

Cold-Case for Christianity: How Can I Trust the Accounts of Jesus?

INTRODUCTION

HOW CAN I TRUST THE ACCOUNTS OF JESUS?

Eyewitness accounts are key.

- The case for Christianity and the truth of Jesus is built on the reliability of eyewitness accounts.

In a court case, juries are asked to evaluate the reliability of a witness based on four major themes:

1. Were they there?
2. Is there corroborating evidence?
3. Are they honest and accurate over time?
4. Do they have a bias—a reason to lie?

LET'S TEST THE ACCOUNTS OF JESUS—THE GOSPELS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. Were they there?

- How close to the events they describe were the Gospels written?
- Acts, written by Luke, is missing too many big events for it to have been written late. Jesus: 33 AD | Acts: 60 AD

2. Is there corroborating evidence? And...

3. Do they remain the same overtime?

- The eyewitnesses and writers of the Gospels had students who wrote books (six main early church fathers). These writings continued to tell the same account of Jesus. Then there are many other writers before Christianity became accepted (so before 313 AD). These were Christians who liked Jesus.
- In the five hundred years after Jesus, there were non-Christians who liked Jesus and wrote about Him for their own means (non-canonical writings). These were Non-Christians who liked Jesus.
- Before 313 AD, there were people who did not like Jesus who wrote about Him. These were Non-Christians who didn't like Jesus.
- **You can reconstruct the story of Jesus using each of these types of writings. Jesus cannot be eliminated from history.**

4. Do they have a bias?

- The motivation to lie typically falls under three categories: power, finances, and sex.
 - The disciples of Jesus gained none of this by holding to Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and teaching. They held to what they had witnessed at great cost to themselves and often their family.
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QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Luke 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

1. **Icebreaker:** How do you know when someone is lying to you? Or, Play "two truths and a lie."
 2. Share something from the sermon which was impactful or insightful to you.
 3. In your experience, what can be roadblocks to someone believing the accounts of Jesus are reliable?
 4. Read Luke 1:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. What is significant about the eyewitness accounts about Jesus?
 5. What evidence convinced you to follow Jesus? Or, What holds you to believing Jesus is who He says He is when it is challenging?
 6. How would you explain the reliability of the New Testament accounts about Jesus to someone who was interested in who Jesus was?
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Resources:

- Listen to Jim Putman's daily devotion on FaceBook or Youtube.
 - J. Warner Wallace, both as books or series on RightNow Media:
 - o *Cold Case Christianity*
 - o *Forensic Faith*
 - o *God's Crime Scene*
 - Norman Geisler's book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*
 - Real Life University's video *Eyewitnesses* on YouTube (follow the link from www.reallifeministries.com/rlu)
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Passages to prepare for next week, Contagious: Fear or Faith—What are you carrying? Week 4 *Where Did the Bible Come From?*

This week, read 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, and 2 Peter 1:20-21.

As you read, ask yourself these questions:

- a) What is the passage saying about God, human beings, and the world?
 - b) What do I learn about myself from this passage?
 - c) What adjustment does this require of me in my thinking, believing, and doing?
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