

The Honest Skeptic's Worksheet

by Dave Arch

All page numbers refer to the New International Version of The Bible as published by Zondervan Publishing as their Thinline Bible. It is available at all Christian Book Stores and many others too.

Introduction

Before beginning, it's necessary to establish the historical accuracy and reliability of the Gospel accounts as found in the New Testament. This reliability is based on several facts:

1. We have more than 4000 manuscripts or parts of the New Testament which have survived to our time. The earliest among these manuscripts is dated 130 A.D.
2. We have writings of secular historians who verify the writings of the Gospels (ex. Flavius Josephus).

"Now, there was about this 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 over to himself many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

(Antiquities Of The Jews, Chapter III, Section 3 by Jewish historian Flavius Josephus)

3. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are all books written by men who were eyewitnesses to the events (i.e. Apostles or close associates of the Apostles).

4. Finally, in textually dating the time of the writing of the Gospels, we arrive at dates prior to 70 A.D. That is within the time period when the contemporaries of Jesus Christ were still living. If they (the Gospels) weren't accurate historical accounts, they could have been refuted at that time.

For more information on this subject, please visit the library and read the article entitled [The Historical Reliability Of The New Testament](#).

Directions For This Worksheet

After reading the historical fact, read and consider the arising question(s) concerning that fact. Finally, choose which of the logical conclusions you will choose as an answer to the question.

For each answer you choose, you must then be able to present an answer to its accompanying question(s).

THE CLAIMS OF JESUS

Historical Fact:

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (Mark 14:61,62, pg. 860).

Arising Question:

Who really is Jesus Christ?

Logical Conclusions:

1. JESUS CHRIST IS A LEGEND

If Jesus never historically existed, how do you account for the fact of A.D. and B.C. as historical standards for labeling dates? How do you account for other historians who wrote during the same time period about this historical person of Jesus Christ?

2. JESUS CHRIST WAS A LIAR

If Jesus knowingly lied about who He was, what motive does a man then have for dying for a known lie? Were any of His other teachings characteristic of a liar?

3. JESUS CHRIST REALLY BELIEVED HE WAS THE SON OF GOD

If Jesus honestly believed that he was the Son of God (and he wasn't), that would make him a mentally unbalanced person. Why didn't he act mentally unbalanced in any other area of His life? Why didn't he fall apart under the terrific tension of His trial? If we accept this conclusion, we must search for other supporting indications of "mental instability."

4. JESUS CHRIST REALLY IS THE SON OF GOD

What will you do about what He said regarding eternal life and forgiveness of sin?

Please note that the choice of Jesus merely being a "good teacher" does not exist if He was wrong on this major point of His teaching!

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Historical Fact:

After being in the grave for two days, the body of Jesus was found missing on the third day (John 20:1-10, pg. 917)

Arising Question:

What happened to the body of Jesus?

Logical Conclusions:

1. NON-CHRISTIANS (JEWISH OR ROMAN LEADERS) TOOK THE BODY

If non-Christians took the body, why would they help by contributing to the belief that Jesus rose from the dead? If they had taken the body, why didn't they show the body in order to squelch the "rumor" of His resurrection?

2. JESUS NEVER REALLY DIED

How could Jesus survive six hours on the cross, live through the stab of a Roman spear, then convince Pilate and his soldiers that He was dead, endure the pain of crucifixion with the coldness of a tomb for three days, and then remove the boulder at the mouth of the tomb, elude the guards posted at the grave, convince His disciples He had a resurrection body, and finally disappear and die a secret death?

3. CHRISTIANS (THE DISCIPLES) TOOK THE BODY

Why would the disciples be then willing later to die for something they knew was a hoax?

4. JESUS CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD

What will you do about what He says regarding eternal life and forgiveness of sins?

Please note that only the final choice takes into consideration the great change that came over the disciples following the resurrection. Only the final choice can account for the change in Peter from that of John 18:15-17 (pg. 915) to that of Acts 2:22-24 (pg. 920).

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Historical Fact:

Jesus says:

**". . . I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
John 10:10 (pg. 906)**

**"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the
Father except through me." John 14:6 (pg. 911)**

**"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son
and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will
raise him up at the last day." John 6:40 (pg. 901)**

Arising Question:

Why not by prayer actively trust Jesus to do all that He promised?

Logical Conclusions:

1. If you personally place your trust in Jesus to provide eternal life and forgiveness of sin, you can know that you are going to heaven when you die (I John 5:13, pg. 1030).
2. If you don't personally place your trust in what Jesus has done for you, the following verse applies:

**"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever
rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."
John 3:36 (pg. 898)**

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