

FROM JESUS TO CHRIST

Some of the most effective enemies of the Bible are actually scholars from some of the most prestigious religious schools. A two-part program on Frontline, which appeared on PBS in 2000, while intending to present the story of Jesus becoming Christ, in reality raised doubt about the accuracy of the Bible. Twelve scholars with the highest of academic credentials were involved in these presentations.

In view of numerous attacks upon the credibility of the Bible from many in the field of education, it appears important that we carefully look at some of the comments made by these scholars. Hopefully this may serve to alert and inform the brethren of such deceptive approaches which actually serve the cause of the devil in casting doubt about the accuracy of the Bible.

1. "The problem for any historian in trying to reconstruct the life of Jesus is simply that we don't have sources that come from the actual time of Jesus Himself" (Holland L. Hendrix). These doubters state that the four gospels were written at least forty years after the actual events of Jesus' life, thus the writers had as their source of information oral traditions about the life and times of Jesus.

Additionally they commented: "Meeting in each other's homes, early Christians told stories of Jesus' parables and miracles and of His suffering and death. These were not historical accounts, but shared memories shaped by a common past... Legend and myth and hymn and prayer are the vehicles in which all traditions develop... It seems that over time some of these songs came to be written down and what came to be thought of as the gospel, the good news, is the story of Jesus."

Reducing the gospels to mere handed-down oral traditions, these critics thus: deny the inspiration claimed by their writers, call in question the integrity of the gospel writers, and question the reliability of the Scriptures. They fail to take note of the fact that Matthew, Mark, and John were constant companions of Jesus for the last three and one-half years of His life.

Peter himself wrote, *"We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our*

Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty"(2 Peter 1:16). Luke, a later disciple who did not personally accompany Jesus, wrote in Luke 1:1-2, "*Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses.*"

If these writers cannot be accepted as inspired by God, having what they claim as absolute truth to be regarded as mere tradition, then how can any other portion of the Bible be acknowledged as the infallible word of God?

2. "The historian's task in understanding Jesus and the Jesus Movement and early Christianity is a lot like the archaeologist's task in excavating a tel. You peel back layer after layer of interpretation, and what you always find is the plurality of Jesus'"(Holland L. Hendrix). These critics thus emphasize differences in the records of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

They fail to understand or allow for the evident fact that these writers do not disagree; each simply included some details which other writers did not. There is no contradiction or clash in their stories but rather perfect harmony.

If four of us were to travel together from Georgia to California and then report on that trip, there would certainly be some things each of us would mention that the others either failed to mention or approached from another perspective. One might mention certain foods, which one might speak of a flat tire, and another talk about the weather conditions. The fourth might describe the beautiful sunset seen in Arizona. This does not suggest that they were on different trips but rather that each report complements and completes the others.

But consider some of these critics' obviously flawed observations:

A. "Mark was the first to write the story of the life of Jesus. He took desperate elements of oral tradition and a few early written sources and wove them together to create an all narrative... Mark ends with an empty tomb and awaiting for the return of Jesus... Now nobody after Mark is going to accept that; Matthew will change it, Luke will change it, John will change it."

Surely this PhD did not read Mark 16 before he said these words. Mark does not end with an empty tomb, but with a resurrected Savior - as did each and every one of the others. Each of the others, however, did add some details which Mark did not mention - just as we do today in our conversations when two or more relate a happening to someone else.

B. "Mark ends with the women fleeing and telling nobody. Is that how Matthew tells it? No. He has Jesus meet the women and now the women then go and tell."

Again, our scholar did not read well! The women did not IMMEDIATELY tell anyone at the scene of the tomb, but both Mark and Matthew inform us that after Jesus appeared to them, the women DID tell the disciples. No contradiction here!

C. "The gospels are very peculiar types of literature. They are not biographies... What they do is proclaim their individual author's interpretation of the Christian message through the device of using Jesus of Nazareth as a Spokesperson... They were gospels...good and news, update interpretations".

In Acts 4:19-20 Peter and John said, *"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."* Does this sound as though Peter and John were giving their interpretations? No! They were eyewitnesses reporting what they actually saw and experienced.

D. "Let me compare Mark with John to explain how two gospels do it differently... There is no agony in John and no garden in Mark... Jesus out of control almost in Mark, Jesus totally in control in John. Both gospels. Neither of them are historical. I don't think either of them know exactly what happened" (Eric M. Myers).

Once again, our scholar has not done his homework. The garden beyond the brook Cedron (John 18:1) is the Gethsemane referred to in Mark 14:32. The brook Cedron is a ravine crossed on the way to the garden called Gethsemane, both in the vicinity of the mount of Olives (Mark 14:26). John calls it a garden and Mark names it.

How can a scholar at such a prestigious school make such an evident flaw in his reasoning? We simply conclude that he is attempting to show inaccuracy in the Bible so as to circumvent the powerful authority of the Bible in matters of faith, doctrine, and practice.

As to His agony, John gives much more detail prior to the departure to the garden, while Mark details the events after reaching the garden of Gethsemane. They simply complement each other. Both writers knew exactly what happened, for they were "eyewitnesses."

E. "Jesus dies on a different day in John's gospel than in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In the three synoptic gospels Jesus actually eats a Passover meal before He dies. In John's gospel He doesn't; the last supper is actually eaten before the beginning of Passover."

Judas was present at the last supper referred to in John 13:26-27. But the three synoptic gospels state that he was also present at the supper referred to in their accounts (Matt. 26:25, Mark 14:20, and Luke 22:21), thus proving that the supper of John was also the same supper of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

To be even more explicit, however, neither of these suppers was the Passover supper. The Passover was scheduled for the day Jesus actually died as the true sacrificial Lamb. For Jesus and His disciples to have eaten it on the evening before would have been a day early and not in accord with Biblical requirements for the Passover.

If these critics would only read with an open mind, they could avoid such evident blunders and avoid casting doubt about the accuracy of the Bible. At one point in their presentation the speaker quoted Luke 1:1 and Luke 1:3 but neglected to quote verse 2. This verse is where it plainly referred to the Biblical writers as the source of accurate information due to their being "eyewitnesses." How convenient to disregard a verse which would so effectively spoil their attempt to show the unreliability of the Bible.

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[Editor's Note: The above article contained a few other comments by the scholars and observations by Bro. Cobb but were not printed due to space. Perhaps in the near future these additional writings will be included.]

THE BIBLE

“Bible” literally means “a written book, or roll or scroll” (Thayer). It has generally been accepted as referring to the sacred writings comprising the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

It can be understood: *“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”* (Prov. 2:1-5).

The Bible consists of two great parts called the Old and New Testaments. The word “testament” means “will, agreement, or covenant,” hence the testimony of God’s will for the salvation of man.

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
March 19 – 21	Fayetteville Rd Church Atlanta, GA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
March 26 – 28	Valley, AL	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
March 28 - - April 4	Cloud Nine Church Sierra Vista, AZ	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
March 29 - - April 2	Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. In the days of Haggai, who stirred up the governor, the high priest, and all the people to rebuild the temple?
2. While Paul was in Ephesus he was going to Jerusalem and then he said he must also go see what city?
3. What are the elders to do when called for the sick?
4. For what type of heart did David pray for in Psalm 86?

5. What two main articles were in the Holy Place of the tabernacle?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was David's friend who became a spy for him as Absalom's advisor? HUSHAI (2 Sam 15:32-37)

2. God said he would make the sky and earth like two metals if the Israelites disobeyed. Name the two metals. IRON AND BRASS (Lev. 26:19)

3. In the Parable of the Talents, how many total talents were entrusted to servants? EIGHT (Matt. 25:15)

4. What was the loud voice like, that John, in the book of Revelation, heard? A TRUMPET (Rev. 1:10)

5. What were the people doing, after the law was read to them, that Nehemiah asked them to stop doing? WEEPING (Neh. 8:9)