

Biblical Reliability Handout

By Howard R. Killion, Ph.D., Copyright, July 2017

*Note: Text **in bold** is author's five-minute introduction.*

Two preliminary comments

1. I must start by clarifying the basic philosophical concept of the word “worldview,” which Kant & Hegel developed in the 19th century. These German philosophers coined the German term “Weltanschauung,” which literally means “worldview.” My [Websters’ New College] English dictionary defines “Weltanschauung” as “a comprehensive, esp. personal, philosophy or conception of the universe and of human life.” Or more simply put, “worldview” means how a person views reality, or a framework for making sense of the data of life. There are seven major worldviews, including the 2 chiefly represented here today—atheism and theism. The others are deism, finite godism, panentheism, pantheism, & polytheism. No one can consistently believe in more than one worldview (except pantheism and polytheism) because the central premises of each are mutually exclusive. [Geisler, “Worldview,” pp.785-86] A worldview is not evidence. It is the way we organize the evidence to help it make sense to us.

Geisler offers the following summary that delineates the seven worldviews by step by step logic: “Reality is either the universe only, God only, or the universe and God(s). If the universe is all that exists then atheism is right. If God is all that exists then pantheism is right. If God and the universe exists then either there is one God or many gods. If there are many gods, polytheism is right. If there is only one God then this God is either finite or infinite. If there is one finite god then finite godism is correct. If this finite god has two poles (one beyond and one in the world), then panentheism is right. If there is one infinite God then either there is intervention of this God in the universe or there is not. If there is intervention, then theism is true. If there is not, then deism is true.” [p. 787b]

2. People cannot reasonably claim to be objective about whether the Bible is reliable if they decide ahead of time that the supernatural and miracles don’t exist. While objectivity does not require certainty that they exist, it does require the possibility that they do. Objectivity and pre-judging are incompatible.

Evidence for the Bible in General

***Although written over the course of 1500 years by 40 human authors, the Bible has a remarkable unity. Here’s a simple outline:**

- A. **Genesis Chs. 1 & 2:** Pre-existing **God creates** out of nothing **the universe** and time **as the setting for loving relationships with humans**, specially made for this purpose;
- B. **Genesis Ch. 3:** **Because of their disobedience the first humans are lost to God’s loving purpose;**
- C. **Genesis Ch. 4 to the end of the rest of the Bible:** **God saves and restores humans to His loving purpose. The central event of this third part is the coming of Jesus the Son of God 2,000 years ago** to live, die, and rise again, and thereby restore God’s plan.

Jesus’ resurrection is depicted as a victory over spiritual death (the result of the broken relationship with God that comes with humans choosing to go their own way). This victory is actually predicted in the second part of the outline: God warns Satan the devil in Gen. 3:15 rather cryptically immediately after Adam and Eve’s disobedience: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman [that’s Eve], and

between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” In other words, a male descendant of Eve will deliver the devil a fatal blow while receiving a non-fatal wound from the devil. Early Bible scholars Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (mid-2nd century) called this verse the “proto-gospel,” or the seed of the future good news of Jesus Christ.

Key Evidences about the New Testament in General & the Gospels in Particular

***A massive number of NT Greek manuscripts exist—more than 5,600 of them—a dozen dating from the 2nd century, & 124 within 300 years of the original NT writing**—including a complete NT from the 4th century, [the Codex Sinaiticus in the British Museum]. The earliest is a scrap of John’s Gospel from about AD 125. We also have 20,000 more NT manuscripts from early translations in Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Georgian, Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and many other languages. Moreover, we have more than a million additional quotations, covering the entire NT, by the Church Fathers. Most of these early Church leaders and Bible scholars—more than two dozen of them—wrote from the late 1st century thru the 4th century. **By comparing the huge number of manuscripts, modern scholars have been able to determine the NT text with a high degree of accuracy. We have NO existing manuscripts of any other ancient text, including Tacitus, Josephus, Pliny, Livy, Herodotus, or Homer, that were written within 300 years of original writing.** [Daniel B. Wallace, “Has the New Testament Been Hopelessly Corrupted?” Steven B. Cowan & Terry L. Wilder, eds., *In Defense of the Bible*, pp. 146-50]

*Re. other ancient writings: Julius Caesar’s Gallic Wars—10 MS; Livy’s Roman History—20; Tacitus—2; Thucydides’ History—8; the most documented classic writing is Homer’s Iliad—2,200; his Odyssey - 141. NT—over 5600 Greek MS and well over one million overall! We have only about 25 copies of Josephus but the oldest was written 700 years after the original, the oldest of Pliny’s 200 manuscripts also dates 700 years after the original, [Geisler, “NT MS,” p. 532a; Wallace in Cowan, pp. 146, 150]

*Re. the high degree of accuracy of determining the NT text:

- a) While radical skeptics claim that the vast majority of NT MS are worthless because they are so late, the 124 MS within 300 years of original writing are still more than the zero for all other ancient writings; by these skeptic’s standards we should therefore not be able to know anything about the history of ancient Greece or Rome apart from archeology;
- b) 12 Gk NT MS – 2nd century; 64 – 3rd century; 48 – 4th century; over 700 – 5th to 10th century;
- c) We have 3 times as many NT MS dating within 200 years of original writing as we have of the average classical author within 2,000 years of original writing;
- d) Less than 1% of all the “textual variants” (differences in the manuscript texts) affect the meaning of the texts. Only two are extensive: Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11. The former is about Jesus’ resurrection appearances. The latter is Jesus’ encounter with the woman caught in adultery. In most recent English translations these passages are flagged by the publishers as not found in “the best manuscripts.” None of the other variants are more than one-fourth the size of these two passages. These include Matthew 27:16-17; Romans 5:1; and Philippians 1:14. But as Bart Ehrman, the leading radical skeptic of the NT text acknowledges, “Essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament.” [Wallace in Cowan, pp. 146-62; Ehrman quotation from Erhman, *Misquoting Jesus*, Appendix, cited by Wallace in Cowan, p. 161]

***Church Scholars Clement of Rome, Ignatius in Turkey (Smyrna), and Polycarp in Syria (Antioch) cited all 27 NT books except 2 Peter & Jude by AD 110. Therefore, we know with certainty that nearly all the NT books were written before AD 100—in order for the books to get disseminated by 110.** We can also conclude that the more than a couple of centuries needed for alleged myths about Jesus to develop were simply not available. [Barnett, pp. 39-40]

Resurrection of Jesus Christ

***I'm now going to focus on evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ because it is central to Christianity and the Bible. As Paul wrote to fellow Christians with rational clarity in 1 Corinthians 15, "...If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified that he raised Christ from the dead."** [verses 14-15] If Jesus' resurrection is the best explanation of the evidence, this gives weight to the reliability of the whole NT because the resurrected Christ is the central figure there. This likewise supports the reliability of the OT because the NT regards the OT as reliable.

***Gary Habermas, (PhD, Michigan State, in History & Philosophy of Religion, Chairman of the Philosophy & Theology Dept at Liberty U) has investigated all the scholars of the resurrection of Jesus, including liberal and radical scholars, in English, French, and German. That's 1400 scholars! As a result, Habermas has identified five historical facts that nearly all of these scholars agree are true.**

Incidentally, these five facts were also acknowledged by Anthony Flew, one of the most influential atheist spokespersons of the late 20th century, in a televised debate on the resurrection with Habermas in April 2000 [for transcript, see Baggett, ed., *Did the Resurrection Happen?*; Flew's acceptance of the five facts, pp. 24, 28, 32, 34-35]

- 1) **Jesus really died by crucifixion;**
- 2) **Jesus' disciples sincerely believed that he rose from the dead and appeared to them;**
- 3) **Church persecutor Paul suddenly changed & later became one of the Church's chief messengers;**
- 4) **Skeptic James, half-brother of Jesus, suddenly changed & later became a Church leader;**
- 5) **Jesus' tomb was empty.** [Note: not supported by "nearly all" scholars, but still 75% of them.] [Habermas, pp. 48-77]

The historical resurrection of Jesus is the most plausible explanation for these five attested facts.

***In addition to many biblical evidences for all five facts, four non-biblical, non-Christian sources support the first fact:** Jewish historian **Josephus** (d. c. AD 100), Roman historian **Tacitus** (d 120), Gk satirist **Lucian** (d. 180), **& the Talmud** (rabbinic commentaries, late 2nd century); **and one**, Roman governor **Pliny** (of Bithynia AD 110), **supports the second fact; and one, Josephus again, supports the fourth fact.**

***Also at least ten Church Fathers, that is, non-biblical Christian sources, support these five facts:** **Clement** bishop of Rome (AD c. 95), **Polycarp** of Smyrna (Turkey, AD 110), **Ignatius** of Antioch (Syria, c. AD 110), **Papias** bishop of Hierapolis (Turkey, d. 130), **Justin Martyr** of Rome (d. 165), **Dionysius** of Corinth (170), **Hegesippus** of Rome (d. c. 180) quoted by Eusebius (church historian d. 340), **Clement of Alexandria** (d. 215), **Tertullian** of Carthage (Tunisia, 240), **& Origen** of Alexandria & Caesarea (Gk theologian, 253).

***Support Summary for 5 Facts:**

- 1) Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, the Talmud;
- 2) Pliny; Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, Tertullian, Origen, Dionysius;
- 3) Same as 2 plus Papias;
- 4) Josephus; Hegesippus & Clement of Alexandria;
- 5) Justin Martyr & Tertullian.

END OF INITIAL 5-MINUTE PRESENTATION

More Definitions

*To save time, I'm going to lump together atheism, materialism, naturalism, secularism, secular humanism, and agnosticism. While they are closely related, I acknowledge that philosophically they are not the same.

*Truth: Accurate, reliable information about reality.

*Microevolution: big horses from little horses; attested by natural science

*Macroevolution: life from non-life & humans from amoebas; beyond the scope of natural science, it is not necessarily untrue, but requires naturalistic philosophical underpinning [See Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*.]

*Prophecy (OT definition): Words or message that God directs a person to communicate to others, sometimes involving prediction of future events

More arguments

*The Bible offers a more plausible explanation than naturalism and atheism for why we humans are the way we are. For example, Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, "summarize[s] the ethical reasoning of secular humanists like this: 'Man descends from apes, therefore we must love one another.' The second clause does not follow from the first. If it was natural for the strong to eat the weak in the past, why aren't people allowed to do it now? I am not, of course, arguing that we should not love one another. Rather, I'm saying that, given the secular view of the universe, the conclusion of love or social justice is no more logical than the conclusion to hate or destroy. These two sets of beliefs—in a thorough-going scientific materialism [on the one hand] and in a liberal humanism [on the other]—simply do not fit with one another. Each set of beliefs is evidence against the other." [Cited in Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical*, pp. 42-43]

*It is not accidental that modern science was developed by people who viewed the universe from a biblical point of view. Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Francis Bacon, Harvey, Gilbert, Boyle, and Newton viewed the universe as created by God and therefore an objective reality that was orderly, discoverable, and worthy of study. [Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science, 1300-1800*, Rev. ed. (1957)]

*Natural science's determination of several score of astronomical, geological, and geographic factors in a precise arrangement necessary for the existence of human life on the earth suggests that the biblical Creator is a more plausible explanation for such an arrangement than the incidental randomness of matter, energy, and time.

*While each individual evidence for biblical reliability is important, the cumulative weight of the large number of evidences deserves extra consideration. The sum is greater than the parts.

*Reminding us that reason may not be the only factor at play here in our discussion, I quote Mark Twain's famous observation that "it is not the parts of the Bible I do NOT understand that bother me—but the parts I DO understand." Let us be mindful of our motives for our most cherished beliefs. [Geisler, "Bible, Alleged Errors in," p. 80]

More evidence for the Bible in general

*Unique among ancient writings of the Middle East, the Bible records the embarrassments, mistakes, and evil acts of its heroes. This indicates an unparalleled commitment to truth-telling.

*Since Napoleon cannot be repeated in a test tube, empirical science has little to say about history, apart from dating archeological artifacts. However, historians—and police detectives, for that matter—use certain common sense criteria to evaluate testimony about the past. These five are basic:

- 1) Multiple independent witnesses are better than one;
 - 2) Factual support from a neutral or hostile source is stronger than testimony by a friendly source since bias in favor of the person or position is absent;
 - 3) People don't make stuff up that would make themselves look bad or weaken their position;
 - 4) Eyewitnesses are better than secondary sources;
 - 5) Testimonies received soon after an event are more reliable than those received long after.
- [Habermas, p. 40]

Note: Satisfying these criteria explains in large measure why the five resurrection facts listed above are attested by nearly all scholars.

*According to Norman Geisler, "Bible, Alleged Errors in," Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, pp. 75-80, most if not all alleged errors or contradictions in the Bible result from one of 17 forms of faulty thinking. These include:

- a) Assuming the unexplained is unexplainable, including arguing from silence;
 - b) Assuming the Bible is guilty of error unless proven innocent (Deconstructionism);
 - c) Confusing interpretations of the Bible with the Bible itself;
 - d) Failing to understand the context (Deconstructionism);
 - e) Interpreting the clear by the difficult;
 - g) Assuming a partial report is a false report (Deconstructionism); etc.
- Notice that these have to do with faulty thinking, not with holding to a particular worldview.

**Jerusalem: The Biography* by Simon Sebag Montefiore, shows pictures of 9 archeological discoveries that correlate with the biblical record: for example, the first archeological mention of King David which was just found in 1994, and the wooden hull of a 27-foot fishing boat, dating from the time of Jesus, found in the mud along the Sea of Galilee's shore in 1986. The Gospels mention this kind of boat 50 times. From my 2007 trip to Israel I have photos of 15 additional archeological finds, including the recently excavated pool of Siloam which is featured in Jesus' healing of the man born blind in John 9; and the Garden Tomb, favored by Protestants over the heavily ornate Roman Catholic burial site in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. (Note: the Garden Tomb corresponds to the biblical description in several ways: it is close to a rugged, skull-faced hill (Mark 15:22); it is in a garden (John 19:41); it is a horizontal cave cut out of stone (Matt. 27:59-60; Luke 23:53); it has an outside channel to guide a rolling but missing very large round stone door (Matt. 27:60; Mark 16:3-4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1); it has a little alcove where the featured body would be placed, TO THE RIGHT of the entrance; this alcove is illuminated by a rock-cut open window slanting downward so sunlight can fall directly on its floor; (Mark 16:5); and the entrance to this alcove, the actual tomb, is so low that one must bend over to look inside. (John 20:5) I also have pictures of the Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll which I saw personally at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

*There is an essential practical goodness in human relations taught in the Bible. When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus quoted two OT passages, well-known to his fellow Jews, which say basically, "Love God wholeheartedly, and love your neighbor as yourself." [Matthew 22:31-40; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18]

Evidence for the Old Testament

*The J/E/D/P documentary theory, created by Julius Wellhausen in an archeological vacuum in 1878 and yet still influencing many scholars today, lacks any objective, independent evidence outside the OT. The theory exists only in the minds and writings of its authors. [Kitchen, p. 492]

*Literary criticism's Deconstructionism is intellectually and factually indefensible. This includes assuming the author's thinking is an illusion created by readers, and texts must always be approached with hostile suspicion. Deconstructionism is also self-contradictory. Using it to interpret writings about Deconstructionism or about anything else gives you the outrageous liberty to turn the writings into whatever you jolly well please. [K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, pp. 469-72]

*The Book of Deuteronomy shows very strong evidence of being written in the middle of the second millennium BC. This would be consistent with Mosaic authorship around 1400 BC, the Exodus date of conservative scholarship. The book closely follows the form of Hittite political treaties of the same period, treaties between a king and a subordinate ruler. The typical treaty of the period consisted of these six elements:

1. A prelude naming the Great King.
2. A historical prologue tracing the history of relations between the two powers.
3. A set of stipulations or obligations imposed on the lesser nation.
4. A provision for the deposit of the treaty and public readings of the treaty at agreed intervals.
5. A list of witnesses, normally the gods of both states.
6. A set of curses and blessings should there be a lack of fulfillment or praiseworthy obedience.

Deuteronomy has these same six elements and in nearly the same order:

1. Preamble – 1:1-5
2. Historical Prologue – 1:6-4:43
3. Stipulations of the Covenant – 4:44-26:19
4. Deposit and Public Reading – 27:1-8; 31:1-13
5. Curses and Blessings – 27:9-28:68
6. Witnesses and Provisions for Succession and Renewal – Chapters 29-34

Critical scholars date Deuteronomy in the late seventh century, almost 800 years after the date of conservative scholarship. But since Middle East treaties of that late date lack several of these six elements, the earlier date for Deuteronomy is far more plausible. [Findings by Kenneth Kitchen as reported by Walter C. Kaiser, "Is the Old Testament Reliable?" Cowan, pp. 209-10]

*A copy of the entire book of Isaiah and parts of every other OT book except Esther were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls beginning in 1947. Dating from about 150 BC, these manuscripts are virtually identical to the previously earliest known existing OT manuscripts, despite a millennium between them. This demonstrates the reliability of Jewish scribal copying practices. In addition, many copies of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, are available for scholarly comparisons. [Geisler, "Old Testament Manuscripts," pp. 548-53, quotation from p. 553; "New Testament Manuscripts," p. 534]

*In the Israel Museum in Jerusalem I have seen the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah, copied about 150 years before Jesus' birth; the original was written about 700 BC. The manuscript includes these prophecies about a future Messiah: A virgin will give birth to a son who will rule David's kingdom with peace, righteousness, and justice; he will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace” (9:2, 6-7); God will lay on his Suffering Servant the sins of all humanity; he will die and be buried among the rich; then he will live again, bringing spiritual health to many. (52:13-53:12)

*Critical scholars viewed Daniel 5’s account of Belshazzar as successor to Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar to be proof of a significant inaccuracy. However, in 1882, a tablet revealed that successor King Nabonidas left his son Belshazzar in charge while he went off to pursue archeological interests in the Arabian Desert. [Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Is the Old Testament Historically Reliable?” Cowan, p. 217-18]

More evidence for the NT and the Gospels in particular

*There are two NT references to other NT books that show that they were written by the mid AD 60s because both Peter and Paul were executed under Nero before his death in AD 68: Peter writes of possessing Paul’s letters, and ascribes OT authority to them. (2 Peter 3:15-16) Paul quotes Luke’s Gospel (Lk 10:7) in 1 Timothy 5:18.

*We have four different accounts of Jesus life, including his resurrection appearances. The 1st and 4th Gospels are by eyewitnesses, Matthew and John respectively. The second was written by John Mark, a disciple of the Apostle Peter, another eyewitness. The third Gospel—as well as its sequel, the Book of Acts—was written by Luke, the only non-Jewish NT writer. The introduction to his books shows his training as a classical Greek historian like Herodotus and Thucydides and articulates his commitment to “carefully investigate everything from the beginning...[giving primary consideration to eyewitnesses, in order] to write an orderly account.” (Luke 1:1-4)

*It is significant that these four accounts of Jesus’ life all agree on main points about his teachings and actions yet also exhibit distinctive perspectives reflecting the unique personalities and interests of the different authors. “Matthew obviously wished to identify Jesus with the Messiah of the OT by pointing out that he was the fulfillment of [OT] prophesy and that he was intimately related to the manifestations of [God’s] kingdom. Mark, by his terse descriptive paragraphs, depicted the Son of God in action among men. Luke used a smoother literary style and a larger stock of parables to interest a cultured and perhaps humanistic audience. John selected episodes and discourses that others had not used in order to promote belief in Jesus as the Son of God.” [“Gospels: The Four Gospels,” *New Intl Dictionary*, p. 398]

*The four Gospels also show minor discrepancies. This demonstrates that the four accounts were not the result of collusion, but actually reflect what eyewitnesses remembered. Police investigators will tell you that eyewitnesses who give evidence independent of each other invariably have discrepancies. However, these inconsistencies between Gospels are only about minor details.

*Early non-Christian references confirm the NT in a number of ways: Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, and Suetonius (Roman historian AD 69-c. 140) wrote the following about Christ and Christians:

- 1) Christianity spread from Judea to Rome by the AD 40s and in AD 49 Emperor Claudius expelled Christians from Rome because they were accused of causing trouble on behalf of “Chrestus”; (confirming Acts 1:4; 18:2; 28:13-15); [Suetonius]
- 2) Jesus Christ was executed as a criminal, probably by crucifixion (“the extreme penalty” reports Tacitus), in the province of Judea when Tiberius was emperor (AD 14-37) and Pontius Pilate was governor (AD 26-36); (confirming latter parts of the Gospels);
- 3) Jesus was called “the Christ”; (throughout NT, such as Acts 2:36)
- 4) His followers were called “Christians”; (Acts 11:26)

5) They were numerous not only by the AD 40s in Rome, but by the 80s in the remote province of Bithynia in northern Turkey; (Romans 1:7; 1 Peter 1:1)

6) Jesus had a brother named James; (Galatians 1:19). [Barnett, pp. 22-34]

*Apostle Matthew's authorship of the First Gospel is supported by the following: a) As a tax collector whose job required note-taking and keeping records, Matthew would be a logical choice as the official recorder of Jesus ministry; short-hand was "widely known in the ancient Hellenistic world"; b) the First Gospel is written in the meticulous style of an accountant, which would be natural for a tax gatherer; c) even though the early Church Fathers recognize that the Second Gospel consists mostly of the eye-witness account of Peter, they still give the name of the gospel to the one who wrote it, Peter's disciple John Mark; therefore, the fact that the early Church Fathers, including Papias of Hierapolis (Turkey, died AD 130) as quoted by Eusebius (bishop of Caesarea and church historian, early 4th century), are unanimous in naming the First Gospel after the Apostle Matthew is highly significant; "If [Matthew] used other sources, in particular Mark, he added his own apostolic witness to that of Peter's..." [*New International Dictionary of the Bible*, pp.630-31]

*John Mark was recognized by the early Church Fathers as the author of the Second Gospel. Papias of Hierapolis (Turkey, died AD 130) wrote: "Mark...having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote...all that he recalled of what was either said or done by the Lord. For he neither heard the Lord, nor was he a follower of his, but at a later date...of Peter." [Quoted by Eusebius, *Church History*, cited in Barnett, p. 74] This authorship by John Mark, disciple of Peter, is also attested by Justin Martyr writing in Rome c. 150, by Irenaeus in Gaul c. 170, and Clement of Alexandria c. 180. [Barnett, p. 74] Mark's main source about Jesus, the Apostle Peter, may have started as a fisherman, but he was discipled by Jesus for three years and became the leader of the twelve Apostles. After famously denying his connection to Jesus three times during the latter's trial and crucifixion, Peter was nevertheless the Apostle who spoke boldly to the large Jerusalem crowd at Pentecost, speaking as an eye witness to Jesus' resurrection in Acts 2. Peter remained a church leader in Jerusalem who defied the religious leaders' attempts to silence him and the other Apostles (Acts 4 & 5) until Herod Agrippa's persecution in AD c. 43—he executed Apostle James son of Zebedee and arrested Peter but Peter escaped—(Acts 12). Back in Jerusalem in about c. 47 Peter and other church leaders decided that he, John son of Zebedee, and James the half-brother of Jesus would continue to lead the outreach to Jews while Paul and Barnabas led the outreach to the Gentiles. (Gal 2:1-9) So Peter travelled on to Antioch c. 49 (Gal 2:11-14), Corinth (1Cor 1:12; 9:5), and eventually Rome in the early 60s (1 Peter 5:13, "Babylon"=Rome). [Barnett, pp. 74-76]

*What else do we know about John Mark? His mother's large house served as a significant gathering place for the early Jerusalem church. (Acts 12:12-17; Gal 1:18-19) His two names, one Jewish (John) and the other Greek (Mark) indicate that he was probably upper class, educated, and bi-lingual. He accompanied his cousin Barnabas, a church leader, and Paul on their missionary journey to Cyprus and southern Galatia (Acts 13:13) until a dispute over John Mark's conduct caused the two leaders go their separate ways. (Acts 15:37-39). But later John Mark is reconciled to Paul who refers to him as a "fellow worker" in Paul's letter to Philemon (verse 23) and as someone whose help he needs late in his ministry. (2 Tim 4:11) Peter also affectionately refers to John Mark as "my son" in 1 Pet 5:13). Finally, without naming himself, John Mark includes what is likely a crazy detail about himself at the moment of Jesus' arrest: "A young man wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind." [Mk 14:51-52] Other internal evidence includes the fact that where the Second Gospel tells of events that are also told by the other gospels, it is the Second that uses the most words and gives the most vivid details of an eyewitness, offering a sense of immediacy as if

Peter were telling the story. In conclusion, the identity of John Mark as the author of the Second Gospel is solid as is its relationship to Peter as its chief source. [Barnett, pp. 76-88]

*In Luke's Gospel introduction, he writes that numerous other eyewitness written accounts of Jesus' ministry preceded Luke's, starting shortly after Jesus death and resurrection: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word." But Luke implies that his account will be more "orderly," and states that it is written for a particular individual—the unknown "most excellent Theophilus," who bears a Greek name and appears to be a Christian of some status, so that he "may know the certainty of the things [he] has been taught." [1:1-4]

*Luke, to whom Paul refers affectionately in Col 4:14 as "our dear friend Luke, the doctor," is attested by late first century and second century Church Fathers as the author of the Third Gospel and its sequel, the Book of Acts: Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Papias, and Hegesippus among others. In the next century Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen said the same. Paul lists Luke among "my fellow workers" (along with John Mark) in Philemon (verse 24) and testifies late in his ministry that "only Luke is with me." (2 Tim 4:11) The Book of Acts shifts from "they" to "we" four times in its account of the travels and ministry of Paul 4: 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; and 27:1-28:16. This implies that Luke was the travel companion of Paul. Skeptics claim that this is merely a literary device, but these "we" passages offer the most details in the Book of Acts and take the reader unerringly through specific names of officials, local and temporary ways of Roman governance, and knowledge of travel, especially of seafaring in the eastern and central Mediterranean Sea, that a non-eyewitness simply could not produce. [HRK; *New Intl Dictionary of the Bible*; see also below the summary of the *Wikipedia* article on renowned archeologist, William Mitchell Ramsay.]

*The Third Gospel reveals certain special interests: the universality of Jesus' message (not just Jewish), a high respect for women, a high level of Greek education (especially of history), a concern for the poor, racial tolerance, and medical knowledge and interest. There is also a gentleness in the description of people's faults, such as the disciples' sleeping during the Gethsemane vigil and Peter's denials of Jesus, that corresponds to Paul referring to Luke as "dear" or as the King James Version puts it, "beloved."

*While nearly all of Luke's many references to individuals in the Roman Empire have been verified by non-biblical sources and archeological evidence, his mention of Quirinius as governor of Syria when a census was conducted under Caesar Augustus, a census that prompted Joseph and Mary to head to Bethlehem where Jesus would be born about 6 BC, is considered by many scholars to be an error. This is because Quirinius did not take the post until AD 6. However, F.F. Bruce has shown that the structure of Luke's key sentence (Luke 2:2) warrants this translation: "This was the first census that took place *before* (not "while") Quirinius was governor of Syria." Actually, famed archeologist William Mitchell Ramsay discovered several inscriptions near the end of the 19th century that indicate that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice, the first time several years before the second in AD 6. Moreover, a previous census took place between 10 and 5 BC, just as Luke records. [W. M. Ramsay, *Was Christ Born in Behlehem?* cited by Geisler, "Luke, Alleged Errors in," p. 430b-31a]

*Evidence that the Apostle John son of Zebedee is the author of the Fourth Gospel (and the three letters of John) is very strong.

- a) The anonymous author identifies himself only as "The disciple whom Jesus loved" (21:20, 24). The other three gospels frequently mention an inner circle of three disciples: Peter and the sons of Zebedee, James and John. Yet the Four Gospel never mentions by name James or any John

but John the Baptist. It does, however, mention “the disciple whom Jesus loved” as dining next to Jesus at the Last Supper, and thereby able to ask him a whispered question. (13:21-29) Later Jesus, dying on the cross, entrusts this same disciple with the care of Mary, Jesus’ mother. (19:25-27). This disciple also runs to the empty tomb along with Peter the morning of the resurrection and sees “the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head; the cloth was folded up by itself....” (20:3-8). Finally, this disciple “whom Jesus loved” is among the seven disciples for whom the resurrected Jesus cooked a breakfast on the Sea of Galilee shore. The Zebedee brothers are listed among the seven. (21:2). Since James was executed by Herod Agrippa I in c. AD 44 (Acts 12:2), John son of Zebedee is the most likely candidate to be the disciple “whom Jesus loved.” [Barnett, pp. 54-73]

*More evidence for Apostle John’s authorship:

b) The Fourth Gospel shows accurate knowledge of the buildings and landscape of Judah and Galilee such as the 5-porticoed pool of Bethzatha in Jerusalem (confirmed by archeology) as well as key people, such as Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Council) members Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

c) This gospel’s depiction of the Roman governor of Judah at the time of Jesus crucifixion is also quite telling. First century Jewish historians Josephus and Philo describe Pilate as mean and unprincipled. Apparently resentful of the Jewish religious leaders attempt to foist on him someone whom he found not guilty of breaking Roman law, Pilate eventually maneuvers the troublesome Jewish leaders into acknowledging Roman rule over them: “We have no king but Caesar!” (18:28-19:15)

d) The Fourth Gospel gives no hint of the upcoming Jewish uprising in AD 66-70 that resulted in Rome’s devastation of Judea and conquest of the end Jerusalem, including the killing of thousands of Jews, the destruction of the temple, the siege and fortress at Masada, and the elimination of local Jewish autonomy.

e) Early Church Fathers identify the author as the Apostle John as they cite the Fourth Gospel. Ignatius quotes from John 3:8 in c. AD 110 and Polycarp also cites John’s Gospel by the same date [Barnett, pp. 68, 40], which means the Fourth Gospel had to be written well before the end of the 1st century.

*The three letters of John are written in the distinctive style of Greek of the Fourth Gospel. [Barnett, pp. 54-73]

*Felix, Roman governor of Judea 52-58 AD, is mentioned by Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius. According to Acts 23:24-25:14 Paul was brought before Felix frequently in the Roman port of Caesarea during the governor’s last two years, keeping Paul in prison there while waiting for a bribe that never came. Those two years would have given Luke, author of the third Gospel and the Book of Acts, and Paul’s travelling companion during the previous and following missionary journeys, the opportunity to “carefully investigate everything from the beginning” [Luke 1:3], including personal interviews with most of the Apostles, Mary the mother of Jesus, and other eye-witnesses.

**Wikipedia* article for archeologist “William Mitchell Ramsay” reports: “[Ramsay] was known for his careful attention to New Testament events, particularly the Book of Acts and Pauline Epistles. When he first went to Asia Minor [Turkey], many of the cities mentioned in Acts had no known location and almost nothing was known of their detailed history or politics. The Acts of the Apostles was the only record and Ramsay, skeptical, fully expected his own research to prove the author of Acts hopelessly inaccurate since no man could possibly know the details of Asia Minor more than a hundred years after the event—this is, when Acts was then supposed to have been written. He therefore set out to put the

writer of Acts on trial. He devoted his life to unearthing ancient cities and documents of Asia Minor. After a lifetime of study, however, he concluded: 'Further study...showed that the book could bear the most minute scrutiny as an authority for the facts of the Aegean world, and that it was written with such judgment, skill, art and perception of truth as to be a model of historical statement.' (The Bearing of Recent Discovery, p. 85)...[Another quotation from the same book (p. 89) reiterates the same claim still more emphatically.] ...When Ramsay turned his attention to Paul's letters, most of which the critics dismissed as forgeries, he concluded that all thirteen New Testament letters that claimed to have been written by Paul were authentic."

*Re. Jesus Seminar: Co-founder John Dominic Crossan acknowledged in a public debate that his views are not shared by most scholars. [Paul Copan, ed., *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up! A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan* (1998), p. 54, cited in Habermas, p. 23; Craig, PhD in Philosophy, U. of Birmingham, England; Prof of Philosophy, Houston Baptist U & Research Prof. at Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada CA]

*Most non-NT "gospels," such as the Nag Hammadi Gospels, and other pseudo-biblical writings date from the third and fourth centuries on, except the Gospel of Thomas, which is second century. In other words they were written at least nearly a century later than the NT documents. (See above & below.) Yet opponents of the NT, such as Dan Brown (*The Da Vinci Code*), and also true scholars who should know better, such as the publicity-hungry members of the Jesus Seminar, have skipped over the earlier NT manuscripts and celebrated the handful of manuscripts of these tardy gospels.

*The Gospel of Thomas, on which the Jesus Seminar radical scholars rely heavily, dates from the late second century, which explains its strong heretical gnostic orientation. Yet it claims to be written by the Apostle Thomas, which proves its legendary character. That the Jesus Seminar would try to use the Gospel of Thomas to disprove Jesus' resurrection is quite ironic since the work claims to consist chiefly of the words of the resurrected Christ. The Jesus Seminar scholars also rely on other even later documents, and a supposed "Q" source, which exists only in their minds and writings. [Geisler, "Jesus Seminar," pp. 386-88, and "Nag Hammadi Gospels," pp. 520-21]

More evidence for the five widely accepted facts about Jesus' resurrection:

1) Jesus really died by crucifixion. [Habermas, pp. 48-49, 257]

a) Attested by all four gospels (Note: see above for solid evidence that the gospels were written well before the end of the first century);

b) Attested by 4 ancient non-Christian sources: Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37-c. 100), Roman historian Tacitus (AD c. 56-120), Greek satirist Lucian (c. 125-180), & rabbinic commentaries of the Talmud (late second century); [Habermas, p. 49; "Jesus in the Talmud," *Wikipedia*]

c) John in his gospel testifies (19:33-35) that he saw a Roman soldier spear Jesus in the chest to confirm that he was dead; the thrust produced "a sudden flow of blood and water," a certain sign of death according to the *Journal of the Am. Med. Assn.* (Mr 21, 1986, pp. 1463) [cited in Geisler, "Christ, Death of," p. 128]; [see more details under the fifth fact]

2) Jesus' disciples sincerely believed that he rose from the dead and appeared to them. [Habermas, pp. 56-62, 270-79]

a) The NT, the Church Fathers, and various non-Christian sources report that the first Christian believers, nearly all Jews, suddenly stopped worshipping on Friday sundown to Saturday sundown and started worshipping on Sunday morning, "the Lord's day," explicitly to honor Jesus' resurrection on the

morning of “the first day of the week” (John 20:19, 26; Acts 2:1 [Pentecost = 50 days or 7x7+1; Lev 25:15-16]; 20:7; 1Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10; Pliny [Roman governor of Bithynia AD 110]

b) We have substantiation that the disciples claimed that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them from nine early, independent sources: [Habermas, pp. 51-56, 221f]

i. Paul’s first letter to Corinthians (15:9-12);

ii. An early oral church creed (within 2 decades of Jesus’ resurrection & probably within 6 years);

iii. Four sermons in Acts by Peter, Stephen, & Paul (Chs. 2, 7, 10, & 22); and Acts 4 & 5 reports that apostles, arrested for preaching about the resurrection, refused to stop (especially 4:33);

iv.-vii. The Four Gospels

viii. Clement bishop of Rome in AD 95 letter to Corinthian church [For the quotation, see Habermas, p. 54; Habermas also says that Church Fathers Irenaeus and Tertullian claim that Clement knew some of the apostles personally, especially Peter, who was also in Rome in the AD 60s].

ix. Polycarp, martyred in Smyrna (modern Izmir, Turkey) in c. AD 160, wrote about AD 110 in a letter to the Philippian church [Habermas, pp. 265-66];

c) The disciples sincerely believed what they claimed—that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them; at least seven early sources testify that the disciples were willing to suffer because of their beliefs:

i. Acts Chs. 4, 5, 12 (including James son of Zebedee’s execution by Herod Agrippa I), & rest of book reporting several beatings and imprisonments of Paul, and closes with Paul in prison in Rome under a potential death sentence;

ii.-vii. Six early Church Fathers independently refer to the apostles’ willingness to suffer & die for the sake of the resurrection:

ii) Clement, bishop of Rome (died c. AD 100) in several letters;

iii) Polycarp (martyred in Smyrna, Turkey, in c. AD 160) in his letter to the Philippians c. AD 110;

iv) Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, Syria, in several letters to churches c. AD 110 on the way to his own martyrdom in Rome;

v) Tertullian, writing in Carthage (in modern Tunisia) about AD 200;

vi) Origen (martyred c. 253) lived in Alexandria, Egypt & then Caesarea;

vii) Dionysius of Corinth (writing c. 170). [Habermas, pp. 56-62, 270-79]

3) Church persecutor Paul suddenly changed & later became one of the Church’s chief messengers; [Habermas, pp. 64-66]

a) Paul wrote of his sudden change from persecutor to advocate in his letters to churches in Corinth (1 Cor. 15:9-10), Galatians (1:12-16, 22-23), & Philippi (3:6-7); re. Paul’s authorship: Paul was willing to suffer—even to the point of martyrdom—for his belief that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to him; early church leaders recognized his apostolic authority and authorship—including 2Peter (3:15-16), Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, & Papias (bishop of Hierapolis, Turkey, AD c. 60-130);

b) In Acts Paul testified of his persecution of Christians in his testimony to the crowd at the temple in Jerusalem, even referring to the high priest and his council for verification (22:3-5, 19-20); and again in his testimony before Roman governor Festus and King Agrippa in Caesarea (26:9-12); then in both testimonies Paul told how his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus totally changed the direction of his life (22:6-16; 26:13-23);

c) Luke also records Paul’s persecution of Christians, leading up to his trip toward Damascus to persecute Christians there, only to be transformed by a confrontation with the risen Christ along the

way (7:57-8:3; 9:1-30); it is worth noting that according to all these witnesses, including Paul himself, he was an enemy of the Church when Christ appeared to him;

d) At least five Church Fathers attest that Paul was willing to suffer—even to the point of martyrdom—for his belief that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to him: Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth, & Origen [Habermas, p. 65]

4) Skeptic James, half-brother of Jesus, suddenly changed & later became a Church leader; [Habermas, pp. 67-69, 284-86]

a) Gospels report that Jesus' half-brothers, including James, were skeptical unbelievers during Jesus' ministry (Mark 3:21, 31-34; 6:3-4; John 7:5; also implied by Matthew 13:54-57, especially verse 57);

b) Early creed lists the appearance of the risen Jesus to James (1 Cor. 15:3, 7);

c) Luke and Paul attest to James as a leader in the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:12-21; Gal. 1:19);

d) Late 1st century Jewish historian Josephus and Church Fathers Hegesippus (AD c. 110-180) & Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150-215) report James' martyrdom in Jerusalem for the sake of the gospel; [Habermas, pp. 68, 286].

5) Jesus' tomb was empty. [Note: while not supported by "nearly all" scholars, this is still accepted as fact by 75% of them, a substantial majority; Habermas [p. 287] lists 29 "prominent critical scholars" among them [Habermas, pp. 69-74, 287-90]

a) Jesus highly public execution occurred in the big city of Jerusalem, Roman soldiers sealed and guarded the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66), and the Roman and Jewish authorities could easily have produced the body if it was still in the tomb after Jesus' disciples start proclaiming that he had risen from the dead.

(Note: Since the disciples, following Jesus' orders (Luke 24:49), waited in Jerusalem until 50 days later when they received the empowering presence of God the Holy Spirit in their lives to start proclaiming the resurrection (Acts 2; Tacitus), NT critic **Gerd Ludemann** claims the authorities didn't produce the corpse because after 50 days, it was unrecognizable. But in Jerusalem's dry climate hair, stature, and crucifixion wounds would still make the body identifiable. Actually producing a human body of any sort from Jesus' tomb would have helped the authorities quell the swirling reports of Jesus' resurrection. But the authorities never produced a body [Habermas, pp. 70-71, 287; Habermas cites authoritative information from the Medical Examiner for the Commonwealth of Virginia]);

b) The Jewish authorities alleged that Jesus' followers had stolen it. (Matthew 28:11-15) This is a tacit admission that there was no body to be produced. They even bribed the Roman guards to tell the embarrassing story that they hadn't done their job and allowed the disciples to steal the body.

This story is also reported by Church Fathers Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) and Tertullian (c. 155-240). [Habermas, p. 71] (Note: the fact that the disciples were willing to die for their claim that Jesus rose again and appeared to them, and also the sudden conversions of persecutor Paul and skeptic James, make the accusation that the disciples stole the body highly unlikely);

c) All 4 Gospels record that women were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. (Matt. 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-2, 11-18) Since in Jesus' day women's testimony was not allowed in Jewish courts [Geisler, p. 648b], why would Jewish male writers mention the women's testimony so prominently if the writers were inventing a story? Women also had second class status in Roman society as well. Luke even reports that the disciples "did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense." (24:11)

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