian belief in Jesus’ resurrection in both Tacitus and Josephus. Sixth, Josephus records that Jesus’ followers believed He was the Christ, or Messiah. And finally, both Pliny and Lucian indicate that Christians worshipped Jesus as God!

I hope you see how this small selection of ancient *non-Christian* sources helps corroborate our knowledge of Jesus from the gospels. Of course, there are many ancient *Christian* sources of information about Jesus as well. But since the historical reliability of the canonical gospels is so well established, I invite you to read *those* for an authoritative “life of Jesus!”

Notes

1. F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 13.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Edwin Yamauchi, quoted in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 82.
5. Tacitus, Annals 15.44, cited in Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 82.
6. N.D. Anderson, *Christianity: The Witness of History* (London: Tyndale, 1969), 19, cited in Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1996), 189-190.
7. Edwin Yamauchi, cited in Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 82.
8. Pliny, Epistles x. 96, cited in Bruce, *Christian Origins*, 25; Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 198.
9. Ibid., 27.
10. Pliny, Letters, transl. by William Melmoth, rev. by W.M.L. Hutchinson (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935), vol. II, X:96, cited in Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 199.
11. M. Harris, "References to Jesus in Early Classical Authors," in *Gospel Perspectives V*, 354-55, cited in E. Yamauchi, "Jesus Outside the New Testament: What is the Evidence?", in *Jesus Under Fire*, ed. by Michael J. Wilkins and J.P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 227, note 66.

12. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 199.
13. Bruce, *Christian Origins*, 28.
14. Josephus, *Antiquities* xx. 200, cited in Bruce, *Christian Origins*, 36.
15. Ibid.
16. Yamauchi, "Jesus Outside the New Testament", 212.
17. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.63-64, cited in Yamauchi, "Jesus Outside the New Testament", 212.
18. Ibid.
19. Although time would not permit me to mention it on the radio, another version of Josephus' "Testimonium Flavianum" survives in a tenth-century Arabic version (Bruce, *Christian Origins*, 41). In 1971, Professor Schlomo Pines published a study on this passage. The passage is interesting because it lacks most of the questionable elements that many scholars believe to be Christian interpolations. Indeed, "as Schlomo Pines and David Flusser...stated, it is quite plausible that none of the arguments against Josephus writing the original words even applies to the Arabic text, especially since the latter would have had less chance of being censored by the church" (Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 194). The passage reads as follows: "At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good and (he) was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders." (Quoted in James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1988), 95, cited in Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 194).

20. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 202-03.
21. *The Babylonian Talmud*, transl. by I. Epstein (London: Soncino, 1935), vol. III, Sanhedrin 43a, 281, cited in Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 203.
22. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 203.
23. See John 8:58-59 and 10:31-33.
24. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 204. See also John 18:31-32.
25. Matt. 12:24. I gleaned this observation from Bruce, *Christian Origins*, 56.
26. Luke 23:2, 5.
27. Lucian, *The Death of Peregrine*, 11-13, in *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, transl. by H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), vol. 4., cited in Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 206.

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Converting Christians

Sue Bohlin

February 27, 2014

Jim Denison recently found a [“15-step strategy for converting Christians to atheism”](#) and [wrote about it](#) in the Denison Forum on Truth and Culture. Although the article is supposed to help atheists convert Christians, I think that Christians can learn some valuable lessons about how to approach and dialogue with non-

Christians.

The article tells atheists to think about building relationships before trying to convert them to atheism. That is certainly good advice for Christians. Jim Denison reminds us that we should earn the right to share the love of Jesus.

The article also encourages atheists to learn the common arguments leveled by theists and the best rebuttals. Again, Christians should always be ready to make a defense (1 Peter 3:15) for the hope that is in us. I have noticed that in many of the debates between Christians and atheists that it is the atheist argument that is often inadequate.

The article also encourages atheists to understand their holy book cover to cover. This would be good advice for Christians interacting with people of other religions or people who say they have no religion. What is their standard of authority? Do they believe in truth? Do they believe in revelation?

Atheists are also encouraged to study basic physics and biology because “believers may form arguments using a flawed interpretation of physics and biology.” Actually, Christians can benefit from the great work done by leading scientists, theologians, and apologists who use a proper understanding of science to show the reasonableness of biblical faith.

The article also encourages atheists to get Christians “in the habit of questioning their own faith.” Once again, that is a great suggestion for Christians. Jesus often used questions to teach biblical truths. I have found that getting people to question what they believe and why they believe it to be a very effective witnessing tool.

The article is a reminder that Christians aren’t the only ones in the world working to convert others. Atheists and apologists for other religions are also working to convert the hearts and minds of Christians. We should be prepared, but also learn some lessons from others about how to win people to Jesus Christ.

First Dallas Series “How Can I Know?”: Links to Apologetics Articles

Probe Ministries Administrator



<p><i>We are pleased and honored to suggest these articles and answers to email as helpful additions to Dr. Robert Jeffress' 2012 apologetics series at First Baptist Church Dallas (Texas).</i></p>	
<p>Aug. 26</p>	<p>How Can I Know How To Start Over When I've Blown It?</p>
	<p>Grappling with Guilt “Will God Punish Me Forever for My Mistakes?” “Will Jesus Still Forgive Me?” The Sinfulness of Humanity</p>
<p>Sept. 2</p>	<p>How Can I Know How To Forgive Someone Who Has Hurt Me?</p>
	<p>Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and You The Keys to Emotional Healing - Part 2 “How Do I Overcome My Hurts and Disappointments From My Church?”</p>

Sept. 9 & 16	How Can I Know There Is a God?
	Evidence for God's Existence There is a God Does God Exist? Answering the New Atheists No Reason to Fear: Examining the Logic of a Critic
Sept. 23 & 30	How Can I Know The Bible Is True?
	Are the Biblical Documents Reliable? The Historical Reliability of the Gospels Authority of the Bible Bart Ehrman's Complaint The Christian Canon
Oct. 7	How Can I Know God Is Good With All The Suffering in the World?
	The Problem of Evil "I Doubt the Existence of a Good God Who Allows a Baby to Suffer and Die" Where Was God on Sept. 11? The Problem of Evil Hope For a World Gone Bad The Value of Suffering
Oct. 14 & 21	How Can I Know Christianity Is The Right Religion?

	<p>Do All Roads Lead to God? The Christian Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions</p> <p>Is Jesus the Only Savior?</p> <p>Christianity and Religious Pluralism</p> <p>“How Can I Teach Pluralism Wisely?”</p> <p>Will Everyone Be Saved? A Look at Universalism</p>
Oct. 28 & Nov. 4	<p>How Can I Know I’m Going To Heaven When I Die?</p>
	<p>“How Can I Know I’m Going to Heaven?”</p> <p>Dealing with Doubt</p> <p>“Can a Christian Lose His Salvation?”</p> <p>“Can a True Believer Commit the Unforgiveable Sin?”</p>

“Can You Recommend Apologetics Resources on Different Levels?”

Dr. Michael Gleghorn

As a Christian, I find it to be of invaluable importance to remain current and educated in fields of history, science, logic and philosophy, etc. At age 20, I’m confronting more and more difficulty sharing Christ with a generation in a secularized society that will less and less have Him. Any books you might recommend? Thank you!

There are many good books and websites which address the concerns you have in one way or another. However, let me recommend two books and three websites that have personally been very helpful to me over the years.

1. An excellent popular-level book on apologetics and evangelism is *I'm Glad You Asked* by Ken Boa and Larry Moody - available [here](#).
2. A superb intermediate-level apologetics book is *Reasonable Faith* (3rd edition) by William Lane Craig - available [here](#).
3. An excellent popular-level website on apologetics is the Probe Ministries website here: Probe.org.
4. An excellent scholarly-level site (with some popular-level material) is the Reasonable Faith site here: www.reasonablefaith.org.
5. Finally, a really great site for biblical and theological issues is bible.org.

I hope these resources prove helpful as you continue to prepare yourself to give an account to all who ask about the hope that you have in Christ!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

Posted 2012

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“Can You Recommend Resources for Sharing Christ in a Secular Society?”

Dr. Michael Gleghorn

Hello, Mr. Gleghorn! I want to thank you for what you do. As a Christian, I find it to be of invaluable importance to remain current and educated in fields of history, science, logic and philosophy, etc. Age 20, I’m confronting more and more difficulty sharing Christ with generation in a secularized society that will less and less have Him. Any books you might recommend? Thank you!

Thanks for your letter. There are many good books and websites which address the concerns you have in one way or another. However, let me recommend two books and three websites that have personally been very helpful to me over the years.

1. An excellent popular-level book on apologetics and evangelism is *I’m Glad You Asked* by Ken Boa and Larry Moody: www.amazon.com/Glad-You-Asked-Depth-Difficult/dp/B004IEA2Z2/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1323708380&sr=8-1
2. A superb intermediate-level apologetics book is *Reasonable Faith* (3rd edition) by William Lane Craig: <https://amzn.to/36sVinp>
3. An excellent popular-level website on apologetics is the Probe Ministries website here: www.probe.org
4. An excellent scholarly-level site (with some popular-level material) is the Reasonable Faith site here: www.reasonablefaith.org

5. Finally, a really great site for biblical and theological issues is this: bible.org

I hope these resources prove helpful as you continue to prepare yourself to give an account to all who ask about the hope that you have in Christ!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Posted Dec. 26, 2011

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“There is No Proof Your Pathetic Manmade God Ever Lived”

Dr. Ray Bohlin

There is not one proof that Jesus ever lived. Everything you quoted on your stupid page was all hearsay that was passed along by g*dd*mn fools. Yeshu was real and lived one hundred years before your concocted fake savior. There was jesus of gamala who was another savior. There was jesus bar kocba, yet another savior. Josephus never wrote that passage about jesus and only a f*ing fool would believe it was anything other than another ‘christian’ lie and forgery. Josephus was a Jew and would have been stoned to death for such a statement. You people lie like dogs and couldn’t tell the truth if your lives depended on it. There were at least 50 well known authors/historians during the era that your pathetic manmade god was said to have lived yet not one of them bothered to write one word about him. Hell, man don’t you think with all his miracles and dead**

people popping out of graves during his crucifixion that someone might sit up and take notice? There are no people on this planet meaner or more insane than Christians. Also, our Founders did not found this nation on your sickening repulsive deadly religion and most of them hated it. History is completely silent on all the major bible characters, including the child raping killer Moses and the pimp Abraham. Thank goodness, for you couldn't find a more disgusting and perverted bunch if you spent your life looking. Yahweh was a real b*stard that I wouldn't allow in my neighborhood. Why don't you try the truth for a change?

I am sorry that our material has caused you to respond with such negative emotion.

But if I may, I'd like to engage some of your points.

There is not one proof that Jesus ever lived. Everything you quoted on your stupid page was all hearsay that was passed along by g*dd*mn fools.

This is a fairly broad generalization. Could you refer to something specific so we can get a better idea of what you object to most?

Yeshu was real and lived one hundred years before your concocted fake savior. There was Jesus of Gamala who was another savior. There was Jesus Bar Kocba, yet another savior.

Do you have some documentation for these various Jesus characters so we can research ourselves? This is a commonly held notion but the documentation we often see is not reliable.

Josephus never wrote that passage about Jesus and only a fing fool would believe it was anything other than another 'Christian' lie and forgery. Josephus was a Jew and would have been stoned to death for***

such a statement.

Concerning Josephus, Michael [Gleghorn] clearly indicates that the second passage he refers to by Josephus was likely edited by a Christian scholar to include the references to Jesus as the Christ and other messianic phrases. Most scholars regard the rest of the passage as genuine. www.probe.org/ancient-evidence-for-jesus-from-non-christian-sources/.

You people lie like dogs and couldn't tell the truth if your lives depended on it. There were at least 50 well known authors/historians during the era that your pathetic manmade god was said to have lived yet not one of them bothered to write one word about him.

Can you provide us a list of a few of these authors/historians? You have to consider that any news did not travel very far or very fast in that era. Many of Jesus' miracles would be beyond belief for many and would have just been dismissed. It makes sense therefore, that Jesus was noted a few decades later when the number of his followers continued to grow despite severe persecution.

Hell, man don't you think with all his miracles and dead people popping out of graves during his crucifixion that someone might sit up and take notice? There are no people on this planet meaner or more insane than Christians. Also, our Founders did not found this nation on your sickening repulsive deadly religion and most of them hated it.

I agree with you to a degree. Jefferson and Franklin were likely [deists](#) who used the Bible when it suited them. [George Washington](#) however, seems to be a genuine Christian. Do you have sources who indicate otherwise?

History is completely silent on all the major bible characters, including the child raping killer moses and the pimp abraham.

Well, that's not exactly true. Roman and Jewish historians make reference to

Jesus and Christians in the first century. Also a stone from around 800BC contained the phrase "House of David." Babylonian records refer to the appropriate kings of Judah in the early years of the Babylonian captivity, both those left in Jerusalem and those taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar is real as are the accounts of various Assyrian kings mentioned in Chronicles and Kings. The Babylonian and Persian kings are accurately reflected in Daniel. It's quite unlikely to find any archeological references to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were nomadic herders who didn't keep any history.

Thank goodness, for you couldn't find a more disgusting and perverted bunch if you spent your life looking. Yahweh was a real b*stard that I wouldn't allow in my neighborhood. Why don't you try the truth for a change?

We are looking for the truth and confidently believe we have found it in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. I suspect that something else besides your perceived lack of evidence is driving the strength of your rejection. Whatever that may be, I am truly sorry that some Christian or group of Christians have grievously harmed you in some way in the past. No true Christians ever claim to be perfect or to have exhaustive knowledge. But we have seen and experienced the truth in ways that are quite convincing.

Respectfully,

Raymond G. Bohlin, Ph.D.

<https://sites.google.com/site/yahwehelohiym/sons-of-god/the-boundaries-of-the-nations>

Yahweh was just a hateful petty tribal god and one of the many sons of el elyon, the most high god, and your bible proves it but you people do not understand what the hell you read and keep the lies going.

I'm afraid your source is a bit behind the times. While some of what he says is correct, that some names of God go back to the Ugaritic language, his/her reliance on the Documentary Hypothesis is outdated. www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/09/24/the-documentary-hypothesis.aspx#Article

"Sons of God" appears elsewhere in the Old Testament, in Genesis 6:2,4 and Job 38:7. In each case it is either a reference to men who followed God (Genesis 6) or angels (Job 38). Nothing new or damaging here.

If you just look a little further in the Old Testament you find Isaiah saying;

I am the Lord, I have no peer,
there is no God but me.
I arm you for battle, even though you do not recognize me.
I do this so people will recognize from east to west
that there is no God but me;
I am the Lord, I have no peer.
Remember what I accomplished in antiquity!
Truly I am God, I have no peer;
I am God, and there is none like me (45:5-9)

The God of the Bible is a monotheistic God throughout. And we do have a nearly complete Book of Isaiah from the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) and the only difference with the Masoretic text of AD 900 is a few spelling changes.

One item at a time.

www.stephenjygould.org/ctrl/buckner_ncn.html

I also advise you to read *Liars for Jesus* and Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*. Paine helped word our Constitution and Bill of Rights and named

this country The United States of America. Few Christians will speak about his book because it cannot be refuted intelligently. His part 3 proves there are NO OT prophecies of Jesus and makes jackasses of anyone who says otherwise. Can you people read? Christians don't follow the doctrine of Jesus, they follow the apostate liar Paul. Read the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* to find the Lord's Prayer and the so-called ten commandments along with many other items the murdering Jews (who are not Jews but are liars from the synagogue of Satan) stole and created their rotten religion. Much of what they stole was from the ancient Sumerians who lived about 1000 years before the Hyksos came to be known as Hebrews. Their epic of creation was used by these maggots to create the most bloody and perverted religion this world has known, until Christians showed up.

Hmmm. I don't recall claiming that the U.S. is a Christian nation. You won't find that anywhere on our website. But do read from George Washington's farewell address:

Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

Clearly he doesn't say what religion, but there was little else in America at that time except for different forms of Christianity. Even if he only means a loose form of deism, he clearly questions that government can function for long without it.

So you really want to use Thomas Paine as your source for the conviction that there are no OT prophecies about Jesus? There is so much we didn't know in the late 18th century. Archaeology was barely a fledgling science. So many manuscripts were unknown. We have thousands of OT and NT manuscripts today that Paine had no knowledge of whatsoever. Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 is about as clear a prophecy of Jesus that you will find. And remember we have a complete copy of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls, well before Jesus lived.

Liars for Jesus looks like an interesting book. I have no doubt there has been sloppy scholarship on the part of many in the religious right. At Probe Ministries we make every effort to research with integrity and write with a biblical reasonableness and respect for those we disagree with.

Two of the foremost and revered Jewish Archaeologists in Israel have proven the OT is a lie but preachers will never tell that. They are greedy dogs and deceivers.

www.hiddenmysteries.org/mysteries/history/jehovah.html

I am familiar with the archaeologists you mention and their conclusions are quite controversial. Archaeology comes with a need for publicity to help donors and foundations continue your funding. Making such an outrageous claim would certainly get headlines and keep the dollars flowing.

I'm not surprised that there are "official" documents declaring that YHWH had Ashterah as a consort. The Jewish histories of the Bible are filled with condemnation for continuing to worship in the high places and using Ashterah poles for fertility. They did indeed worship many gods at times. The Bible doesn't

hide that.

But again, this document refers to the Documentary Hypothesis and the P source. This has been debunked for decades but is still used in many secular universities because it fits their predetermined conclusions about biblical texts.

By the way, you can find documentation for the House of David inscription here: www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/category/archaeology/.

Also we do have the oldest form of writing from Tell Mardikh, the Ebla Tablets. These date to between the 26th and 23rd centuries BCE. There are names, of places, people, and customs similar to those found in Genesis. If Genesis was supposedly written in the 7th century BCE as many claim, these names, places and customs could not be known.

evidenceforchristianity.blogspot.com/2008/11/ebla-tablets-ancient-sumerian.html

Elba Tablets?! Ha, your man was long ago discredited. You must keep up.

www.infidels.org/library/modern/james_still/reliability.html

Everything the so-called jews have or ever had was stolen from other cultures. It is easy to understand why those horrid creatures have been tossed out of every nation they tried to infiltrate with their money making schemes and corruptions. They were the central bankers our founders hated and tried to keep out of this nation. The Presidents who came against them were assassinated. Jackson managed to survive the attempts they made on his life but they still managed to gain the upper hand again and now the swine damn near own this entire nation. The only method used to gain control of Palestine was more lies. Go figure. You don't have a clue what is even happening in this world and who is in control.

I don't think Mr. Still refutes much of anything about the Ebla Tablets. He admits that Pettinato is a Sumerologist and therefore will have skills of translation. The only quibble Mr. Still seems to have with Pettinato is his claim to find the name Yah, similar to Yahweh. OK fine, he just offers another opinion. He says nothing about the names of the cities on the plain. He lost almost all credibility with me in his opening three paragraphs, claiming that Christianity is just a faith and mystery religion according to Paul. Then says Josh McDowell's theology is in tension with this since McDowell wants an inerrant scripture based on facts. Sorry, I don't see any tension at all. Paul refers to actual events in his letters, things that happened to him and things he learned from the apostles. Paul is the one in 1 Corinthians 15 who puts a lot of weight on the historical resurrection. There's no tension. He's making mountains out of ant hills.

His account of how the gospels came about is some shoddy tying together of weird threads. The so-called "Q" document does not exist. It is only supposed to exist because it fits this model. He refers to some of the church fathers to back up some of his points but not to the early tradition among those same church fathers that Mark was written by Mark from Peter's recollections. Luke is indeed an historian. Still's confusion over the middle chapters is not worth responding to. Most conservative scholars now suggest that all the gospels were written before AD 70 because none of them mention the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple when Jesus specifically predicts this in all three synoptic gospels. It would be easy to add this as an editorial proof that Jesus got it right. Especially if these gospels were supposedly cobbled together from sayings and other recollections.

Last, I really liked the part about Jesus waving a magic wand over Lazarus in the catacombs indicating they saw him as a magician. I haven't actually seen the picture though I looked for one. Found a few articles stating the same but no documentation. I suspect that it's another Everest out of an ant hill.

I'm still working on the Thomas Paine refutation of messianic prophecies. Not terribly impressed though. As suspected some of his objections no longer hold up.

He also assumes away the supernatural so when Isaiah refers to the Persian Cyrus who wasn't even born in Isaiah's time, he uses that to say that obviously Isaiah was written after 500 BCE. It's bad form to assume away what you are trying to discredit.

Funny how you keep claiming that men like Paine just assume things while he at least existed and that is more than you can say about your bible supermen. It would be one thing to have one of these paragons of virtue (not) to disappear but to have the great majority of them to vaporize from all historical records should wake up even the village idiot. I guess when a man makes his living off conning the sheeple he will stand by his deception until the end. Religion is now a trillion dollar a year BUSINESS. That is like waiting for a used car salesman to tell the buyer to be ware, there may be something wrong with his intended purchase. If Christians really claim the bible is the word of god they must really be confused about what the book says since there are over 3000 sects of Christianity and they disagree on many points. If god is not the author of confusion he sure messed up with his only written word to man. Not only is the bible a mess of contradictions and falsehoods, it is by far the filthiest and bloodiest book ever penned by man. You claim the Creator of this entire world had any part of that filth and to me that is where blasphemy truly is found. You are obviously rooted in lies or you are just taking advantage of brainwashed people to make a living. Either way, you will never open your eyes. Enjoy the holiday of greed and materialism with the rest of the Christian world.

Your hatred blinds you at least as much as you would say my faith blinds me.

I will readily admit that much that passes for Christianity indeed is little more than business. But I would say you are guilty of following the old adage of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. We're not all liars, cheats and frauds.

Jesus did/does exist.

He indeed fulfilled dozens of OT prophecies about the Messiah.

Performed signs and miracles beyond the plain ability of a simple magician, control over nature that frightened even his own disciples, raised a man dead for four days, healed a man blind from birth.

He died for my sins and for yours.

His historical resurrection proved his claims of deity and opened the door for all who call Him Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, will be saved. Ten of eleven disciples died a martyr's death, believing all that they saw and heard was real.

You are following the imaginations of those who are guilty of seeking to destroy what they simply don't like. Besides, as the evolutionary biologist J.B.S. Haldane said, "If my brain is simply composed of atoms, and my thoughts are simply the interaction of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose my brain to be composed of atoms" (loose paraphrase). In a fully materialistic universe, there is no truth, no way to truly know what is real; truth is simply what works, for the moment. Truth is indeed relative and ultimately unknowable. So why bother with your crusade? If some choose to believe a benevolent fiction, what do you care? Obviously you do care, you believe some things to be true and false. I only observe that you need to borrow from a Christian worldview to do so.

Pascal's wager is still worth considering; if I am wrong and death is the end and there is no afterlife, I've lost nothing. I've lived a good life, loved my wife and kids, kind to my neighbors, supported an Indian boy, and help give others hope. If you're wrong, you lose everything.

I will enjoy the celebration of the Incarnation that the now secular culture of the USA has turned into a necessary economic ritual. My family will enjoy a very

modest Christmas.

I hope you can enjoy some time with friends or family during this end of year.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ray Bohlin

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Defending Your Faith - Additional Readings

Steve Cable

Defending Your Faith - *Additional Readings for Probe's course on basic apologetics*

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- Hindrances of the Mind: www.probe.org/hindrances-of-the-mind-the-scandal-of-evangelical-thinking
- Faith and Reason: www.probe.org/faith-and-reason

Issue 2 - Apologetics & Evangelism

- The Apologetics of Jesus: www.probe.org/the-apologetics-of-jesus

- The Apologetics of Peter: www.probe.org/the-apologetics-of-peter
- The Relevance of Christianity: www.probe.org/the-relevance-of-christianity-an-apologetic
- What Constitutes Good Proof? (Ronald Nash) [Access article by clicking here.](#)

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- Worldviews Part 2: www.probe.org/worldviews-part-2
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“Is Laminin All That Louie Giglio Says It Is?”

Dr. Ray Bohlin

There are some crazy-popular YouTube [videos](#) featuring Louie Giglio about a cross-shaped molecule called Laminin that holds us together. What’s your take on it?

As a biologist myself I was intrigued when I heard about it and watched one of his YouTube videos. He really had to pump the crowd to get the reaction he wanted when he put it on screen. He almost always uses the crafted diagram, not an actual photograph, because the diagram shows the cross far better. Seemed a little forced to me.

Some observations:

1. The cross is not Jesus, so we are not held together by a symbol of Jesus. The cross is just the symbol of crucifixion, maybe.
2. Any adhesion molecule is going to need a way to interlock with another and this shape works well.
3. As mentioned above, when you see an electron micrograph (tiny tiny photo) the cross shape is not so clear. Textbooks will naturally lay it out differently.
4. Sorry, no goose bumps for me.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

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