

Are the Gospel Writers Credible?

The writers of the Gospel accounts — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — quite definitely affirm that Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God, and that he performed miracles to authenticate that affirmation. Further, they allege that even though Jesus was put to death on the cross, after three days he came out of the grave, thus, forcefully demonstrating that he is Jehovah's beloved Son, and that his authority must be respected. There is really no dispute about what the record claims.

How do skeptics address these historical records? Generally speaking, they assert that the New Testament writers fabricated the accounts. The writers **knew** that Jesus did not do these things; they simply invented the stories.

Will this charge stand up in the light of logical inquiry? Let us think about it for a moment.

Logically speaking, it is the case that either there is an eternity wherein one will give an account for the deeds of his life, or else there is no existence after death. The logical "law of the excluded middle" — a thing either **is** or it **is not** — demands this.

Now, reflect upon the implications of this principle in light of the charge that the New Testament writers lied about the events in the life of Christ. If they **believed** in eternity, why would they falsify the records regarding Jesus, knowing that such lies would exclude their entrance into heaven? Lying is well nigh universally conceded to be unethical.

On the other hand, if Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John **did not believe** in eternal accountability, and so callously fabricated the documents that affirmed Jesus' divine nature, why would they have subjected themselves to the persecution that accompanied Christianity — since this life would be all they believed they would ever enjoy?

It makes no sense at all. This is a problem that no skeptic can explain. The New Testament documents are reliable!

- by *Wayne Jackson*

God and Man

Remember that God sees the whole picture. He sees all the past; He sees all the present; and He has the power to see all the future. He can see the end from the beginning, and He knows the destiny of every person and the solution to every problem. He loves us and is always available to us, but He will force neither Himself nor His will upon us. As long as we live, we are allowed to choose. He is concerned about our true welfare and happiness - here and hereafter. With Him on our side every thing will turn out well (Rom.8:28,31); but if He must be against us, nothing will turn out right.

- by *Bill Crews*

Wash Your Face

When you see a dirty face in the mirror, you wash your face, not the mirror. Likewise when we see error in our lives, portrayed by truth revealed in the Bible, let us simply clean up our lives and quit criticizing the Bible.

What do you think of a man who breaks a mirror because he doesn't like what he sees? Then what do you think of one who criticizes the truth that simply reveals the inner man that we can't see with the physical eye?

- by *Leslie Diestelkamp*

True Repentance

Repentance means to change your mind, do an about-face, to change direction. In the context of salvation, it refers to changing one's mind about sinning, turning from sin, and turning to God. It is prompted by a guilty conscience (Acts 2:37-38) and is attainable through the goodness and kindness of God (Rom. 2:4). But for repentance to be accepted by God, it must be

genuine and sincere. It is here that I fear Christians sometimes abuse repentance.

It is possible, for example, to use repentance as an escape hatch for “planned sinning.” That is, a Christian might knowingly commit sin, thinking that they can “always repent later.” Or, one can go through the motions of repenting, without understanding or intending to comply with the changed life which it demands. After all, repentance has fruit, John the Baptist said (Mt. 3:8). Peter commanded his hearers to “*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out...*” (Acts 3:19). And Paul told Agrippa that he “*preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds*” (Acts 26:20).

Any prayer to God for forgiveness which leaves a mental loophole for continued sinning is no repentance at all. Such mental finagling is an attempt to mock God, which Paul says cannot be done (Gal. 6:7). Have you really changed your mind about your sin, or are you trying to have it both ways? Remember, the Lord already knows the answer. .

- by Jim King

Proving Oneself

In writing about the qualifications of deacons, Paul said that they ought to “first be proved” (1 Tim. 3:10). His point is obvious. Before a man should be appointed to serve in this special office in the church, he should have demonstrated his faithfulness, his zeal and his commitment to serve the Lord. We’re not looking for a person who has to be specially recognized before he does any work. We want a man who is already working - and who will continue to work whether he receives any notice or not.

While Paul was specifically speaking about deacons in the text cited, there are some things implied that have application to all Christians.

- First, you should realize that you are currently establishing a reputation. Others in the congregation are viewing your work and service. They are developing an opinion of you. As they think of you, they will see you as either a steady worker or as a mere spectator in the work of the church. Which will it be?
- If it is right to hold potential deacons up to this kind of scrutiny, why would it not also be proper to use the same approach regarding folks who might be selected for other roles in the church? Preachers, Bible class teachers, those who serve in the public worship, etc., all need to “first be proved.”
- And, while some will complain about this kind of “judging”, it is clear that the Lord expects us to do it (John 7:24). If you want to serve, then you must be willing to “first be proved.”

And so, Christian, how are you doing? As your brothers and sisters look to you do they see someone who is “proving” himself to be a faithful disciple? Such evaluations ARE taking place continually. How do you rate? Think!

- by Greg Gwin