

Session 3: Is it True (Part 2)?

1. Bible Reflection

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

Reflect upon the following question:

What do you think Jesus meant by referring to Himself as the light of the world?

2. Session Outline Part 1

Why believe that God is the Christian God?

This is a question that has to do, among other things, with matters of history.

Two big questions:

1. Why trust what the Bible says?
2. How can we believe in the resurrection?

The credibility of the Bible

- Has it been changed over time?

Homers Illiad

- 2,000 manuscripts
- Dated within four centuries of the original.

New Testament

Nearly 6,000 manuscripts in the Greek alone, plus about 19,000 in other ancient languages. Dated within a century of the original.

Is what it says historically accurate? Two facts point to its accuracy:

- The very early dating of the originals.
- It's correspondence with extra-biblical sources (i.e non-biblical historical writings and archeological findings).

3. Discussion Break

What difference does it make that the Bible is historically reliable?

4. Session Outline Part 2

Can we believe in the resurrection?

If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.
1 Corinthians 15:14

Bedrock historical facts about Jesus:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. His tomb was found empty.
3. His disciples genuinely believed the risen Jesus had appeared to them.
4. James and Paul (skeptics) were converted.
5. The early church exploded in numbers.

What is the most plausible explanation for these facts? Could the disciples have been deceivers, deceived or deluded?

Deceivers?

- Historians unanimously agree that the disciples sincerely believed they witnessed the resurrection (e.g. martyrdom).
- If they fabricated the story, women would be an unlikely choice as the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

Deceived?

- No one had anything to gain by deceiving the disciples.
- The severity of His bodily torture and disfiguration and the deadly effectiveness of crucifixion makes the possibility of Jesus deceiving others practically impossible.

Deluded?

- Hallucinations are not a group phenomenon.

I have examined all the alternative explanations, ancient and modern, for the rise of the early church, and I have to say that far and away the best historical explanation is that Jesus of Nazareth...really did rise from the dead.

N.T. Wright

5. Further Discussion

1. Have you ever found yourself in a conversation with someone who challenged either the credibility of the Bible or the resurrection? How did the conversation go?
2. Why do you think it is important that the resurrection did happen?
3. Is there anything from this session that you found particularly interesting or surprising?

6. Take Time to Pray

Take a moment to pray with one another around some of the things you have shared today.

7. Where to From Here?

What is one thing you will take away from this session?

8. Notes
