

Session #2 Reasons to Trust the Four NT Gospels

* Examples of the erosion of trust.

I. THE NOVEL/MOVIE DAVINCI CODE HAS CREATED DOUBT IN SOME MINDS.

A. Villain, Leigh Teabing, explains to the cryptologist Sophie Neven that at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 “*many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon,*” including the divinity of Jesus. There’s more.....

B. This passage of fiction has raised questions because it appears to be an accurate historical summary embedded in an otherwise fictitious account. But it’s anything but accurate history!

C. What are the problems with those statements of author Dan Brown?

1. Constantine, the first Roman emperor to make Christianity legal, convened the most important church council in AD 325. True! Leaders from around the Christian world gathered to debate: _____ which falsely taught that _____

2. Novelist Brown writes that Constantine called this council so he could introduce a new divine Jesus to be equal with the Father. Not true!

3. Documents dating from before Nicaea show that most followers of Jesus already called him LORD, the Yahweh of the OT. The Council of Nicaea rejected _____ and affirmed that: _____

4. Furthermore, the vote was NOT close. It was _____

What happened to the dissenters? _____

What happened to the books of Arius? _____

5. The Arian heresy, though, continued throughout the fourth and fifth centuries. And what you see today in the DaVinci Code and other books you can buy on Amazon are modern heirs of an ancient heresy.

II. WHAT IS THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORIC JESUS?

A. The Old Quest for Jesus –Come to a Victorian era living room (1800’s). The walls are filled with faded portraits hanging everywhere.

1. Who comes into the room and what does he do? _____

2. Who is that man? _____

What book did he write? _____

What was his view of Jesus? _____

3. So a split developed with history on one side and faith on the other. (Big ditch).

4. In the 20th century along came theologians _____

B. The New Quest for Jesus

1. A student of Bultmann, Ernst Kasemann, got the quest going again when he delivered a lecture on October 20, 1953 arguing the ‘Christ’ who is worshipped by the church must be firmly attached to the real Jesus who lived in Palestine in the first century and died on a cross.

2. During the 1950’s and 1960’s scholars debated about the different criteria available for assessing whether this or that saying of Jesus was authentic or not---

Jesus Seminar organized by Robert Funk. They voted on the authenticity of each saying of Jesus using _____

3. Falsely claim Jesus didn't say about ____% of what the Gospels attribute to him.

4. A new picture of Jesus to hang on the wall. It's Jesus as the wandering Cynic Preacher.

View held by Dominic Crossan. Have you heard of him?

III. CAN WE TRUST THE FOUR NEW TESTAMENT GOSPELS TO SHOW US JESUS?

A. The NT documents have _____ than any other work of classical literature: i.e., Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, Tacitus.

1. We have a great quantity of ancient manuscripts of the NT. We have more than _____ copies of Greek manuscripts of the NT. We have as many as _____ translations in languages including Latin, Coptic, and Syriac. Compare this number to only 7 copies of Plato's manuscripts.

2. The earliest manuscript fragments date back to the _____.
Plato _____ year gap. Gospel of John dating to _____

How the NT compares to other ancient writings

(From Josh McDowell The New Evidence Demands a Verdict, Nelson, 1999, p. 55)

| AUTHOR | BOOK | DATE WRITTEN | EARLIEST COPIES | TIME GAP | NUMBER OF COPIES |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|--|--|------------------|
| Homer | Iliad | 800 BC | c. 400 BC | c. 400 yrs. | 643 |
| Heroditus | History | 480-425 BC | c. AD 900 | c. 1,350 yrs. | 8 |
| Thucydides | History | 460-400 BC | c. AD 900 | c. 1,300 yrs. | 8 |
| Plato | | 400 BC | c. AD 900 | c. 1,300 yrs. | 7 |
| Demosthenes | | 300 BC | c. AD 1,100 | c. 1,400 yrs. | 200 |
| Caesar | Gaelic Wars | 100-44 BC | c. AD 900 | c. 1,000 yrs. | 10 |
| Tacitus | Annals | AD 100 | c. AD 1,100 | c. 1,000 yrs. | 20 |
| Plino Secundus | Natural History | AD 61-113 | c. AD 850 | c. 7,500 yrs. | 7 |
| New Testament | | AD 50-100 | c. AD 114 (portions) c. AD 200 (books) c. AD 125 (complete NT) | c. 50 yrs. c. 100 yrs. c. 225 yrs. | 5366 |

B. The reliability of the NT documents is confirmed through _____.

1. Luke 1:1-3

2. 1 John 1:1)

3. 2 Peter 1:16

C. _____ confirm many of the events, people, places, and customs reported in the NT documents. These historians include Josephus (before AD100), Tacitus (c. AD 120), Seutonius (c. AD 110), and the Roman governor Pliny the Younger (c. AD 110).

D. _____ also shed light on the accuracy of the NT documents. This includes Irenaeus (AD 170), Tertullian, Julius Africanus, and Clement of Rome (AD 95) – all writing before AD 250.

E. _____ findings confirm the accuracy of the NT.

CONCLUSION: Our choice....