

## Fact or Fiction Part 2

### Message Notes

Feb 6/2022

Intro: Stefan Duerksen

**Church-wide Requests: PRAY TOGETHER.**

#### 1. Great Command: Love God – Love people

Recap:

TRUTH doesn't change. TRUTH doesn't mind being questioned. TRUTH stands the test of time. TRUTH is simple. TRUTH is not influenced by our feelings.

Subjective Truth. truth based off of a person's perspective, feelings, or opinions.

Subjective Truth: Truth is in fact a verified or indisputable fact.

**Barna Group study on Gen Z ...** regarding how Gen Z's (10-25) and Millennials (26-41) would see objective and subjective truth:

- 37% its not possible to know if God is real
- 58% believe many religions lead to eternal life. 62% adults agree.
- 34% say the Bible is God's Word, no errors, but some symbolism
- 22% say the Bible is God's Word, no errors, taken literally.
- 14% say the Bible is God's Word but has factual or historical errors
- 14% say the Bible is just another book written by men that contains stories
- 9% don't know how to define it
- 8% say it is NOT inspired by God but tells how the writers understood God
- -> the most significant difference 16% vs 22% millennials believe the Bible is inspired and should be taken literally
- 23% vs 14% millennials believe the Bible is just another book

**Three Foundational/Anchor Points for our Faith:**

#### 1. The existence of God as demonstrated through creation

- a. **Romans 1:20 (ESV)** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.
- b. <https://youtu.be/6CulBuMCLg0> Kalam argument 4:31
- c. **WE HAVE TWO OPTIONS:** The universe was created by someone of incredible power, or the universe popped into existence for no reason, out of nothing. Which takes more faith?

#### 2. The Life, Death & Resurrection of Jesus

- a. **1 Corinthians 15:12-14 (ESV)** Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

## The evidence for Jesus' life, death & resurrection

### A. Evidence for the historicity of Jesus. His LIFE & DEATH.

- I. **Biblically we have the 4 gospel accounts** that speak of Jesus. MANUSCRIPTS FOUND: "To date we have over 5800 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, with an astounding 2.6 million pages of biblical text.<sup>1</sup> While some of these manuscripts are small and fragmentary, the *average* size of a New Testament manuscript is 450 pages.<sup>2</sup>

<https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2019/02/15/the-earliest-new-testament-manuscripts/>

- II. **Manuscripts dated 50-70AD** well within the time period where witnesses would have been alive.

### III. NON-CHRISTIAN RECORDS:

- **Evidence from Tacitus** - *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....*
- **Evidence of Josephus** - *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.*
- **Evidence from the Babylonian Talmud** - *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."*
- **Evidence from Lucian** - *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*
- <https://www.bethinking.org/jesus/ancient-evidence-for-jesus-from-non-christian-sources>

### IV. Objections & Answers:

- a. **OBJECTION:** We shouldn't listen to people who already believe the evidence.
- b. **ANSWER:** what would their motive be, money? Fame? Power? All of them suffered and most died as a result of their faith.
- c. **OBJECTION:** we can't trust the believers/non-believers accounts because they were written decades after Jesus lived.
- d. **ANSWER:** we accept other people/events as fact with less manuscripts, often dating 100's of years after the fact. E.g. King Arthur's records were 300-400 yrs after he died

- e. **IMPORTANT:** it should also be noted that there is NO historical account of any type of debate over the historicity of Jesus. It appears that the only debate centered around his claims...

As Professor Simon Gathercole said, *“These abundant historical references leave us with little reasonable doubt that Jesus lived and died. The more interesting question – which goes beyond history and objective fact – is whether Jesus died and lived.”* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/14/what-is-the-historical-evidence-that-jesus-christ-lived-and-died#comment-96597779>

If he was a historical figure... we are left with determining: is he Lord? Liar? Or, lunatic? He cannot be simply a “good teacher” NO! if he wasn’t God, he was either a liar or he was out of his mind. Because he claimed to be God and told his followers to give up their lives in pursuit of Him.

## B. Evidence for the resurrection

### I. The empty tomb

- a. **Joseph Arimathea who owned the tomb**, was a historical figure & member of the Sanhedrin. He was well known. It would be highly unlikely for Christians to use his name without being refuted.
- b. **The Bible records women as the first witnesses.** Jewish culture did not permit a woman to testify in court. Highly unlikely they would fabricate a story using women
- c. **The response by the Jewish leaders of the day.** Matthew 28 reports the Jews claimed that the disciples stole the body. No records of this being refuted by the Jewish leaders. They seemed comfortable with that claim.
- d. **Who had motive to steal Jesus’ body?**
- e. The disciples wouldn’t have stolen the body and been willing to die for a lie
- f. The Jews wouldn’t have stolen the body and proven themselves wrong
- g. The Romans wouldn’t have stolen the body and risk insurrection
- h. **The LOGICAL alternative? GOD RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD.**

### I. The appearance of Jesus alive

- a. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (ESV)** *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*
- b. Paul was an unbeliever until he encountered Jesus
- c. Peter saw him, the twelve, a group of more than 500 brothers (many who are still alive), then James (Jesus’ brother), all the apostles.
- d. **OBJECTIONS.** Most people who refute Jesus’ life, death & resurrection don’t focus on discrediting the sources. They are widely accepted as reliable.
- e. A common objection is that the witness hallucinated

**Jesus. Not just a historical figure.** He is God, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, gave his life as a ransom for those who were perishing, was raised back to life and is seated next to the Father waiting for his triumphant RETURN!

**3. The Personal Testimony of our Experience of Jesus. (and the testimony of MANY millions of others!)**

a. **John 8:31-32 (ESV)** *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

**Remember: the picture of the cat.** The objective TRUTH sets the boundary lines for WHO God is and WHAT he is like. Our subjective experience with him, colors inside the boundary lines and takes what otherwise could be viewed as "religion" and transforms it into a LIFE-GIVING RELATIONSHIP – wow!

b. **Stefan's example:** *"since my time away from the Lord, I have ALWAYS been afraid of authority. If I see a police cruiser, anxiety hits me, breathing gets shallow, shoulders and neck tense, thoughts begin to race... I have said MANY times... "how long do I have to be on the right side of the law before these feelings go away?" I mean. I know RCMP officers and Winnipeg police that are WONDERFUL PEOPLE! They give their lives to serve and protect us. I love what they do! Yes! Yet... I see them and that feeling.. every time. Ray Y trip... came back and experienced again... when I got back I was praying and asking the Lord where this was coming from and was asking him to remove this from my life... he brought me back to a Passage that had gripped my heart before I left..."*

**Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*I had read it and it hit me... but I hadn't known why... as the Lord brought me back... he revealed to me that the FEAR I was feeling was coming from a FALSE belief system that I was "going to be found out". Which had some TRUTH when I was away from the Lord! Then that fear was legitimate! As I brought that lie based thinking to the Lord and asked him to speak to me... he simply said, in reference to this verse, "Stefan, you are Stefan."*

*From that moment on. I have NEVER felt that panic. In fact, the next day, me and Lou were driving home and passed what looked like a domestic incident. Three cruisers at a house and people outside... lights flashing... the exact type of situation that has ALWAYS evoked panic. And as I saw what was going on, my heart felt for those involved and I said a short prayer... and only realized afterwards... WAIT?!?!?! I didn't feel any FEAR... I only felt COMPASSION?!?!? And this has been my EXPERIENCE since."*

c. **Like the coloring on a page.** These experiences fit within the framework of TRUTH outlined within what the Bible says is TRUE about God... but these experiences beckon us into a RELATIONSHIP with Jesus. So that we do not simply KNOW ABOUT God. WE GET TO KNOW GOD FOR OURSELF.

**TO CLOSE: MY CONFIDENCE FOR MY FAITH IS BASED ON:**

- d. The Objective Truth of God as seen in Creation
- e. The Objective Truth of the life, death & resurrection of Jesus
- f. AND my own PERSONAL EXPERIENCE with Jesus as I have come to know him as my Lord, Savior, Deliverer, King & Friend.

**D. Practical Questions from the message**

1. What did you learn about God?
2. If what you learned was true. How does this effect your life?
3. Who can you share this with this week?

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