

# WHY THINK THIS IS TRUE

*Do You Have to Commit Intellectual Suicide to Follow Jesus? (Handout 1)*

## **Gnosticism's Influence—**

## **Constantines Influence—**

Acts 17.6-7—When they could not find them [Paul and Silas], they dragged Jason and some believers before the city authorities, shouting, “These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here [Thessalonica] also, and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another **KING** named Jesus.”

Acts 16.31—They answered, “Believe on the **LORD** Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Acts 9.20—And immediately he [Paul] began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the **SON OF GOD.**”

Acts 10.36—You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching **PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST**—he is **LORD OF ALL.**

1John 4.14—And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the **SAVIOR OF THE WORLD**

William Temple (Church of England)— If our concept of God is wrong, the more religious we get, the more dangerous we are to ourselves and others.

G. K. Chesterton—The teachings of Jesus have not been tried and found wanting; they has been found difficult and left untried.

## What We Do Know:

1.) In the first third of the 1st Century (30,40,50 A.D.) there is a band of Jewish men and women who went out into the world proclaiming a message.

Acts 8.12—But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of THE KINGDOM of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 19.8—Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about THE KINGDOM of God.

Acts 20.25— Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching THE KINGDOM will ever see me again.

Acts 28.23—They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about THE KINGDOM of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus.

Acts 28.30-31—For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed THE KINGDOM of God and taught about the LORD Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

2.) They went out into a HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT, starting in Palestine and then very quickly spread throughout the Roman empire.

3.) They suffered alot of persecution because of it.

We know from Tacitus, a Roman Historian, that Christianity had grown so large and so fast that by the years 62,63, 64 AD, that the Roman Emperor Nero could plausibly blame the burning of Rome on these Christians. And that justified trying to exterminate them on his campaign to try and kill all the Christians. (And it was as brutal as anything in history affords us.) Even the hardened Tacitus comments that Nero's treatment of the Christians was barbaric even according to Roman standards.

4.) We find the basic message of the early followers of this Jesus in the Gospels and “Paul’s” Epistles (the earliest writings).

Pacifists - Hope of a New World, and Preaching Enemy-Love and Forgiveness

Acts 10.38-40—How **GOD** anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power,

That the world might be healed . . . — John 3.17

\*All texts quoted from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

and how he went around doing good and healing all who were **under the power of the devil**, because **GOD was with him**. We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. **THEY** killed him by hanging him on a cross.

Acts 3.13-15—The **GOD** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. **YOU** handed him over to be killed, and **YOU DISOWNED HIM** before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. **YOU DISOWNED** the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. **YOU KILLED** the author of life.

Acts 2.22-24—“People of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by **GOD** to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was given to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and **YOU**, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Acts 10.39-40—**THEY** killed him by hanging him on a cross, but **GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD**.

Acts 3.15—**YOU** killed the author of life, but **GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD**.

ACTS 2.24—But **GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD**

Acts 4.10—Whom **YOU** crucified but whom **GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD**.

### Question 1: Why would these men do this?

No Motive.

Heretical by traditional Jewish Standards

Publius (or Gaius) Cornelius Tacitus (AD 56 - AD 117)

### Question 2: Could could they have pulled this lie off?

Christianity was seen as a pernicious cult that needed to be stamped out and although there are many charges against Christianity in the first Century, never is the charge made that they made it all up! (They don’t even deny that Jesus did “miracles.”) We can’t find any ancient person who accuses the early Christians of making the whole thing up!

### Question 3. Why are there no deserters?

### Questions 4: Why do the Gospels read the way they do in regards to their counter cultural dimensions?

One example is Jesus’ treatment of women.

Easily Falsified

Not long, long ago, in a place far, far away.

Jesus was a fellow Jew whom they knew and they presumed their audience knew. (James Jesus’ brother)

Lived in Palestine where they were preaching.

Died very recently

Big names are used (Pilate the Governor, Caiaphas the High Priest, Joseph of Arimathea)

No evidence that they were the kind of people who would lie.



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# WHY THINK THIS IS TRUE

*Do You Have to Commit Intellectual Suicide to Follow Jesus? (Handout 2)*

Paul's first epistles were written in 49 A.D. - 16 years after Jesus.

Paul's Earliest Account - 53-55 A.D\*:

Five accounts of the Resurrection in the first 20 to 60 years & 11 accounts within the first Century. Very rare in history that you have that many sources for a single event.

Ancient Judaism - Josephus (90 years later)  
Alexander the Great - Arrian (400 years later)

Ancient Persian Wars - Herodotus (70 years later)

Middle Ages - St Bede (200 years later)

By Historical Standards the Resurrection is very exceptional.

**\*1Corinthians 15.1-8**—Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received\*\* I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

\*\*It is arguable that Paul received this within 3-4 years of the event, at most 5 or 6. See Paul's claim in Galatians 1&2

**Dating of Luke**—Evidence from Book of Acts.

## Question 5: Where is the “Cultural” Catalyst for this?

*How The Gospels Came to Be*

Cultural Expectations of the Jews - Maccabean History  
Messiah Preaching Nonviolence and Loving the Romans  
Way to Restoration is Embracing a Roman Cross  
The elements of the Jesus story are completely and entirely counter-Jewish.

## Question 6: How do orthodox monotheistic Jewish men go against their most fundamental convictions within their own culture and begin to worship a contemporary Jewish person as the embodiment of Yahweh?

Most antithetical act to Jewish Culture is the belief that a human being can be God.

John 19.7—The Jews insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

## Question 7: How Do They Do This Over Night?

Huge Problem: You don't have enough time.

(Alexander the Great - 4 centuries later.)

(Buddah - 5 centuries later)

**Mark 15.21**—A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

## Question 8: How does one reconcile the claim of these men to be giving eyewitness testimony?

**John 1.1-5**—... which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched ... we have seen it ... has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard ... This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you ...

James 1.1—James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Wolfgang Schadewaldt, one of the great Homeric scholars of this century, assessment of the historical reliability of the Gospels to Tübingen University Seminary in Germany—“As someone who has acquired some knowledge of ‘literature’, I am particularly con-

That the world might be healed . . . — John 3.17

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Ends abruptly with Paul being on house arrest (62 A.D.)

Does not mention the martyrdom of Paul which happened in 64 or 65 A.D.

Doesn't mention the Jewish-Roman War that broke out in 66 A.D.

Doesn't mention the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Doesn't mention the persecution under Nero (64 A.D.) .

Before 62 A.D. (Less than three decades after the original Jesus lived.)

cerned here to note that when we read the Synoptic Gospels we cannot be other than captivated by the experiential vividness with which we are confronted. The conditions of their time stand before us: nature, the landscape of Palestine, the Sea of Galilee, places from the coast to the far side of the Jordan, and Nazareth with its sheer cliff. If only we read the text simply enough, we can imagine Jesus traveling here and there—a situation which we misunderstand if we miss the repeated 'other way'—the most important words are spoken and actions performed 'on the way' as no more than literary decoration...I know of no other area of history-writing, biography or poetry where I encounter so great a wealth of material in such a small space." (W.Schadewaldt in M. Hengel, "Studies in the Gospel of Mark", p.102)

Newtonian Physics to Quantum Physics

## Story Details versus Ethical Teachings

1. Things that Changed with Constantine
2. Virgin Birth not in all four Gospels
3. Historical Criticism vs. Rhetorical Criticism
4. Bob

**"I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene." – Albert Einstein**

**"I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ was no mere man." – Napoleon**

**"A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others . . . it was a perfect act." – Mahatma Gandhi**

**"Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet" – Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette**

**"Even those who have renounced Christianity . . . have not been able to create a higher ideal of man and of virtue than the ideal given by Christ of old." – Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

**"The things he says are very different from what any other teacher has said" – C.S. Lewis**

**"I am a historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history." – H.G. Wells**

**"Christ teaches that God is love . . . Religion can be the enemy of God. It's often what happens when God, like Elvis, has left the building. – Bono**



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