



REASONS TO BELIEVE

Lesson 7 – Can We Trust the Gospels?



INTRODUCTION

Luke 1:1-4, John 19:35, 21:24

*The gospel writers claimed to be recording historical events accurately.
Can we believe them?*





POTENTIAL OBJECTIONS



The writers were biased for Jesus.

The gospels contain miraculous claims.

The events were first passed down orally, allowing for changes.

The gospels contain many discrepancies.

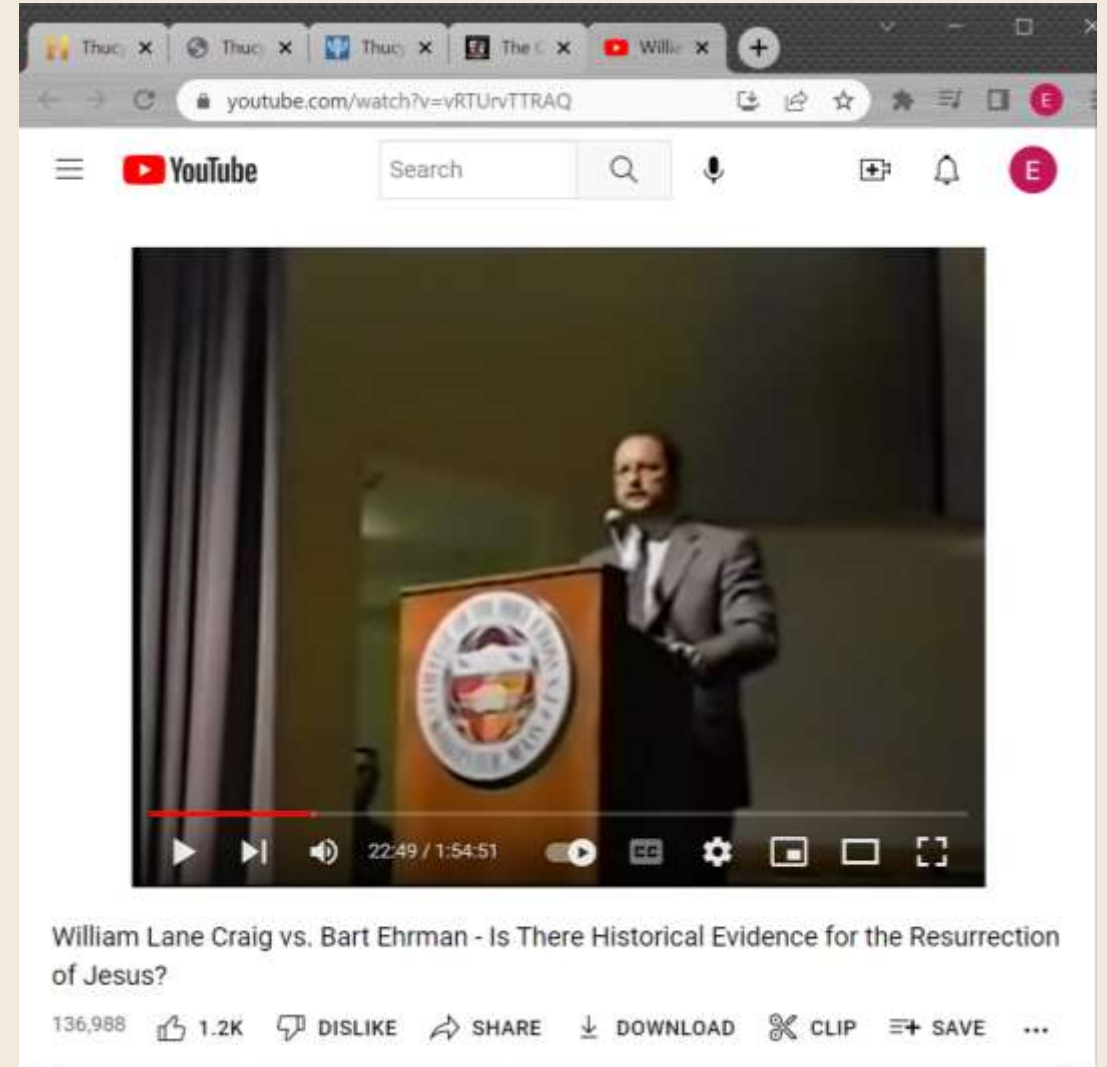
CRITERIA FOR RELIABILITY

Contemporary accounts

Independent accounts

Corroborate accounts

Unbiased accounts





CRITERIA FOR RELIABILITY



How do the Gospels test?

Contemporary accounts?

Matthew – AD 65-85

Mark – AD 60-75

Luke – AD 65-95

John – AD 75-100

The Gospels were written within 70 years (max) of Jesus' life
(compare other early ancient biographies – much later)



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How do the Gospels test?

Independent accounts?

Four accounts with many similarities (esp. Matthew and Mark)

Four accounts with many differences (Luke 14-16, most of John)

The Gospels contain enough differences to show they are independent sources.



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How do the Gospels test?

Corroborate accounts?

Luke emphasizes Jesus' humanity (Luke 2, 3:23-38)

John emphasizes Jesus' deity (John 1:1)

Both affirm Jesus is God and man (Luke 5:17-26, John 1:14)

At the very least, the Gospels show consistent corroboration on the most important facts about Jesus.



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How do the Gospels test?

Unbiased accounts?

The writers had an agenda (John 20:30-31)

*But...1) it wasn't hidden, 2) they took their history seriously (Luke 1:1-4),
3) what writer doesn't have an agenda?*

Bias alone does not make a writer's work untrustworthy.



JESUS LEGEND?



Not enough time for fiction to erase the facts

Jewish process of preserving history orally was highly developed

Relied on memorization and repetition

Jesus' teachings memorable (Matt. 5:3-11, 6:24, 7:1-5)

Jesus' disciples had good reason to care (Matt. 24:35, John 6:63)

Oral history had "checks-and-balances" (1 Cor. 15:6)



JESUS LEGEND?



Not enough time for fiction to erase the facts

Jewish process of preserving history orally was highly developed

**When written, it was done so with consideration for accuracy
(Luke 1:1-4)**

The inclusion of “embarrassing material” makes fabrication unlikely

Women witnesses (Luke 24:10)

Peter’s denials (all four gospels)



RESURRECTION ACCOUNTS



Differences?

How do we account for these differences?

Differences aren't necessarily contradictions

Each gospel focused on a different aspect

The differences support independent multiple attestation



RESURRECTION ACCOUNTS



Differences?

How do we account for these differences?

Similarities?

Women arrived to find stone rolled away and tomb empty

This wasn't what any of the disciples expected

Jesus appeared to the disciples in bodily form

How do we explain these facts most reasonably?



CONCLUSION

The gospels are historical documents to be honestly and fairly evaluated. They could not have been fabricated, but are accurate and “fact-checked” accounts of the events of Jesus’ life.

1 John 1:1-3

