
Creation Answers

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Who does this newsletter?

This newsletter is produced by Wayne Spencer on a Quarterly basis. Its purpose is to bring creation research within the reach of Christians and provide up-to-date reliable information on creation issues. Wayne Spencer is a creation author and former teacher who has presented papers at the International Conference on Creationism and has published in various creation publications, such as the Creation Research Society Quarterly, Creation magazine, the Journal of Creation, and Origins (from the Biblical Creation Society, UK).

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More information on Wayne Spencer's education and publications can be found on the creationanswers.net web site. You'll also find many other resources. <http://creationanswers.net>

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A Personal Note from Wayne Spencer

Greetings,

I hope all of you reading this are having a good summer. I'd like to thank all of you for requesting my newsletter. In this issue I finish my series on Why Believe the Bible (Part 3). I hope it is an encouragement. Please share it with others. I have been exploring historical issues related to the Bible in recent years. This has led me to looking into the historicity of the New Testament. I found in this study there was evidence I never expected to find about Christ's crucifixion. But to address it properly, I had to delve into the issue of dating the crucifixion. The gospels describe that the sky darkened and that there was an earthquake on the day Jesus died. There is actually historical evidence for both the sky darkening and the earthquake. My article in this newsletter does not contain all the details on determining the date of the crucifixion. So I put that into a separate supporting article on my website, "[The Date of Christ's Crucifixion](#)." Somehow my study of this date question has made the crucifixion mean more to me. No wonder many Romans became Christians!

The other article in this issue is about Adam and Eve. There are scientists who are telling Christians we do not need to believe there was a literal Adam & Eve. But there is actually strong scientific evidence against humans evolving from apes, and supporting Genesis. Pulling out Adam & Eve would be like pulling out an important thread in the Bible that makes many other things unravel with it.

Wayne Spencer, M.S., Physics

Why Believe the Bible? Part 3

The historicity and reliability of the New Testament

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3, NIV)."

This is the beginning of the New Testament letter of 1 John, from John the Apostle. I like it because it stresses the tangible. God revealed himself to mankind in the person of Jesus Christ. This was seen and heard in the real world. The Apostles and other believers from the time of Jesus were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life and ministry. The New Testament then is first of all a record of eyewitnesses or close associates of eyewitnesses. Most of the New Testament is written by Apostles, who were personally given special authority from Jesus himself. Luke is an exception in that he was a close associate of the Apostle Paul, having traveled with him in some of his missionary journeys. There were many other "gospels" and stories written later, after the death of the Apostles. It seems there was an effort to try and copy and counterfeit the originals for various types of selfish personal gain. But from what I have learned of church history it was generally pretty clear and well known which writings were the authentic writings. The New Testament books were all written down before 100 AD, within the lifetime of the Apostles. They present a consistent realistic account on Jesus and the beginning of the church. The various other apocryphal

writings often are just unrealistic or out of character in how they are written, and sometimes have fanciful implausible tales about Jesus. The revealed truth in the New Testament contains many historical details about people, places, and events that can be verified from historical and archeological research from outside the Bible.

Before continuing I want to stop and consider the role of apologetics. It is worth noting that the point is not that the Bible NEEDS to be historically verified. Rather the point is that it CAN be historically verified. It can be verified because the Bible is objectively true and based on real people and events that happened in history. Many people think the Bible is only subjectively true, as people perceive it. It is not merely imaginative stories made up by ambitious religious leaders. Christianity is not a religion made up by man, though you can say that various theological views are made by men as means of understanding Scripture. Christians and churches are not perfect, but the truth of Christianity does not hinge on Christians always being right about everything. There are good reasons to accept the New Testament as reliable; this would be true even if there were no Christians in the world who would tell the truth about it. Christians are Christ's witnesses but the evidence of the truth of Christianity does not depend on Christians. A nonchristian could come to the conclusion that Christianity is true without being told anything by a Christian, though this is not the ideal way to become a Christian. This has sometimes happened when nonchristians have seriously and sincerely looked into Christianity and the Bible.

The truth of Christianity is also born out in the real life experience of Christians who live by it. Christian faith has a long track record for over 2000 years now of making positive changes in the personal lives of people. So the reasons for having faith in the Bible are not merely intellectual, but also revolve around people experiencing God

changing their lives and making life more meaningful for them. It is usually the life of a Christian lived out with integrity that is more persuasive to most people, when it counts, than a logical argument. But the intellectual questions do deserve some answers. The Apostle Paul was well educated and he was not afraid to speak to scholars in Athens at the Areopagus. In fact, he persuaded a few (see Acts 17). But he knew there was more to coming to faith than reason. The real obstacle is in the person's will and choices, not in their intellectual questions. Thus, logical arguments like below hopefully will help some be more open minded to considering faith in Christ. Also, for Christians, I hope this will help Christians appreciate what they have and have confidence in God's word. Historical evidence like this shows that verifiable information is accurate in the New Testament.

Archeology and the New Testament

Much archeological investigation is done in Palestine and over the years there are a number of very significant things which have been found to confirm what the New Testament describes. For instance, for years it was known that the writings of Jewish historian Josephus and Roman historian Tacitus mentioned Pilate as the governor of Judea. Written records show that he was in this position from A.D. 26 to 36. Then in 1961 an archeological team was excavating in Caesarea at the site of what had been an amphitheater. A special inscription was found that had the name Pontius Pilate on it [1]. Apparently Pilate had donated funds to contribute to the building and may have dedicated it to Tiberius Caesar. This confirms the title of Pilate as given in the gospel of Luke. Historians and archeologists have commented about how careful and accurate Luke's writings (Luke and Acts) are about people, their titles, and places.

There are other really interesting examples of cities and places described in the gospels or in Acts that have been found and studied by archeologists. Some atheists have questioned whether the town of Nazareth existed as a community at the time of Christ. Atheists have claimed it was only one farm house, with caves used as burial sites. But there are a number of archeological sites in the area, as well as historical sites commemorating especially events related to the life of Mary and places related to Mary and Joseph living in the area [2, 3]. There were some caves used as burial sites from before the time of Christ. But other caves were used as workshops or other purposes. The location is well known in Galilee but it was apparently only a small community in the time of Christ. Houses and caves of the area have been excavated and have clear evidence that Jews lived there from unique pottery only used by Jews [4]. There is also a written Roman record that indicates certain priests were resettled there during the war between the Jews and Romans between 68 and 70 A.D. So there are Roman references to the community there. It was an area in a valley between limestone hills.

Another interesting place is the Pool of Bethesda (or Pool of Bethsaida). At one time skeptics used to claim that John was written by someone who did not have first hand knowledge of Jerusalem and thus the information in John was not accurate about this site. This is the place described in John 5:1-15 where the people believed that an angel would come and stir the waters so that people could get in the water and be healed. Jesus healed a crippled man at this site. John describes it as having five covered colonnades or porticos. This is located just North of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It is known to be same site as mentioned in John because it has what is left of a water pool found to have what was five covered porch like areas. Today it appears below current structures because later structures

were built over and around it [5]. I could mention other notable places where Jesus visited such as the Pool of Siloam [6] and Capernaum [see YouTube videos 7, 8, 9]. These are places confirmed to exist by archeology, where Jesus did miracles as the gospels describe. Other kinds of information from the gospels also is confirmed by Roman historical sources and artifacts. These include Matthew's descriptions of Herod the Great around the time of the birth of Christ, or coins that confirm dates and names of Caesar or other officials. There are many ways in which the New Testament presents a historically realistic picture.

The book of Acts also has many historical details that have been verified. A number of examples could be given but one significant case is in Acts 18, which gives an account of when Paul was in Corinth. In Acts 18:12 it describes an official named Gallio. "While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court . . . (NIV)" Some have questioned use of the title, "proconsul." But Marianne Bonz, as Managing Editor of the Harvard Theological Review, wrote in 1998 about a doctoral student who in 1905 translated an inscription in which Claudius Caesar is writing a letter to Gallio [1, 10]. It uses his full name, Lucius Junius Gallio and calls him "proconsul of Achaia." This letter can be dated to 52 A.D. Thus, this not only confirms Acts but greatly helps date events in the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul.

Jesus in nonchristian sources

It is interesting to read of various Roman writers of the first and second centuries that mentioned Jesus. There is no doubt Jesus really lived as a real man and he was acknowledged as such by nonchristians in the first and second century Roman world. He was regarded as a real man by Roman historians and various Roman writers. If you doubt that Jesus

really lived consider Celsus. Celsus was a Roman writer of the second century [11]. He vehemently attacked Christian beliefs but he mostly tried to refute the deity of Jesus. He never challenged that Jesus really existed. There is no way Celsus would have relied on Christian sources because he was too antichristian. Yet, he obviously was aware of many of the events described in the gospels because he tried to attack those accounts. He tried to explain away many miracles Jesus did and discredit the Apostles also. But his attempts to refute these things tends to only confirm the gospels. Many of his criticisms sound like the weak arguments used by the Jewish Pharisees which are answered in the gospels. Other suggestions from Celsus, such as that Jesus learned magic and sorcery in Egypt and then brought it back to Israel, are just too implausible. So one question to ask is, if Jesus did not exist, why did Celsus go to so much trouble to write against Jesus and the Apostles writings?

Another important reference to Christ is by Roman historian Tacitus. Tacitus was writing about Nero after the great fire in Rome of 64 A.D. and how he blamed Christians for it [12]:

"Nero fastened the guilt . . . on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of . . . Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome. . . (Tacitus, Annals 15.44)."

This quote confirms first that Jesus existed and that he was crucified under the reign of Tiberius by Pontius Pilate. This confirms the gospels nicely.

There were also Jewish documents that mentioned Christ and the crucifixion. There is a well known quote of Josephus often mentioned but because there is

controversy about it perhaps having been rewritten some later by a Christian I will not use it. However, here is another example from Jewish Rabbinical writings. This is from the Babylonian Talmud, written sometime between 70 A.D. and 200 A.D. 'On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald . . . cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy." ' [The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. 3, Sanhedrin 43a, 281]

In this quote, "Yeshu" is like the Hebrew pronunciation of Jesus, which was "Yeshua". It quotes a herald about stoning Jesus. This is odd because of the mention of 40 days prior to execution. This would seem to imply Jewish leaders making an announcement about planning to stone Jesus even before he arrived in Jerusalem, which seems questionable to me. Perhaps the Jews first intended to stone him but couldn't because of Roman law. Also, note that "hanged" here does not mean what we would think of in modern times; this is a reference to crucifixion because that is how Romans hanged non-Romans.

Date of the Crucifixion

The historical accuracy of the New Testament is shown by the fact that Christ's crucifixion can be dated. The date of the crucifixion has been much debated. There has not been a complete consensus from Christian scholars on the date of the crucifixion. Even if there is uncertainty on the exact date of the crucifixion, delving into the problem shows that the New Testament is realistic about Jewish practices of the first century. The exact date and day of the week have been much debated, even though the traditional understanding has Christ crucified on Friday. The year most often argued for by Biblical scholars is 33 A.D. It is challenging to determine this because there is almost no writings from Jews from the time of Christ that record

exactly what dates they followed in their festivals or dates related to Jesus. The Hebrew calendar as it is currently defined today was not in use in Jesus' time but was defined in the sixteenth century. Also there were probably at least three different calendars in use in Israel in Jesus day. This is because no one was sure of some details of the calendar Moses originally followed. The calendar most used was apparently similar to the Babylonian lunar calendar, which many Jews brought back with them from captivity. On the other hand some Jews (in Qumran) followed a solar calendar. The confusion on the calendar makes determining the date difficult.

A recent book (published in 2011) by a Cambridge professor, Colin Humphreys, attempts to unravel this thorny problem. There are some events in the New Testament that can be dated, a very important example is in Luke 3:1-3. Here Luke pins the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry to the time of six different important officials, five of which were Caesar or Roman governors, and one was the Jewish High Priests. Tiberius, Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphus are all mentioned in writings outside the Bible. Thus, this clearly fixes the date of the start of John's ministry to 29 A.D. It is known from Roman records that Pilate was in power from 26 to 36 A.D. Thus you can begin to narrow down the date of the crucifixion from this and other information. Most scholars who've looked into it argue either for 30 A.D. or 33 A.D. as the year of the crucifixion.

I would agree with Colin Humphreys date of Friday April 1, 33 A.D. (Gregorian calendar date). Arriving at this is a long process. Humphreys has used astronomical calculations, much analysis of calendars and when the Passover occurred, and various Biblical information. Humphreys also deals with how to reconcile the four gospels regarding what day of the week Jesus was crucified on. I have written an article summarizing this evidence. [CLICK HERE](#) to

read *"The Date of Christ's Crucifixion."* I go through three lines of argument to establish the date, one is just deduction from all the available evidence, which is what Colin Humphreys does in his book. A second line of argument is from the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel as worked out by Physicist Isaac Newton. Newton was the first to use orbital mechanics calculations to determine when the New Moon and Full Moons would fall in the years surrounding Jesus death, and then relate those to the Hebrew calendar. Colin Humphreys has worked with a Cambridge University astronomer to refine Newton's calculations. This updated calculation is very important for determining the day and day of the week of the crucifixion.

In addition to the analysis of Humphreys there is another line of argument that points to 33 A.D. from historical written sources from the first and second centuries. There were Roman, Jewish, and Christian historians who wrote about the crucifixion. Some even mention the earthquake and darkening of the sky that is described in the gospels at the crucifixion (see Matthew 27:45-54; Luke 23:44-45). See for example this article by John MacArthur which mentions Tertulian pointing out to Romans that their own records record the darkening of the sky at the crucifixion [14]. If Humphreys date is correct, there was also a Lunar eclipse the evening of the same day, which is somewhat interesting. The National Geophysical Data Center, a database kept by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) records that only one earthquake is known to have taken place near Israel between 25 and 35 A.D. and it was in 33 A.D.

A Christian historian named Sextus Julius Africanus (from second century), quoted a Roman historian, Phlegon, about the crucifixion: "Phlegon records that, in the time of Tiberius Caesar, at full moon, there was a full eclipse of the sun from the sixth

hour to the ninth - manifestly that one of which we speak. But what has an eclipse in common with an earthquake, the rending rocks, and the resurrection of the dead, and so great a perturbation throughout the universe? . . . And calculation makes out that the period of 70 weeks, as noted in Daniel, is completed at this time." (Julius Africanus, Chronography, 18.1)

Julius Africanus goes on to explain why this darkness is so significant: "On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the 263 third book of his History, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun. For the Hebrews celebrate the passover on the 14th day according to the moon, and the passion of our Savior falls on the day before the passover; but an eclipse of the sun takes place only when the moon comes under the sun. And it cannot happen at any other time but in the interval between the first day of the new moon and the last of the old, that is, at their junction: how then should an eclipse be supposed to happen when the moon is almost diametrically opposite the sun?" (Julius Africanus, Chronography, 18.1) To see some explanation on lunar and solar eclipses related to this [go to this website](#) .

Thus the crucifixion was a notable event that would have been remembered by anyone who was there at the time, whether they believed in Jesus or not. I should also point out that there are many Roman records of the practice of crucifixion. There is also one case of bones being discovered which were from a man from Jerusalem around 70 A.D. who was crucified in a manner probably similar to Jesus. His name, from the ossuary box his bones were found in, was Yehohanan ben Hagkol. The heel bone had a nail through it as it was placed in the ossuary. His legs had also been broken, which is something the Romans would have

done to speed death. A very detailed article describes this evidence about ben Hagkol [15] ([CLICK TO GO TO THIS](#)). The point is all of this agrees with the New Testament. This was what Jesus suffered for us, if we just believe it. There is every reason to believe it. I would encourage anyone who hasn't read the New Testament to read it for yourself. Many have alleged various historical inaccuracies about the New Testament. But these claims usually do not have much substance to them when you look into them. Since the New Testament is accurate about people, places, events, and other verifiable historical information, we can trust it.

The New Testament Documents

Skeptics have often attempted to question the reliability of the New Testament documents themselves. The claim is that we just cannot trust them to be accurate copies of the original manuscripts. We owe the privilege of having the New Testament to many people through history who often risked their lives to preserve them and translate them. One important thing about the New Testament documents is that they were all written within one lifetime of when the events of Jesus' life happened. This is important because it meant that the people reading these in the first century would have remembered what happened. So not only could the Apostles say "we are witnesses of these things" but they could also appeal to the knowledge of their hearers. If they would have gotten facts wrong, there were plenty of Romans and Jews hostile to Christian ideas in the first century, who would have gladly pointed out the inaccuracies.

Also, the date of writing of the New Testament documents means that, unlike many other ancient documents in history, it was not likely that distortions and factual errors would come into the text because of a long (such as hundreds of years) gap of time between when it all happened and

when it was first written down. Josh McDowell points out that the well known archeologist, William Foxwell Albright, said in Christianity Today (Jan. 18, 1963) "*In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century A.D. . . .* [McDowell, Josh, "The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict Evidence I and II", 1999, p 52]"

On top of this, we have thousands of copies of the New Testament books. Thus any issues with one Greek manuscript can be compared to others so there is seldom serious question about what the text should actually say. Copying mistakes can thus be easily identified. There are a few cases where some manuscripts do not have certain portions. But these portions are not controversial in what they actually say and that they are disputed portions is pointed out in modern translations.

Conclusion

The Bible is a remarkable set of 66 documents that has come to us through many different writers over many years of history. Yet it gives a consistent set of answers to mankind's questions and to man's need for salvation. It is in a class by itself in ancient literature. I believe the Creator-God who made man has revealed truth to mankind in this amazing book. Even well known Christian scholars sometimes misunderstand or deny the truth from it. But we should not question its reliability or inerrancy. There are many confirmations of factual information from historical and archeological sources. Archeology cannot verify doctrine, and many miracles described in the Bible are not mentioned in any other historical documents. So there are limits to what historical investigation can do. But with so much confirmation of the verifiable information in it, shouldn't we be open to its message? Sometimes Christians today are confused and do not realize the firm connection to real history the Bible has.

Christians worship and serve a God who has proven himself through history. God proves himself in a personal way today to each believer in daily life. Thus the personal experience of every believer today confirms the experience believers of the past, as revealed in the Bible. God is still the same God as he was to Abraham, Noah, Moses, and the Apostles. Thus we have every reason to rely on the Bible.

Science Versus Adam & Eve

In the June 2011 issue of Christianity Today there is an article called, "The Search for the Historical Adam." In recent years there have been great advances in genetics research. Research related to the human genome has led to new arguments by some in science against a literal Adam and Eve. Well known scientist and Christian, Dr. Francis Collins is Director of the National Institutes of Health. He is associated with an influential organization called Biologos. He advocates that humans evolved from lower animals as Evolutionary theory has always said, even though he says the Bible is trustworthy and authoritative in faith and practice. He does not believe the Bible is accurate on topics related to science.

Collins coauthored an Inter-Varsity Press book called "The Language of Science and Faith." Collins' coauthor was a physicist named Karl Giberson who says the concepts of Adam and Eve as a literal first man and woman, does not fit the evidence.

This is not a new debate but genetics research is adding a new dimension to it. Evolutionary scientists seem to believe they have reason to say science totally rules out the possibility of a literal Adam and Eve. Modern theories of the evolution of man attempt to determine how large the populations of primates were in the past that humans and modern apes evolved from. Today's humans and today's apes are believed to have had some "primitive primate" that was a common

ancestor. Since these ancient primates were present in significant numbers before Homo Sapiens evolved, and since the genetic variability is believed to come from random mutations in a sizable population, it follows that humans could not evolve from one couple. The evolution of humans is believed to have required something on the order of 10,000 individuals.

Thus, a challenge is confronting Christian scholars over whether it matters to believe in a literal Adam and Eve. Note that the Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:45, 'So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being." ' In an evolutionary viewpoint, the concept of "first man" does not really have meaning, because human characteristics did not come about all at once. How can Christians possibly reconcile no Adam and Eve with the rest of Scripture? It is impossible. There is the genealogy of Jesus in Luke which traces Christ's lineage all the way back to Adam. There is also Paul's logic that connects Adam to redemption in Christ (see Romans 5). Or what about the various confessions of faith and catechisms that have been written all through the history of the church? Should we just delete the parts about Adam? Should we add a line in our Church doctrinal statements saying man evolved from primates – because evolutionary science says so?

We must absolutely resist this trend to throw out Adam and Eve. Exciting new discoveries in genetics are beginning to be hinted at from the research of young age creationists who believe in a literal Adam and Eve. There is new research from Dr. Robert Carter with Creation Ministries International that implies some aspects of the diversity of human beings, based on study of the X and Y chromosomes in the human genome, seems to require a literal Genesis to explain. I'd recommend this great article by Dr. Carter answering the idea of no Adam & Eve.

<http://creation.com/noah-and-genetics>