

Is Jesus God?

Savor The Savior, Session 1

Introduction: Orthodoxy And Opinion Polls

- Superman was great, but had one weakness (besides Lois Lane) – Kryptonite.
- Jesus Christ is the greatest and has no weakness. Yet sinful man likes their heroes flawed, for whatever self-affirming motivation. So unbelievers and liberal theologians have sought to depict Christ as a mere man who preached the kingdom of God, but was not God Himself. Man has provided “kryptonite”
- Critics will recognize Jesus (His humanness), but not the Christ (His deity)
- Who is Jesus? How do know who He is?

“Jesus...asked His disciples ‘**Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?**’
So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’
He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’
Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.””
Matthew 16:13-16

1. What Did The Ancient Opinion Polls Say About Who The Son Of Man Is?

- **John the Baptist** - some Jews may have gotten this from Herod the Tetrarch who in Mt 14:1-2 called Jesus the reincarnation of JB who is coming back to haunt him
- **Elijah** - a reincarnation of Elijah who was to be sent “before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord” (acc. to Mal 4:5)
 - John MacArthur states that: “at many modern Jewish Passover celebrations - an empty chair is reserved at the table for Elijah in the hope of his one day coming to announce the Messiah’s arrival”
- **Jeremiah** - one of the most respected OT prophets
 - An ancient Jewish legend in the apocryphal book, 2 Maccabees, says that Jeremiah took the Ark of the Covenant and the altar of incense out of the Temple and hid it at Mt. Nebo to preserve them from Babylonian destruction
 - Some Jews thought that Jeremiah would return for these items before the Messiah returned
- **Prophet** - equivalent to the greatest of prophets in Jewish history

2. What Do The Modern Opinion Polls Say About Who The Son Of Man Is?

September 8, 2020 Ligonier Ministries State Of Theology Survey

<https://thestateoftheology.com>

- 52% of Americans believe Jesus was a good teacher, but not God
- 30% of Evangelicals believe Jesus was a good teacher, but not God

Religious Beliefs Of Americans 2013 (Harris Poll)

http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2013/12/22/US-belief-in-God-down-belief-in-theory-of-evolution-up/24081387762886/

- 57% believe in virgin birth (60% in 2005)
- 68% believe Jesus is God or the son of God (72% in 2005)
- 65% believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (70% in 2005)

Gallup Poll findings: (date unknown)

- 91% Yes, Jesus lived
- 70% Christ was God
- 11% Just a religious leader
- 2% Christ did not live
- 58% Important that Christ was fully human and fully God
- 42% Jesus is divine in the sense that He was in fact God living among men
- 27% Only a man but called by God to reveal God's purpose in the world
- 9% Divine in the sense that he embodied the best in all men
- 6% Great teacher but I can't call him divine
- 2% Not sure there was such a person
- 14% No opinion

3. What Do The Modern Religions Say About Who The Son Of Man Is?

a. The Jewish View Of Jesus:

- Jesus was Jewish, Himself. But the Jewish people will either see Him as a good prophet or a Messianic fraud.

According to Ken Woodward ("The Other Jesus," Newsweek, 3/27/2000), the Jewish view of Christ is that:

- "he was the apostate, whose name a pious Jew should never utter"
- the Christian crusades made the Jews shun the cross of Christ even more
- "Geiger argued that Jesus was a reformist Pharisee whose teachings had been corrupted by his followers and mixed with pagan elements to produce the dogmas of Christianity," says Susannah Heschel, professor of Jewish studies at Dartmouth
- holocaust deepened the Jewish hatred of Christians even more – blamed Christian church – Luther church stood by and watched

b. The Islamic View Of Jesus

1) Islam believes Christ was sinless and virgin born, but not the Son of God.

- Sura 3:45-47 refers to the virgin birth, but not as a product of the Holy Spirit
- Islamic writer Matar cites the Koran's view of Mary: "The Koran honors the Virgin Mary as a model of chastity. There is a chapter in the Koran named after her (Sura 19), and many verses praise the purity and devotion of her life. *'And of Mary, daughter of Imran who guarded her chastity, so that We breathed into her a life from Us, and she believed the words of her Lord and*

His Books, and was among the obedient.’ (Koran 66:12)’ (Islam For Beginners, p. 23)

- Muslims disdain the fact that Allah would have a Son
- Sura 4:171 reduces Christ by saying “Jesus...was only a messenger of Allah...Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son.”
- To equate anyone with God is to blaspheme Allah.

John 1:1,14,34 ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth...³⁴And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

2) **Islam believes Christ was not crucified.**

- Sura 4:157 “They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them ... They certainly did not kill him but God raised him up to himself.”
- Sura 3:55 “Jesus, I will take you and raise you to me.”
- Sura 4:159 teaches that before Jesus dies, He will be a witness to all people at the Day of Judgment
- Muslims believe that Jesus never died but was assumed into heaven by Allah. Someone else died in His place. The substitutionary death is reversed – mortal for immortal, sinner for sinless.
- Islamic writer Matar states: “The Koran views Jesus as a Prophet born of God’s Spirit but without any divine characteristics. Thus He was not crucified, but only appeared to have been. (Koran 4:155-169).” (*Islam For Beginners*, p. 23)
- “Most Muslims believe Judas was put in the place of Christ, and Christ went to heaven.” (McDowell, *Handbook...*, p. 395)
 - Malcolm Clark points to the prophetic role of Jesus in Islam: “In the final days, Jesus will return, perhaps as the *Mahdi* (messianic figure of Islam), defeat the anti-Messiah, and live for 40 years on earth. He will then die (for the first time), be buried in a place reserved for him beside Muhammad in Medina, and be resurrected on the Day of Judgment when he, like all prophets, will be a witness for (or against) his community.” (*Islam For Dummies*, p. 267)

3) **Islam believes Christ was not resurrected.**

- If Jesus didn’t die, He didn’t need to be resurrected. Jesus is viewed as being received to heaven without dying.
- Besides, Muhammad wasn’t resurrected, and he is seen as greater than Christ.
- Sura 5:116 infers that Jesus would have considered it blasphemous for Him to have been raised to the level of Allah.

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶After that He was seen

by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

4) Islam Believes That Jesus And The Bible Predicted Muhammad

- Sura 61:6 teaches that Jesus predicted the coming of Muhammad
- Muslims believe that the *Paraclete* that Jesus would send after He leaves (Jn 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 Jn 2:1) is not the Holy Spirit, but Muhammad
- Deuteronomy 18:15-18 gives Moses citation of another prophet raised from among them. While Christians believe this is Jesus, Muslims believe this is Muhammad.

5) Islam Views Muhammad As The Ultimate Prophet Over Christ

- Sura 33:40 refers to Muhammad as the "seal of the prophets."
- Though Muhammad is the greatest of the prophets, he was not impeccable. Muhammad is equal in form to every other man (Sura 18:110).
- Muhammad was commanded by Allah to repent of his sins (Sura 40:55).
- Yet Jesus is viewed by the Scriptures to be sinless.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

c. Buddhist View Of Jesus

- Christ was merely a teacher, but not on the level as Buddha.
- Some Buddhists try to equate the "Savior" role of Buddha with that of Christ.
- Ankerberg & Weldon dispel that myth in "Buddhism vs. Christianity"
 - "The truth is that purported similarities between Buddhism and Christianity are only apparent or surface. For example, many have claimed a similarity between Jesus Christ's saving role in Christianity and the Bodhisattva's savior role as given in later Buddhism. But these roles are entirely contradictory. In Christianity, "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). This means He saves us from the penalty of our sins by taking God's judgment of sin in His own Person. Jesus paid the penalty of sin (death) for sinners by dying in their place. Thus, He offers a free gift of salvation to anyone simply for believing and accepting what He has done on their behalf (Jn. 3:16). The central ideas involved in Christ's saving role—God's holiness, propitiatory atonement, forgiveness of sin, salvation as a free gift of God's grace through faith in Christ, etc., are all foreign to Buddhism.
 - "The Bodhisattva's role of savior is thus entirely different than that of Christ's. The Bodhisattva has no concern with sin in an ultimate sense, only with the end of suffering. He has no concept of God's wrath against sin or the need for a propitiatory atonement. He has no belief in an infinite personal God who created men and women in His image. He has no belief in a loving God who freely forgives sinners. His only sacrifice is his postponement of entering nirvana so that he can help others find Buddhist enlightenment. Having achieved self-perfection, the Bodhisattva could freely enter nirvana at death.

Instead, he chooses to reincarnate again to help others attain their own self-perfection and nirvana more quickly.”
(<http://www.ankerberg.com/Articles/apologetics/AP1101W3.htm>)

- “Thus when Buddhists encounter Christianity they depersonalize the Jesus who walked this earth and transform him into a figure more like Buddha. “Buddhists can think of Jesus Christ as an emanation or ‘truth body’ [*dharmakaya*] of the Buddha,” says Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman of Columbia University. For Tibetan Buddhists, Jesus strongly resembles a bodhisattva—a perfectly enlightened being who vows to help others attain enlightenment. But to reconfigure Jesus as a Buddhist is to turn him into something he was not. Jesus, after all, believed in God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, which Buddhists do not. He believed in sin, which is not a Buddhist concept. Jesus did not teach compassion as a way of removing bad karma, nor did he see life as a cycle of death and rebirth. In short, says the Dalai Lama, trying to meld Jesus into Buddha “is like putting a yak’s head on a sheep’s body.” It doesn’t work. Indeed, nothing shows the difference between the Jesus and the Buddha better than the way that each died. The Buddha’s death was serene and controlled—a calm passing out of his final rebirth, like the extinction of a flame. Jesus, on the other hand, suffers an agonizing death on the cross, abandoned by God but obedient to his will.” (Ken Woodward, “The Other Jesus,” *Newsweek*, 3/27/2000)

d. The Hindu View Of Jesus

- Hindus believe there are several manifestations of God becoming man. Christ is one of the many incarnations God has taken. The Bible states that this only happened once.

e. The New Age View Of Jesus

- Many New Agers don’t pay attention to Christ, but focus on Pantheism.
- Some segments see that Christ will come at the dawning of the New Age.

Ronald C. Rhodes exposes the New Age error (“The New Age Christology of David Spangler,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume 144:576, Oct, 1987, pp. 400ff):

- “In Spangler’s system of thought, Jesus and the Christ are two distinct beings, the Christ being the more important of the two. According to Spangler, Jesus was an ordinary (though quite spiritual) human being who became a vehicle through which the Christ manifested Himself for a short period of three years. After this time (at the crucifixion), the Christ departed from the body of Jesus, having fully accomplished His mission. Jesus is said to be unique only in the sense that He provided a body for the Christ during this short stay on earth.” (pp. 403-404)
- “In Spangler’s system of thought, the Christ has a fourfold identity: (1) the Christ as a Bodhisattva; (2) the Christ as an ‘individual being who is beyond individualized selfness’; (3) the Christ as a universal spirit; and (4) the Christ as a cosmic principle.

"In regard to the Christ as a Bodhisattva, Spangler explains that He was once a human being, but progressed and evolved so rapidly that 'he achieved a position of mastership at a time when humanity as a whole was still in its infancy; and this being travelled a path which in the Orient would be called the path of the Bodhisattva.' Spangler goes on to say that 'a Bodhisattva is a being who has earned the right to enter into Nirvana or into illumination, but he turns back from that state and does not enter.' Instead the Bodhisattva 'turns his face and his attention back to humanity, back to the other lives that are following after him, and in essence pledges himself not to enter an illumined state until all the lives that are lesser than him can do so as well.' Spangler believes that the Christ is even now working toward this goal." (pp. 404-405)

f. **Other Religious Views**

(summarized from Josh McDowell & Bart Larson's *Jesus: A Biblical Defense Of His Deity*, Appendix, p. 113ff)

- **Agnostic** – Impossible to know if Christ is God
- **Atheist** – There is no God, so Christ can't be
- **Bahai** – Jesus is the main prophet of His day that God used like Buddha, Moses, Krishna, Zoroaster, Muhammad, etc. Baha'u'llah is God's prophet for today.
- **Black Muslims** – Christ was probably black and an inferior prophet to Muhammad, and is certainly God.
- **Christian Science** – They deny the deity of Christ by stating that Jesus is the son of God, but not God. "Jesus" reflects his humanity; "Christ" is the divine idea that heals.
- **Confucianism** – They reject the Judeo-Christian concept of a personal God. "Heaven" is the highest reality and replaces "God."
- **Jehovah's Witnesses** – Christ was a pre-existent "god" created by God (thus not eternal). God used Christ to create the world. Christ is a sinless spirit being (god) who was made flesh. The JW view mirrors the view of Arius who was condemned at the Council of Nicea for denying the deity of Christ. The Holy Spirit is also denied His deity.
- **Mormonism** – "They teach that a council of the Gods met, and that one of them, Adam (as in Genesis chapter two), became a man and is the 'God' of this planet. He is the one Jesus referred to as 'God the Father' (see *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, pp. 50-51). Mormons believe that all people exist first in a pre-mortal state, and that in order to become Gods we must first take upon ourselves bodies of flesh and bone. They teach that Jesus as a pre-mortal man was the brother of Lucifer, and that Jesus had several wives. *Elohim* and *Jehovah* (two Old Testament names for God) are seen as two separate Gods." (McDowell & Larson, p. 118)
- **Scientology** – Being rooted in science fiction and not the Judeo-Christian tradition, they do not discuss the Trinity or the deity of Christ.
- **Unification Church** – Sun Myung Moon believes he is the new Messiah. Jesus is a son of God, but not God. "Unification teaches that Jesus brought spiritual redemption to earth but died prematurely. Sun Myung Moon is seen as the new Messiah to bring physical redemption to earth and finish what Jesus failed to complete. The Holy Spirit is seen as the feminine counterpart to God the Father." (McDowell & Larson, p. 121)

- **Unitarianism** – The Unitarian church denies the Trinity, thus Christ and the Holy Spirit are not considered God. God is impersonal.
- **Unity** – Founded by Charles Fillmore and his wife, the Unity School of Christianity is similar to Christian Science. God is impersonal (“life” or “divine principle”). Jesus is a man, Christ is a divine concept. Sin is negative thinking. The Bible is an allegory.
- **The Way International** – Victor Wierwille, the founder, taught that Jesus was a sinless man, redeemer and Son of God, but not God. They deny Christ’s pre-existence and eternality. Jesus came into being at His conception.
- **Zen Buddhism** – Christ is a good, moral teacher.

4. What Does The Bible Say About Who The Son Of Man Is?

- **Colossians 2:9** “For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (or “fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” NIV)
 - “fullness” = totality
 - J.B. Lightfoot - “the totality of the divine powers and attributes”
 - all of what God is dwells in Christ
 - “dwells” = present tense - continuous action
 - the fullness of the deity **permanently resides** in the Person of Christ
- **Hebrews 1:3** “The brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (“radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” NIV)
 - “brightness” = radiance, shining forth, effulgence
 - not a reflection, but a light source
 - Christ is not merely a reflection of God’s glory, but a source of it
 - “express image” or “exact representation”
 - word used of an image or impression left by an engraving or stamping tool, ie/ stamped coin, engraved wood
 - Christ is the authentic representation of what God is

5. What Do You Say About Who The Son Of Man Is?

Q: How would you answer someone who has the following objections to the person of Christ?

- Jesus was merely a great teacher, but not God.
 - He also forgave sins, healed disease, raised people from the dead (even himself)
- Jesus didn’t come back from the dead – that’s a myth!
 - Evidences: well-trained Roman soldiers, stone, burial wrap & spices, seamless tomb, blood & water from His side at the cross
 - Witnesses: 500+ witnesses of resurrection (1 Cor 15)
- Jesus can’t be the only way to heaven! There are so many good religions, there must be lots of ways to get to God!
 - Can there be more than one truth?
 - Law of Contradiction: no two truths can contradict each other

- Jesus is no different than Buddha, Muhammad and other great religious prophets. What's so different about Jesus?
 - Buddha lived 560 BC – 480 BC
 - Muhammad lived 570 AD - 632 AD
 - Christ is timeless, infinite, eternal
 - The true Jesus had a birth date and a time of death, like the others, but Christ has another date that no one else has, a resurrection date

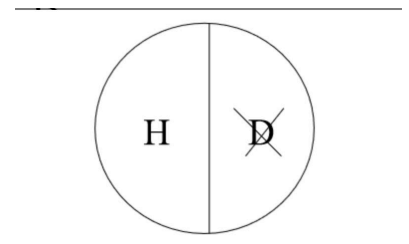
I. How Was Christ's Deity Attacked In History?

Heresy	Teaching	Proponents	Opponents
Ebionism	Jewish heresy that claimed Christ was merely a great prophet.	Judaizers	Origin (ca. 185–ca. 254)
Docetism	Christ was not truly man since all material is evil. He only seemed to be man.	Valentinus	Irenaeus (ca. 115–ca. 155)
Adoptionism	Christ became the son of God when he was adopted.	Paul of Samosata	Hippolytus (170–236)
Modalism	All three members of the Trinity are all one person with three names or activities.	Sabellius	Condemned at the synod of Antioch, 286.
Arianism	Christ was the first created being and was of similar substance (<i>homoiousia</i>) with the Father.	Arius, bishop of Alexandria	Athanasius (ca. 296–373) Condemned at the council of Nicaea, 325.

(Theological Notebook – Trinitarianism, p. 92)

A. Ebionism – Jesus is a mere man

- Ebionites were ascetic, vegetarian Jews who vowed poverty and saw Christianity as an obedience to a moral code that was superior to or the fulfillment of the law
- Their name originated from the term *'ebyonim* ("poor ones")
- The Ebionites continued the tradition of the Judaizers who opposed the Apostle Paul
- They became prominent after 70 A.D. and died out after the 4th century
- They denied the deity of Christ as well as the preexistence of the Logos
- They believed that Christ's deity was in conflict with monotheism
- They "denied the virgin birth of Jesus, considering Him the natural offspring of Joseph and Mary. Ebionites taught that the eternal Christ was united with the human Jesus when John baptized Jesus." (Witmer, *Immanuel*, p.84)



- Christ was a mere man who received the Holy Spirit at His baptism which was Jesus' qualification to be the Messiah
- Jesus was selected because he kept the law perfectly
- Christ was the prophetic successor to Moses
- "According to this view Jesus died just as a man, not as the God-Man." (Witmer)
- "In the second century this heresy denied the deity of Christ, considering Jesus to be the natural son of Joseph and Mary but elected to be Son of God at His baptism when He was united with the eternal Christ." (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 252)
- "Some Ebionites said Christ was the incarnation of the ideal man, and they called him the highest archangel." (Robert Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, p.67)
- **1 John 5:6-8** refutes the Ebionites: "This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one."
(water = baptism; blood = death – combats the dualist who believe Christ's spirit left Jesus before dying on the cross)

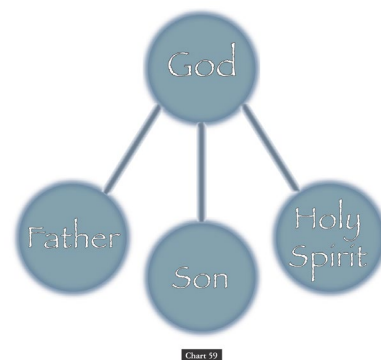
B. Monarchianism – Jesus Is An Emanation From God

1. Modalistic Monarchianism

a. Understanding Monarchianism

- Monarchianism arose at the end of the 2nd century
- *mono* = one, *arch* = chief, supreme (also beginning)
- They sought to preserve "one" "arch" ruler in the universe
- Radical monotheism – sought to preserve supremacy of God the Father, yet still give an elevated status to Jesus Christ
- This effort defended the sole government of God

Modalism: An Attempt to Explain Christ



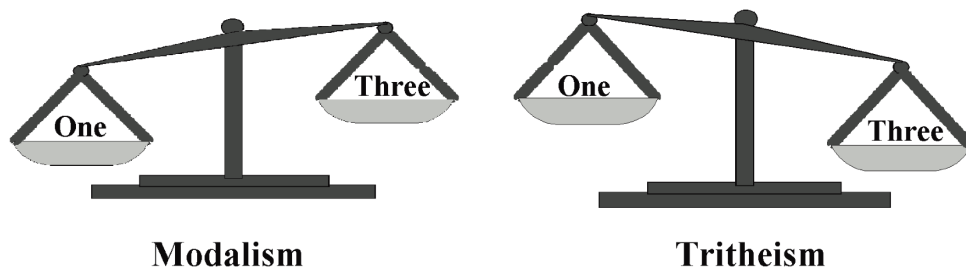
b. Understanding Modalism

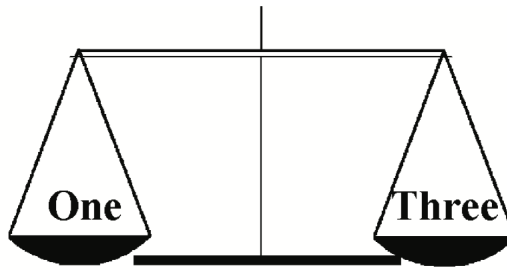
- "modes" = manifestations
- "This teaching...held that the so-called three persons were actually modes in which the one person manifested himself. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are God the Father, but in a different guise. Just as the same man may be a father, a son, and a brother, so the one person of God the Father played different roles." (Lutzer, *The Doctrines That Divide*, p. 24)
- Modalism (or "Patripassitism") is refuted by the separate, yet simultaneous presence of the three Persons of the Godhead at Jesus' baptism (Mt 3:16-17)

c. Understanding Modalistic Monarchianism

- Gnosticism believes in different emanations or modes coming from God – God is the core being and different emanations come from God like rays to the sun, the closer the mode is to God the higher

- Christ is in the highest mode from God but is not God Himself
- Modalistic Monarchians believe that God exists in 3 modes (Father, then Son, then Holy Spirit) at different times, denying separate persons in the Godhead
- Modalistic Monarchians deny the humanity of Christ (they were docetic)
- Sabellius in Rome (3rd century) believed that God was of the same essence of God, but was another mode
- Sabellius illustrated his with the sun and it's rays ("Light of Lights") – the rays are the same substance of the sun, but is not the sun
- *homoousios* = substance, stuff, essence, ultimate reality
- Sabellius calls Christ the "Light of Lights" and the *homoousios* of God, but that Jesus was not God
- Because *homoousios* is a pet term of Sabellius, the church rejected the term (Synod of Antioch in 268), but later adopted it again at the Council of Nicea
- T.D. Jakes softened his modalistic position on his church's doctrinal statement but didn't completely remove it either. His church's doctrinal statement on their website cites: "There is one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three manifestations: Father, Son and Holy Spirit."
<https://www.thepottershouse.org/explore/belief-statement/>
<https://www.challies.com/articles/the-false-teachers-t-d-jakes/>
- Steven Furtick preaches: "[Jesus] is not leaving you, but changing forms." ... "up until now I have walked with you, But when I send my spirit, *I will be in you.*" ("Ghosted", Sermon 1/27/20)
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=611801289632898>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmIK1LmDM7w>,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9vFSLCcrLU>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wo4ZV6BUNmc>
<https://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/is-megachurch-pastor-steven-furtick-denying-the-traditional-view-of-the-trinity.html>
- Oneness Pentacostalism holds that God is one person who reveals Himself in three different persons
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- From the United Pentecostal Church website: "56. Can Trinitarians show that three divine persons were present when Jesus was baptized by John? Absolutely not. The one, omnipresent God used three simultaneous manifestations. Only one divine person was present--Jesus Christ the Lord." (<http://www.upci.org/doctrine/60Questions.asp>)





(Theological Notebook – Trinitarianism, p. 91)

2. Dynamic Monarchianism (or Adoptionistic Christology)

- Dynamic = change of status
- They called themselves "*Alogo*" ("a" = against, "logos" = Word)
- Paul of Samosata is a prominent proponent of Dynamic Monarchianism
- The "logos" is an impersonal attribute of God – a power of God, not the person of God
- "Paul of Samosata...depersonalized the Logos as simply the inherent rationality of God" (Blaising, "Monarchianism", *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Elwell, p. 727)
- This "power" ascended upon Jesus at His baptism, but before the baptism, Jesus was a mere man
- "This descension of the power of God upon Jesus at His baptism, affected in Jesus a unique moral union with the Father – a moral unity that had never existed before between man and God – so unique that Christ could be called the Son of God." (R.C. Sproul, "The Council Of Nicea," from the tape series "The History of Christian Theology", 1984)
- Jesus is viewed not as the eternal Son of God but as the adopted Son of God
- Jesus changed from man to a divine (hence "dynamic")
- Lucian (a disciple of Paul of Samosata) added that "God is one, everything else is created. The Logos is neither the eternal preexistent person of the Godhead, nor is the Logos an eternal attribute of God, but the Logos itself is created. God sends the Logos into the world and takes upon it a human body. But as such, in creation, and in its union with the human body, the Logos is a created and mutable thing. But the Logos in the man achieves immutability, which is an attribute of God." Logos becomes God (Sproul tape)
- Liberalism in the 19th century revived this heretical Christology

Adoptionism and Modalism Compared

ADOPTIONISM (Dynamic Modalism)	MODALISM (Modalistic Monarchianism, Sabellianism, Patripassionism)
Stress Oneness of God	Stress Oneness of God
Deny Deity of Christ	Affirm Deity of Christ
Affirm Humanity of Christ	Deny Humanity of Christ
Holy Spirit = a power	Holy Spirit = a mode of God's existence

Chart 60

C. Arianism – Jesus Is Similar, But Not The Same As God

- Gregg Allison: "Tragically, other heresies in the early church denied the full deity of the Son, including the particularly widespread Arianism, named for its founder. Arius believed that God, being one and only one, could never share his being with anyone or anything else. To do so would mean there are two gods, but by definition God is absolutely unique. Moreover, this eternal and unbegotten God created a Son; thus, the Son is a created being: '[God] begat an only-begotten Son before eternal times.... He made him exist at his own will, unalterable and unchangeable. He was a perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures; he was a perfect offspring, but not as one of things begotten.... At the will of God, he was created before times and before ages, and gaining life and being from the Father.' Furthermore, God created the entire universe and all that is in it through the Son. Therefore, 'We consider that the Son has this prerogative [to be called 'Son'] over others, and therefore is called Only-begotten, because he alone was brought into existence by God alone, and all other things were created by God through the Son.' Despite granting the Son this uniqueness, Arius maintained that the Son is nonetheless a created being." (*Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, pp. 368-369, Zondervan, Kindle Edition, 2011-04-19)

1. Historical Background Of Arianism

- Arius (250-336) was a presbyter in Alexandria who endorsed his heresy in 318 A.D.
- Constantine had just recently proclaimed Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Emperor and Constantine did not want any division in His new religious endeavor
- Arius was opposed originally by Alexander of Alexandria and then later by Athanasius
- Eusebius of Caesarea held a middle view in that Christ was similar in substance

2. Doctrinal Teaching Of Arianism (summarized from R.C. Sproul)

- a. God the Father alone is eternal and unbegotten (makes Arius a monarchian)
- b. God creates all things voluntarily (not a gnostic or modalistic monarchian who believed that God did not voluntarily create the universe, but that by necessity God had to emanate a creation)
- c. God alone is *agenetos* (without being begotten – repeat of 1st term)
- d. The term "to beget" means to "create" (Since Jesus was born, He must have a beginning; if He has a beginning, he has an end - thus He is not eternal)
- e. The Son is the perfect creature (*katisma* – creature, *telion* – end or goal)
- f. In Christ, there is a union of the body with the Logos, and the Logos replaces the human soul. The Logos is created and is the instrument of creation (A created Creator). Christ is creator, but not God (e.g. Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons)
- g. Christ was the highest of created beings - superior to man, inferior to God
- h. Christ was similar in nature to God (*homoiousios*), not the same nature/essence of the Father (*homoousios*)
- i. Arius offered a cosmological monotheism (1 God creating the world), but a theological polytheism (He maintained monarchianism, but not monotheism)

- j. "Arius leaves us with an undefinable being who becomes God by first becoming man, but still is neither God nor man" (Sproul)

Q: Why would Christ be truly God in Arius' theology?

Q: Why would Christ not truly be man?

(body without a soul, b/c Logos replaces soul)

3. Doctrinal Refutation By Alexander (from Sproul)

- a. Christ must belong to the side of God in order to redeem man
- b. The Son is begotten but has the predicate (*a*) "always"
- c. Christ is generated by the Father (still a primacy given to the Father), yet "to be generated" neither means "emanation" or "creation"
- d. When Philip asked to see the Father, Jesus said if you've seen me, you've seen the Father
- e. To worship a creature is idolatry and to worship Christ as a creation is to commit idolatry (argument to be used against
- f. Arius' term *homoiousios* ("similar") is not distinct enough. So Alexander adopts the term *homoousios* ("same"), which was Sabellius' term rejected by the church, because it's more precise.

4. The Council Of Nicea

- A council was convened by Emperor Constantine to protect the unity of his newly formed state church
- Attended by 300 bishops convening on June 19, 325 A.D. at Nicea in Bithynia (Isnik, Turkey today)
- The Council called for the condemnation of Arius and his followers and claimed the full deity of Christ calling Him *homoousios* with the Father

The Nicene Creed: *We believe in one God, father almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible. And in one lord, Jesus Christ, the son of God, begotten from the father, only-begotten, that is from the being of the father, God from God, light from light, true God from True God, begotten not made, one in being** with the father, through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and those on the earth, who because of us human beings and because of our salvation descended, became enfleshed, became human, suffered and rose on the third day, ascending to the heavens, coming to judge the living and dead. And in the Holy Spirit. The catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes those who say: there was when he was not; and before being born he was not; or that he came to be from things that are not; or that the Son of God is from a different hypostasis or ousia or mutable or changeable.*

- "Son" – refers to obedience and relationship to Father (you are a "son" of whom you obey)
- "Generation" describes the picture of relationship better than "creation" or "emanation"
- "Begottenness" = uniqueness, dignity – not origin

5. Modern Day Arianism: Jehovah's Witness & Mormonism

- "Charles Taze Russell, founder of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, which later became known as the Jehovah's Witnesses, described Jesus Christ as 'the highest of all Jehovah's creation, so also he was the first, the direct creation of God, the *only begotten*, and then he, as Jehovah's power, and in his name, created all things – angels, principalities and powers, as well as the earthly creation.'" (Witmer, *Immanuel*, p.85)
- "The Mormon author James E. Talmadge affirmed the preexistence of Christ before His conception by Mary and birth in Bethlehem, but he taught that Jesus was not God, a member of the Trinity. Talmadge wrote, 'He had lived with the Father as an unembodied spirit, the Firstborn of the Father's children.'" (ibid)

D. Socinianism – Jesus Is Created, Yet Exalted

- Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) was an Italian theologian who denied the Trinity
- Christ is a created being, but the supreme of all men
- God expressed Himself through the mortal Christ
- because of Christ's perfect obedience, God exalted Him to a divine nature
- because Christ has been exalted to a divine nature, He is worthy of worship
- "In his view Christ had a human nature and did not become God until after his resurrection when the Father delegated some of his divine power to the risen Jesus. Socinus accepted the miracles and virgin birth of Christ, seeing them as signs given to mankind to show Jesus' unique role in becoming divine. Socinus did not believe Christ's death on the cross brought forgiveness of sins because God could forgive sins without the necessity of Jesus' atonement. Repentance and good works brought forgiveness from God. Socinus denied original sin, predestination, and the resurrection of the body...Socinus's ideas laid the foundation for later unitarian movements." (Kubricht, "Socinus, Faustus", *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Elwell, p. 1031)

E. Unitarianism – Jesus Is A Good Man To Emulate

- this anti-trinitarian heresy finds its roots with Arius (4th century) and became more definite with Socinus (16th century)
- Unitarianism became a rationalistic dogma in the age of Enlightenment and teaching of deism
- Unitarianism came to America via New England (1710) dominating most of the New England Congregational churches by 1750
- Christ is a good and godly man
- Christ is to be imitated, but not worshipped

II. How Is The Deity Of Christ Attacked Today?

- 4 Modern Views of Christ
 - (Norman Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask*, p. 102)
 - 1. Jesus never lived
 - 2. Jesus without theology or miracles
 - 3. Jesus mythologized
 - 4. It doesn't matter

A. Jesus Is Fictional And Never Existed (No Such Person)

- Paul probably invented Jesus from ancient myths
- The Gospels are later documents creating a reality to a fictional icon
- "There is no history written at the time Jesus Christ is said to have lived that speaks of the existence of such a person, even such a man." (Thomas Paine)
- "Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we know nothing about Him." (Bertrand Russell)

B. Jesus Is Historical But Mythologized (Just Jesus, Not Christ)

- "From Jesus To Christ"
- Rudolf Bultmann's Historic Jesus
- The Jesus Seminar (see below)

The Historical Jesus	The Historic Christ
Not relevant for faith	Relevant for faith
Jesus of scholars	Christ of believers
Jesus of critical history	Christ of the Gospels
Uncertain foundation	Certain foundation
Inaccessible to most Christians	Accessible to all Christians
The facticity of Jesus	The significance of Jesus
The Jesus of the past	The Christ of the Present

• Why The New Testament Could Not Have Mythologized Jesus

- The time between Jesus' life and the writing of the gospels was so brief that many eyewitnesses (1 Cor 15:6) would have been alive to refute what might be untrue
- The many hostile witnesses of Jesus who were still alive would refute the new testament

1. First Quest or Old Quest (1778-1906)

- Hermann S. Reimarus applied his historical method in the 18th century to conclude: "Jesus was a **revolutionary** who tried and failed; the disciples were **deceivers** who propagated a view of Jesus they knew to be false. Reimarus in his mind had unearthed a historical Jesus antithetical to the Christ of faith, and he hoped it would be the demise of Christianity as he knew it." (Michael Burer, "A Survey of Historical Jesus Studies: From Reimarus to Wright", probe.org)
- David Strauss published a book in the 19th century called *The Life Of Christ* where he stated: "that the **Gospels could no longer be read straightforwardly as unvarnished historical records of what Jesus actually said and did.**" (cited by Rick Wade, "The Historical Jesus," Probe Ministries, <http://www.probe.org/theology-and-philosophy/theology---christ/the-historical-christ.html>)
- Michael Burer writes: "This time was the time of the Enlightenment. Dogma and revelation no longer were accepted as accurate sources of information. Critical history, devoted to sources and "objectivity," held primacy of place in the determination of truth. Scholars working during this time felt that only critical historical work could truly discover who Jesus was. They believed it could strip away

inaccurate layers of interpretation placed upon him by later followers which were not historical in any sense. This method of investigation had been used in other fields, and it was now time to apply it to the Bible. The application of this method of history upon the Gospel materials and their central character yielded something far different than what was normally understood to be true. The essential conclusion was that the Jesus of history was in no way equal to or coextensive with the Christ of faith. In fact, the Jesus of history had been transformed into the Christ of faith by naïve people at best, deceivers at worst. Along with this recovery of the true Jesus of history, the Old Quest carried with it the implicit assumption that the theology of the church should change to correct itself in light of this new historical revelation. The belief in Christ passed down throughout the ages in the church had been built on an improper historical understanding. In light of that, the belief should now change.” (“A Survey of Historical Jesus Studies: From Reimarus to Wright”, probe.org)

- Rationalism denied the authority of God’s Word. Human reason became the determiner of what was actually history in the Gospels. The supernatural aspect of the Gospels is denied because of the naturalistic worldview.
- Albert Schweitzer took the First Quest to task for not producing results and for ignoring Jesus’ eschatological impact. This quest stopped for 50 years.

2. Second Quest

- **Rudolf Bultmann**, a German theologian in the 1940’s, asserted that what is known about Jesus historically is to be found in other historical sources because **the Gospels were not eyewitness accounts, but biased writings of Christians** who elevated Jesus to Christ over time as his legend grew.
- Burer comments: “Bultmann contributed to this interim period between the quests by focusing the attention of history upon the early church, not the life of Jesus. The material in the Gospels does not illuminate the life of Jesus but the *Sitz im Leben* of the church. Jesus’ words were in fact those of Christian preachers speaking in his name, and the Christ which was preached was the Christ of faith, not the Jesus of history.”
- John Walvoord discusses Bultmann’s impact: “Seeking to establish the viewpoint of the early church, Bultmann adopted the approach of **demythologizing Scripture** and with it *Formgeschichte* as the main means of determining the real meaning of the New Testament and the viewpoint of the early church... He prefers ‘*de-mythologizing*,’ an attempt to get behind ‘the mythological conceptions’ of Scriptures to their ‘deeper meaning.’ In his attempt to eliminate the supernatural and arrive at a nonmiraculous interpretation of the New Testament, Bultmann tended to dilute the facts concerning the historical Jesus in the Bible with emphasis on what he believed the early church held rather than what the Bible itself actually teaches.” (*Jesus Christ Our Lord*, p. 15)
- Bultmann’s Second Quest methodology continued through the 1970’s.

3. Third Quest

- With the prevalence of new archaeological findings and manuscripts, the Third Quest has sought to determine Jesus by comprehending the world He historically lived in.
- A propagator of the Third Quest is Oregon State University professor Marcus Borg who shreds the New Testament record of who Jesus is and states these results of who Christ is: (Marcus Borg & N.T. Wright, *The Meaning Of Jesus: Two Visions*)
 - "The name *Jesus* has two referents. On the one hand, *Jesus* refers to a human figure of the past: Jesus of Nazareth, a Galilean Jew of the first century. On the other hand, in Christian theology, devotion, and worship, the name *Jesus* also refers to a divine figure of the present: the risen living Christ who is one with God." (*The Meaning Of Jesus*, pp. 6-7)
 - "This [pre-Easter] Jesus is dead and gone ... recognizes that the 'protoplasmic' Jesus isn't around anymore.... By the post-Easter Jesus, I mean *what Jesus became after his death*." (p. 7)
 - "Raised as a Christian in the middle of this century, I grew up with both a religious and a secular worldview. By early adolescence, the secular worldview had begun to cause problems for my religious worldview... Indeed, the modern worldview had essentially crowded out the religious worldview." (p. 10)
 - Borg attempts to demonstrate that the New Testament is historical in some facts about Jesus and metaphorical in other aspects (miracles, resurrection).
 - "The four gospels of the New Testament are the product of a developing tradition. During the decades between the death of Jesus around the year 30 and the writing of the gospels in the last third of the first century..., the traditions about Jesus developed." (pp. 4-5)
 - "The gospels combine history remembered with history metaphorized. By the former, I mean simply that some of the things reported in the gospels really happened....By history metaphorized, ... include both symbol and story... In short, the gospels do not simply report the history of Jesus, they metaphorize it." (pp. 5-6)
 - He sees that the crucifixion happened, but the meaning was metaphorized.
- The Jesus Seminar is the most prominent propagator of this Third Quest.

4. The Jesus Seminar

- The Jesus Seminar is a group of 75 liberal scholars sponsored by the Westar Institute.
- They initially convened to determine if the words of Jesus were really said in the Bible. They concluded that **80% of what was said by Jesus in the Gospels was not reliable**. They published their conclusion in 1993 in a book called *The Five Gospels: The Search For The Authentic Words Of Jesus*. They assert that the synoptic writers got their source of history from a "Q" (Quelle) Document though this document has never been found or proven. They extol the *Gospel of Thomas*

as another important book along with the other four Gospels, though it is Gnostic in origin.

- Hank Hanegraaff summarizes their teaching: "According to the Jesus Seminar, Jesus is said to be the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier, while the story of His Virgin Birth was a cover-up; He wasn't born in Bethlehem; the betrayal of Jesus was a fabrication concocted by Christians as an anti-Semitic slur; His dead body was not buried but left on the cross and then eaten by birds and prowling dogs; and His resurrection is a story borrowed from the literature of Eastern pagan cults called mystery religions." ("The Search For Jesus Hoax," Christian Research Journal, Vol. 23:2, 2000, <http://www.equip.org/free/DJ925.htm>)
- In Robert Funk's (the founder) Keynote Address to the Jesus Seminar in the spring of 1994, he stated:
 - "Jesus did not ask us to believe that his death was a blood sacrifice, that he was going to die for our sins."
 - "Jesus did not ask us to believe that he was the messiah. He certainly never suggested that he was the second person of the trinity. In fact, he rarely referred to himself at all."
 - "Jesus did not call upon people to repent, or fast, or observe the sabbath. He did not threaten with hell or promise heaven."
 - "Jesus did not ask us to believe that he would be raised from the dead."
 - "Jesus did not ask us to believe that he was born of a virgin."
 - "Jesus did not regard scripture as infallible or even inspired."(Source: Jimmy Williams, "The Jesus Seminar," <http://www.probe.org/theology-and-philosophy/theology---christ/the-jesus-seminar.html>)
- They later met to determine if the works of Jesus actually occurred in the Bible.
- The Jesus Seminar describe themselves in their own words: <https://www.westarinstitute.org/about/>
- These liberal religious professors would cast votes. Their process is quoted from their website:
<http://www.westarinstitute.org/Polebridge/Title/Acts/VotingActs/votingacts.html>
 - red: I would include this narrative information unequivocally in the database for determining who Jesus was. (3 points)
 - pink: I would include this narrative information with reservations (or modifications) in the database for determining who Jesus was. (2 points)
 - gray: I would not include this narrative information in the primary database, but I might make use of some of the content in determining who Jesus was. (1 point)
 - black: I would not include this narrative information in the primary database for determining who Jesus was. (0 points)
- Voting results from Jesus Seminar's Once & Future Jesus Conference, October 20–23, 1999
(http://www.westarinstitute.org/Mission/O_F_Voting_Results/o_f_voting_results.html)

Voting color scheme

Red	Strongly Agree	.7501 and up
Pink	Agree	.5001 to .7500
Gray	Disagree	.2501 to .5000
Black	Strongly Disagree	.0000 to .2500

Samplings from the website:

- The future of Jesus does not depend on exclusive claims made for him, such as his status as God incarnate or as the Jewish messiah.
 - Fellows: **.90 RED** Associates: **.87 RED**
- Jesus will return someday and usher in a new age.
 - Fellows: **.00 BLACK** Associates: **.07 BLACK**
- Jesus intended to establish an ongoing movement that would carry on his ministry.
 - Fellows: **.34 GRAY** Associates: **.37 GRAY**
- The symbol of the cross should be reinterpreted to avoid connotations of the blood atonement.
 - Fellows: **.80 RED** Associates: **.85 RED**
- God intervenes in history in response to petitionary prayer.
 - Fellows: **.06 BLACK** Associates: **.22 BLACK**
- The Bible contains a consistent, external, timeless standard of ethical behavior.
 - Fellows: **.11 BLACK** Associates: **.19 BLACK**
- The churches should review and revise the canon of scriptures.
 - Fellows: **.48 GRAY** Associates: **.50 GRAY**
- The cross symbolizes Jesus' willingness to die for his gospel, not a sacrifice for sins.
 - Fellows: **.62 PINK** Associates: **.80 RED**
- The resurrection means that what Jesus stood for—the kingdom of God—outlives him, not that his corpse was resuscitated.
 - Fellows: **.67 PINK** Associates: **.80 RED**
- The affirmation of Jesus' resurrection does not entail the promise of life after death.
 - Fellows: **.60 PINK** Associates: **.73 PINK**
- The Bible is neither the inerrant word of God nor the only word of God.
 - Fellows: **.93 RED** Associates: **.97 RED**
- Jimmy Williams concludes in his Probe.org article: "If we accept the Jesus Seminar notion that the historical Jesus was a simple peasant later revered and deified, with what are we left? Jesus is so stripped down that He becomes the "Christian dummy" of the first century church! The community is more brilliant than the leader!"
- Eleanor McKee, in a letter to *Time* about the Jesus seminar, states: "Let's see if I got it straight. Fifty panelists, one of whom directed *Showgirls*, have determined that 1.5 billion misguided Christians have an erroneous impression of who Jesus was. A more accurate version of the life of Christ was created by a vote that involved dropping plastic beads into a bucket. O ye of little faith!" (cited by Luis Palau, *God Is Relevant*, p. 96)

C. Jesus May Be Actually What The Bible Says, But It Only Matters If You Want It To (Truth Is Relative)

- Some scholars admit that the Resurrection may or may not have happened, but it doesn't matter
- What matters is what each individual believes
- Truth is whatever you believe is true

D. Jesus Is The Christ, God Incarnate

III. What Is The Best Source To Find Out Who Jesus Is? First Hand Accounts

A. The New Testament Is A Record Of Those Who Had First Hand Experience With Jesus

- **Gospels** – historical record of Christ
 - Matthew – Jews – Christ as King
 - Mark – Romans – Christ as Servant
 - Luke – Greek – Christ as Perfect Man
 - John – All – Christ as God

Luke 1:1-4 “¹Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.”

- **Acts** – historical record of the church
- **Epistles** – presents the theology of Christ's deity & work of salvation

B. If We Don't Have The Original Autographs, How Can We Know Our New Testament Is Reliable?

RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT					
Author/ Book	Date Written	Earliest Copies	Time Gap	No. of Copies	Per- cent Accu- racy
Hindu, <i>Mahābhārata</i>	13 th cent. B.C.				90
Homer, <i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.			643	95
Herodotus, <i>History</i>	480-425 B.C.	C. A.D. 900	c. 1,350 yrs	8	?
Thucydides, <i>History</i>	460-400 B.C.	C. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs	8	?
Plato	400 B.C.	C. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs	7	?
Demosthenes	300 B.C.	C. A.D. 1100	c. 1,400 yrs	200	?

Caesar, <i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs	10	?
Livy, <i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 th cent. (partial) mostly 10 th cent.	c. 400 yrs c. 1,000 yrs	1 partial 19 copies	?
Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs	20	?
Pliny Secundus, <i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61-113	c. 850	c. 750 yrs	7	?
New Testament	A.D. 50-100	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of N.T.) c. 325 (complete N.T.)	±50 yrs 100 yrs 150 yrs 225 yrs	5366	99+

(Geisler & Nix, p. 408)

- 400 years after NT completed – 60-70 copies
- 50 – 70 years from writing: 10–15 copies still in existence today
- There are 30,000 manuscripts (5,752 Greek Manuscripts, 10K Latin mss, thousands of Coptic, Syriac, Georgian & Armenian)
- Plus over a million N.T. citations from the Church Fathers
- add all the manuscripts and quotations, there is a tremendous number of support for NT accuracy
- Princeton Textual scholar Bruce Metzger tells Lee Stroebel: "Well, the more often you have copies that agree with each other, especially if they emerge from different geographical areas, the more you can cross-check them to figure out what the original document was like. The only way they'd agree would be where they went back genealogically in a family tree that represents the descent of the manuscripts.... We have copies commencing within a couple of generations from the writing of the originals, whereas in the case of other ancient texts, maybe five, eight, or ten centuries elapsed between the original and the earliest surviving copy. In addition to Greek manuscripts, we also have translations of the gospels into other languages at a relatively early time-into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. And beyond that, we have what may be called secondary translations made a little later, like Armenian and Gothic. And a lot of others-Georgian, Ethiopic, a great variety...."Because even if we had no Greek manuscripts today, by piecing together the information from these translations from a relatively early date, we could actually reproduce the contents of the New Testament. In addition to that, even if we lost all the Greek manuscripts and the early translations, we could still reproduce the contents of the New Testament from the multiplicity of quotations in commentaries, sermons, letters, and so forth of the early church fathers." (*The Case For Christ*, p. 76)

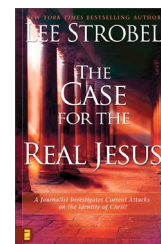
C. **If The Gospels Are Written Decades Or Centuries After Jesus Died, Isn't The Gospel Based On Oral Tradition That Is Subject To Error?**

- The Jesus Seminar (liberal scholars) – The Bible is based on folklore. Oral tradition is passed down and is subject to embellishments, deletions, augmentations and combinations over the decades and centuries.

- Ie/ The game “Telephone” – a sentence goes down the line of children whispering it in the ear of the next child until it reaches the end of the line when a garbled result entertains everyone involved



- Bart Ehrman wants us to believe that the “Telephone Game” of the Gospels is centuries long over the expanse of the Roman Empire (2,500 miles across) with thousands of participants – hence the Gospels are not trustworthy and Jesus was reinvented over and over again
- Daniel Wallace answers this challenge in Lee Stroebel’s *The Case For The Real Jesus*:
 - Unlike *Telephone* “rather than having one stream of transmission, we have multiple streams. Now suppose you were to interrogate the last person in, say, three lines. All of them repeat the message they heard in their own line, and the message ultimately goes back to one source. There would certainly be differences in the resultant message, but there also would be similarities.” (p. 81)
 - The liberals assume that people didn’t write down what they heard
 - When someone was writing the original method, there were a number of eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ to interview who are close to the Gospel content
 - Wallace: “Putting all this together, the cross-checks among the various streams of transmission, the examination of early generations of copies – often exceedingly early – and the written records rather than oral tradition, make textual criticism quite a bit more exacting and precise than the game of telephone.” (ibid)



IV. What Other Ancient Sources Outside Of The New Testament Attest To Jesus?

Q: Is that it for historical data outside the NT?

- **Historic Creeds corroborates Jesus Christ’s teachings**

A. Biblical Creeds On His Life

1 John 4:2 “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God”

1 Timothy 3:16 “God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”

B. Biblical Creeds On His Death And Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”

Romans 1:3-4 “His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”

C. Biblical Creeds On His Deity

Colossians 1:15-17 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

Colossians 2:9 "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"

Hebrews 1:3 "The brightness of His glory and the express image of His person"

D. Historic Creeds on His Personhood and Deity

• The Nicene Creed

*We believe in one God, father almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible. And in one lord, Jesus Christ, the son of God, begotten from the father, only-begotten, that is from the being of the father, God from God, light from light, true God from True God, begotten not made, one in being** with the father, through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and those on the earth, who because of us human beings and because of our salvation descended, became enfleshed, became human, suffered and rose on the third day, ascending to the heavens, coming to judge the living and dead. And in the Holy Spirit. The catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes those who say: there was when he was not; and before being born he was not; or that he came to be from things that are not; or that the Son of God is from a different hypostasis or ousia or mutable or changeable.*

E. What If Ancient Writings Don't Seem So Conclusive To Me?

Josh McDowell, *He Walked Among Us: Evidence for the Historical Jesus* (pp. 32-33) – deals with "False Expectations Concerning References To Jesus":

- Expecting first-century issues to be the same as modern issues
 - There was never a debate as to the existence of Christ until the last few hundred years
 - Since there wasn't a historical debate on this topic, not a lot was written in earlier times
- Expecting first-century communication to be the same as ours
 - Alvin Toffler in *The Third Wave* refers to 3 distinct periods of history: agricultural age, industrial age and the present & future wave of information
 - From Guttenberg's printing press to Intel's microprocessors, the amount of information gleaned today absolutely overwhelms what is available from antiquity
- Expecting first-century customs to be the same as ours
 - Q: Why didn't someone sketch Jesus?
 - Jews & Christians seriously obeyed Ex 20:4 – not making vain images of God
 - Also, Christianity was not very big news in Roman times
 - They mostly wrote about international politics and military conquests

- Expecting other events of history to be attested by a wealth of evidence
 - Some facts gleaned on Julius Caesar comes from only a few lines of Cicero's writing
 - There is much more written about Jesus Christ

V. Are There Ancient Non-Christian Sources That Attest To Jesus Christ's Existence?

A. **Cornelius Tacitus**, Roman Historian, Governor of Asia (54-120 AD)

- Tacitus is called the "greatest historian" of ancient Rome
- He is famous for 2 works: *Annals* (covering Augustus to Nero – 14-68AD) & *Histories* (covering Nero's death to Domitian – 68-96 AD)
- When writing about the reign of Nero
 - "But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome. Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. **Christus**, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also." (*Annals*, XV.44)

B. **Lucian**, 2nd century satirist and critic of Christ and Christians:

- "the man who was crucified in Palestine because He introduced this new cult into the world...Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they were all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that **crucified sophist Himself** and living under His laws" (*The Passing Peregrinus*)

C. **Flavius Josephus**, Jewish historian (37-97 AD)

- became a Pharisee at age 19
- commander of the Jewish forces in Galilee in 66AD
- after being captured, he became a part of the Roman headquarters serving commander Vespasian in Jerusalem
- "Now there was about this time **Jesus, a wise man**, if it be lawful to call Him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the **Christ**, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned Him to the **cross**, those that loved Him at the first did not forsake Him; for He appeared to them **alive again** in the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him. And the tribe of Christians so named from Him are not extinct at this day." (*Antiquities*, xviii.33)
- Josephus also refers to James, the brother of Jesus in *Antiquities* XX 9:1

D. Seutonius, Roman historian (120 AD)

- court official under Hadrian, annalist of the Imperial House
- "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of **Chrestus** he expelled them from Rome" (*Life of Claudius*, 25.4)

E. Plinius Secundus (a.k.a. Pliny the Younger)

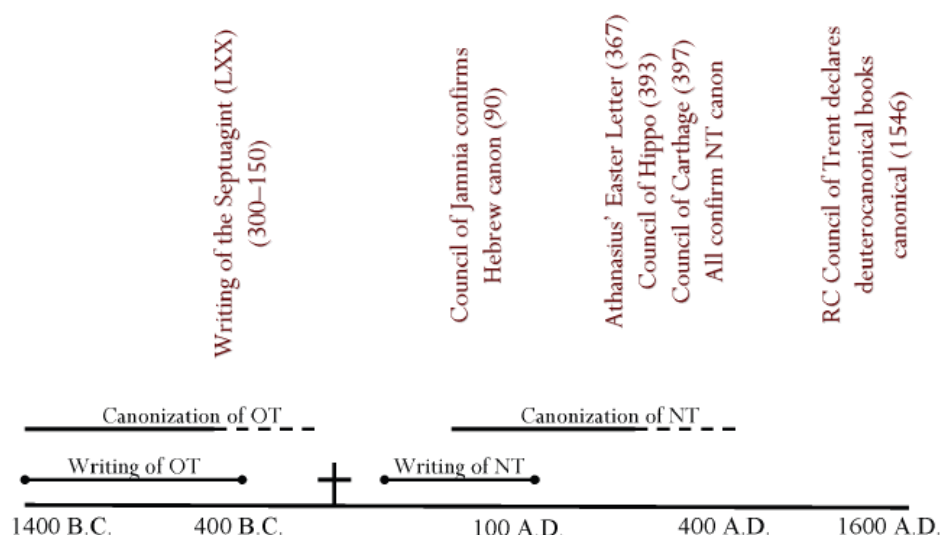
- Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor (112 AD)
- Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan on how to treat the Christians
- he had killed so many Christians, he was wondering if he should kill anyone who calls themselves a Christian, or only particular ones
- he writes that he "made them curse **Christ**, which a genuine Christian cannot be induced to do....They affirmed, however, that the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternative verse a hymn to **Christ as to a god**, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up (Epistles, X.96)

F. Other Early Literature

- The Jewish Talmud, Mara Bar-Serapion (Syrian encouraging his son from prison), Gnostic literature, Apocrypha and the Pseudepigraphas
- **Were There Other Gospels That Should Have Been Considered As Part Of The Canon?**
- Dan Brown (*The DaVinci Code*) suggests that there are 80 Gospels from antiquity, but he has no evidence or titles
- The Four Gospels (Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn) are from the 1st Century
- From the 2nd – 11th Century A.D. are 45-60 Gospels, but they are all later
- The Codex (book form with pages and binding) was developed around 90 A.D.
 - In the First to Fifth Century A.D., Christians had 80% written on a codex while the rest of the world had 20% had their writings in codex form
 - It has been suggested that the early church developed the codex to carry more than 1 book, particularly the 4 Gospels
 - The Gospels were particularly prized by the early church
- The Canon was in place by the 2nd century
 - This is long before liberal claims of the 4th century with Constantine
 - Irenaeus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John defended Christianity from Gnosticism in the 2nd century secures the 4 Gospels as important as the 4 winds & 4 corners of the world (reflecting the importance of the 4 Gospels)
 - Irenaeus was correcting the heretic Marcion who said that only an edited version of Luke by Marcion was the single legitimate Gospel
 - Irenaeus cites 21 of the 27 NT books as authoritative



- In the 2nd Century, collection of works of the Early Church Fathers
 - 1 Clement – disciple of Apostle
 - Justin Martyr – 1st of the Apologists
 - These men were writing
- Origen confirms the 39 O.T. Books – 3rd Century A.D.
- “In the fourth century eight prominent Church fathers, Athanasius of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius of Cyprus, Amphilocius of Asia Minor, and Gregory Nazianzus of Cappadocia, Hilary of France, Rufinus of Italy, and Jerome have left us lists all of which agree with the Hebrew canon except for very minor variations. . .” (R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*)



(Theology Handbook – Bibliology & Hermeneutics, Bible.org, p. 55)

• Do The “Missing Gospels” Give New Insight On Who Jesus Is?

	The Bible	The Gnostic Gospels
Authorship	Matthew, Mark, Luke & John	Unknown
Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apostle or ministered with Apostles • Eye witness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of Gnostic religion that opposed a God-Man Christ • Wrote several hundred years after Christ
Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately accepted by Church • Irenaeus confirms their acceptance by 150 A.D. 	Rejected by early church
Amount	More than 5,300 Greek manuscripts (early 12 th century) – far more than any other ancient document	13 books discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945 (written in Coptic)
Date	30-60 years after Jesus	200-300 A.D.
Reliability	Proven to be consistent with each other and history	Unreliable historical information

- The Biblical authors were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ.
- Peter authenticated Mark – they traveled together
- Paul authenticated Luke – they traveled together
- Matthew & John were Apostles
- The Gnostic Gospels were written 100 to 300 years after the Biblical Gospels.
- Gnostic Gospels came out of the 2nd and 3rd century
- Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Philip, Gospel of Mary Magdalene
- 32 texts that deal with Christ outside of the Gospel
- most of those texts try to reveal what Christ was like after the resurrection (trying to outdo the 4 Gospels by being more recent in news)
- Gospel of Thomas (not Gnostic) 114 sayings of Jesus, 25% from Gospels, 25% similar to Gospels and 50% new and unusual material
- Many depict what creation and after life was like from a Gnostic point of view
- The Gnostic Gospels were rejected by the Church because they were divisive
- The Gnostic Gospels were inconsistent historically, theologically
- The authorship of these gospels as indicated by their titles were rejected (Philip, Thomas, Mary Mag, Judas)
- Who are the Gnostics?
 - Gnosticism is an anti-Christian cult
 - The Gnostics attacked the deity of Christ and attempted to infiltrate the church telling believers that their Gospels and their Christ were unreliable
 - “gnosis” = knowledge, claim an exclusive knowledge of God
 - Anything material was evil, anything spiritual was good
 - The Gnostic influence on Christianity emphasized that Jesus could not have been human, because flesh is bad
 - “Cosmological dualism was also a feature of the system—opposed spiritual worlds of good and evil. The material world was aligned with the dark world of evil.” (Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 273)
 - Creation done by demiurges
 - Jesus is so divine, he can’t be human (Gnostics despise the material and elevate the spiritual) – which is opposite of Dan Brown’s assertion
 - “From the standpoint of traditional Christianity, Gnostic thinking is quite alien. Its mythological setting of redemption leads to a depreciation of the historical events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Its view of man’s relationship to God leads to a denial of the importance of the person and work of Christ, while, in a Gnostic context, “salvation” is not understood in terms of deliverance from sin, but as a form of existential self-realization” (J.W. Drane, “Gnosticism,” *The New Bible Dictionary*)
- “The early church leaders unanimously condemned the Gnostics as a cult. Church father Irenaeus, writing 140 years before the Council of Nicaea...rejected their ‘gospels.’ However, referring to the four New Testament Gospels, he said, ‘It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are.’” (Darrell L. Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, p. 114)

- Geisler & Nix illustrate: "***The Gospel of Thomas*** (early second century) The Gospel of Thomas was known to Hippolytus, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Irenaeus. There were at least two versions of this collection of sayings, one of which shows Gnostic influence. Like other accounts of the infancy of Christ, the Gospel of Thomas contains fanciful stories of alleged childhood miracles of Jesus:

This little child Jesus when he was five years old was playing at the ford of a brook: and he gathered together the waters that flowed there into pools, and made them straightway clean, and commanded them by his word alone. And having made soft clay, he fashioned thereof twelve sparrows. . . . Jesus clapped his hands together and cried out to the sparrows and said to them: Go! and the sparrows took their flight and went away chirping. (2:1–4)

Another tells how He cursed a lad to wither like a tree:

And when Jesus saw what was done, he was wroth and said unto him: O evil, ungodly, and foolish one, what hurt did the pools and the waters do thee? Behold, now also thou shalt be withered like a tree, and shalt not bear leaves, neither root, nor fruit. And straightway that lad withered up wholly, but Jesus departed and went unto Joseph's house.(3:2–3) (GIB, p. 302)

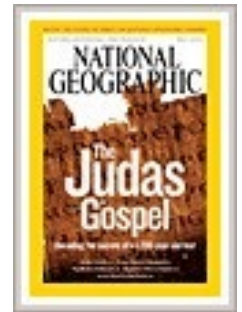
- Craig Evans explains to Lee Stroebel (*The Case for the Real Jesus*, p. 36) how fragments of the Gospel of Thomas in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt in the 1890's and more of it in the Nag Hammadi library in 1945 elsewhere in Egypt. Some want to date it early, but Thomas cites Matthew & Luke, even John. His writing also "reflects Syrian development." It also reflects a Gnostic approach to Jesus – Jesus is not the Savior, but a messenger of this hidden knowledge.
- Evans: "Salvation [in the Gospel of Thomas] ... comes from self-knowledge, from understanding oneself authentically, and recognizing where one fits into the cosmos ... slightly Christian, slightly Old Testament, slightly Gnostic."
- Geisler & Nix summarize "***The Gospel of Peter*** (second century). Origen, Eusebius, and Theodoret all refer to this Pseudepigraphal gospel. Only fragments of it have been preserved. Eusebius identified it as docetic, which means it denied the true humanity of Christ.

The Gospel of Peter teaches several things that fail to concur with the New Testament. That includes the following examples: (1) That Pilate was guiltless for the death of Jesus and only the Jews were answerable for it. (2) That Jesus felt no pain when crucified. "And they brought two malefactors and crucified the Lord in the midst between them. But he held his peace, as if he felt no pain." (3) That Jesus referred to the Father as "My power." And the Lord called out and cried, "My power, O power, thou hast forsaken me!" (4) That Jesus' "brothers and sisters" were from a first marriage of Joseph, a view long held by Roman Catholic scholars. In addition, the Gospel of Peter contains an embellished account of the resurrection of Jesus, which asserts that:

in the night in which the Lord's day dawned, when the soldiers, two by two in every watch, were keeping guard, there rang out a loud voice in heaven, and they saw the heavens opened and two men come down from there in a great brightness and draw nigh to the sepulchre. That stone which had been laid against the entrance to the sepulchre started of itself to roll and give way to the side, and the sepulchre was

opened, and both the young men entered in. When now those soldiers saw this, they awakened the centurion and the elders for they also were there to assist at the watch. And whilst they were relating what they had seen, they saw again three men come out from the sepulchre, and two of them sustaining the other, and a cross following them, and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that of him who was led of them by the hand overpassing the heavens. And they heard a voice out of the heavens crying, "Thou hast preached to them that sleep", and from the cross there was heard the answer, "Yea." (GIB, p. 303)

- **Judas' Gospel**



- "Lost for nearly 1,700 years, the Gospel of Judas came to light within an ancient, crumbling, leather-bound papyrus manuscript that was discovered in Middle Egypt during the 1970s and bought in 2000 by a Zürich antiquities dealer. Five years of conservation, transcription, and translation have revealed the gospel's radically different view of Judas Iscariot—usually understood to be a villain—and of Christ's teachings. Written by Christians called Gnostics decades after the canonical testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, this gospel says that Jesus asked Judas to betray him; Jesus wanted to be killed so his soul could escape from the prison of his body. Other parts of the Judas gospel claim the world was not created by the true God, whose divine spark flickers within all human beings, but by a lesser deity—the vengeful God of the Old Testament. That is why, the gospel explains, creation is flawed and evil exists." (<http://www9.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/gospel/gallery1.html>)
- "The second page of the Gospel of Judas presents a dramatically different retelling of a final meal Jesus shared with his disciples. "When he [approached] his disciples, [who had] gathered together and [were] seated and offering a prayer of thanksgiving over the bread, [he] laughed," reads the manuscript. "The disciples said to him, 'Master, why are you laughing at [our] prayer of thanksgiving? We have done what is right.' He answered and said to them, 'I am not laughing at you. [You] are not doing this because of your own will but because [it is through this that] your god [will be] praised.' " Jesus laughs, scholars say, because the disciples do not understand that the God of the Old Testament, to whom they direct their prayers, is not the true God. In this gospel, only Judas, the disciple reviled by orthodox Christians, understands God's true nature." (<http://www9.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/gospel/gallery4.html>)
- "The surviving Gnostic documents were written hundreds of years after Jesus died. So first of all, they simply can't compete with the eyewitness accounts of the Gospels. Further, "there is no evidence that any of the Gnostic documents in the Nag Hammadi Library or any other collection was ever widely recognized as authoritative. It is even debatable whether they were regarded as 'holy scripture' even within the groups where they were read. But their rejection of the Old Testament (not to mention the God of the Jewish people) and its teachings (for example, its teaching about creation), their denial of the true humanity of Christ and his suffering for humankind, and their esoteric doctrines that were so contrary to the spirit and the letter of both the Old Testament and the New Testament, caused

them to be condemned as heretical by the majority of Christians. There is no evidence that anyone ever made an attempt to get any of these writings added to the Bible." (Flory & Monroe, *Fear Not Da Vinci*: "Who Were the Gnostics?" by W. Ward Gasque, PhD, www.fearnotdavinci.com)

VI. When We Consider All The Ancient Literature On Jesus, What Can Be Determined?

* Minimum facts agreed upon by practically all critical scholars in light of information: (Gary R. Habermas, *Ancient Evidence For The Life Of Jesus*, pp. 127-128)

- A. Jesus died by crucifixion
- B. Jesus was buried
- C. Jesus' death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope
- D. The tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered to be empty a few days later
- E. The disciples had experiences which they believed were literal appearances of the risen Christ
- F. The disciples transformed from doubters to bold proclaimers of his death and resurrection
- G. The death and resurrection were the center of preaching in the early church
- H. This message was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and was buried
- I. The church was born and grew
- J. Sunday was designated as the primary day of worship
- K. James, who had been a skeptic, converted to faith when he believed he saw the resurrected Christ
- L. Paul also converted to faith through what he believed to be an appearance of the risen Christ

Conclusion:

1. *How do we sort through all the opinions of who Jesus is?* The world has various opinions of who Jesus is, but the opinions of man do not make Jesus who He is.
2. *How do we sort through all the myths and legends of who Jesus is?* We have firsthand accounts of who Jesus is in the Gospels, Acts and Epistles in the New Testament. Not only are they accurate records historically, but God's Word to us directly.
3. *How do we deal with the reality of who Jesus is to us personally?* If Jesus is God, how do we worship Him? If Jesus is Lord, do we obey Him? If Jesus is Savior, do we rely on Him alone for our salvation?

Discussion:

1. How did you come to a realization that Jesus Christ is God (more than just a man)?
2. How do we relate to Jesus Christ *as God* in our every day lives?
3. How is Christ's deity a comfort to us?
4. How is Christ's deity sobering to us in how we live our lives?