

Forensic Faith | Part 2

July 28, 2019

Introduction: Women's Retreat: In His Image Nov. 1st: early bird pricing in effect!!! Lake Junaluska NC 28745

- I. 4 Reasons
 1. It can't be true
 2. I don't want it to be true
 3. I'm not sure what is true
 4. I believe it's true...now what?
 - A. Brand new series ..."Forensic Faith"...
 - B. Bones
 - C. Quincy..!
 - D. CSI: Crime Scene Investigation
 1. CSI: New York
 2. CSI: Miami
 3. CSI:
 - E. NCIS United States Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) is the primary law enforcement agency of the U.S. Department of the Navy.
 1. Los Angeles
 2. New Orleans
 - F. All these shows have in common...
 - a) application of scientific methods and techniques to the investigation of crime.
 - G. They have to accumulate evidence, clues...information, resources, people..
 1. To draw a conclusion...that they feel is true..!
 - a) That they 'believe' this is how this went down
 - b) They have "FAITH"...they are right!
 - H. The point I'm getting at is...
 - a) We all know what it means to have belief in something
 - (1) We know what it means to faith in something
 - I. HEAR THIS: In Christianity...
 1. When we use words like...faith & belief..
 - a) They do not take on different meanings just b/c they are used in a religious context
 2. HOWEVER: for some reason...they Become more associated with HOPE
 - (a) Instead of reason...rationale
- J. HOPE...becomes the word associated with religious faith/belief
 1. But..we don't have to RELY ON HOPE...!
 - a) There is so much evidence and data proving the existence of Jesus Christ...
 - (a) The accuracy of the Bible

- b) I believe this is why so many college students lose their faith
 - c) They were never given the evidence...the data
 - (1) They were just told...believe have faith...
 - (2) That's what this series is about..
 - d) That's not enough...it's more than an intellectual understanding
 - (1) More than just academic...logical...historically accurate
- K. Deciding whether or not Christ was real...died...resurrected...
 - 1. It's a pretty serious...and truly needs to be worked out by ALL OF US!...
 - a) Everyone at some point in their lives has to come face to face with this FORK in ROAD..!
- Slide:

"Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important." -C.S. Lewis
- L. Hugh Hefner in an interview with Lee Strobel.."Case for Christ"
- M. So here's the story: Strobel sat with Hefner in the living room of Hefner's opulent Los Angeles mansion and asked him very direct questions about his spiritual beliefs.
 - 1. Hefner expressed a minimal belief in God, referring to him as "the beginning of it all" and the "great unknown," but he said he did not believe in the God of Christianity.
- N. Interestingly, when Strobel brought up the resurrection of Jesus,
 - 1. Hefner instantly saw the supreme relevance of it.
 - 2. "If one had any real evidence that, indeed, Jesus did return from the dead, then that is the beginning of a dropping of a series of dominoes that takes us to all kinds of wonderful things," he said. "It assures an afterlife and all kinds of things that we would all hope are true."
- O. But Hefner was a doubter. His rational side couldn't accept it. He said, "I don't think that Jesus is any more the Son of God than we are." And despite the importance of the resurrection, he admitted he had never investigated the historical evidence for it.
- P. Well, Hefner was right about one thing:
- Q. If the resurrection is true, it changes everything. It confirms Jesus' identity as the unique Son of God and opens the door to eternal life for anyone who will truly follow him.
- R. On the other hand, if Jesus' resurrection is a legend or a lie, then Jesus is, at best, just another unfortunate crucifixion victim in a long line of failed revolutionaries and false messiahs.

S. Slide:

T. "Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important." -C.S. Lewis

- a) What you like or don't like...!!
 - (1) What you want or don't want...!!
 - (a) HAS NO BEARING ON THE TRUTH!..
 - (2) The truth is what it is!!!...regardless of our opinion!
- 2. Today: hope you see the importance of 'working this out'...
 - a) And even if you are Christ-follower & believe in God, Jesus, death, resurrection...accuracy of the Bible...
 - b) What if someone asked you WHY ARE YOU A CHRIST-FOLLOWER?...
 - (1) b/c you grew up in church
 - (2) I had an encounter w/ Jesus!
 - (a) I had an experience that changed me forever!
 - (3) Those are great responses...but do they work on a skeptic or atheis, agnostic...unbeliever...?
 - (a) Maybe...i don't know...
- 3. It's kinda like the way I'm a South Carolinian!...NC...i'm a Carolinian!
 - a) I grew up in the Carolinas...i love the mountains...and skip over to the beach...
 - b) Most folks are nice and hospitable...
 - c) I like the way we talk...
 - d) I like the pace of life in the carolinas...
 - e) I AM A CAROLINIAN!!!!
- 4. But if you were to 'corner' and ask me about the history of the carolinas...!
 - a) Year founded
 - b) How many counties?
 - c) How many people?
 - (1) State birds/flowers/motto
 - d) How is a bill passed in either state?
 - e) Embarrassing...at the end of the day...
 - (1) I'm a horrible Carolinian...
- 5. Compare that to your Christian faith...!
 - a) Are you an 'incidental Christian?'...by accident...
 - (1) Did you sit down...study and make an informed decision?...
 - (2) It's okay...that's why we are here...that's why we are studying this series...
 - b) We want you to be able to have evidence, data, research...so that you can boldly know...and say that you are a Christ-follower!!!!
- 6. This is a great place for us to get started ...Because we are even instructed by God's Word to research it for ourselves...

U. Slide:

Matthew 22:37

37 Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ (cerebrum/cerebellum)

V. Slide:

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

19 Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. 20 Do not scoff at prophecies, 21 but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. 22 Stay away from every kind of evil.

II. We're Christ-followers:

A. We could go in all kinds of directions...we could get into BIG BANG...age of the earth...

1. Stay focused on Jesus...His time was 2000 years ago...let's go back to that point and no further for now...!

B. And what better place to start than...

C. what if all of His Story was just some big Conspiracy..!

1. Slide:

conspiracy: a secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful

2. Lee Harvey Oswald didn't act alone assassination of JFK
3. US Gov't involved in 9/11
4. Apollo moon landing filmed in a movie studio
5. UFO crashed in Roswell, NM
 - a) High-altitude balloon in 1947

D. FOR STARTERS:

1. LET'S...Test and see if this was a conspiracy:
2. 'Successful conspiracies' are popular in movies & books...
 - a) Do you know why they are good movies & books...?
 - b) Few & far between...
 - (1) Because they are close to IMPOSSIBLE to pull off!!!
 - c) Very difficult to pull off...
3. If it was successful...then no one ever hears about it!!!
4. Slide:

5 things needed to pull off a CONSPIRACY

 1. A very small number of conspirators

Smaller the number...the more likely to pull it off

-We get this: LIES are tough to keep going/maintain

-fewer the number of people to keep the lie going...the better chance for success...
 2. Great communication

-VITAL: when conspirators don't know what the others have said (given up the truth)...they are more likely to say something in an effort to save themselves from punishment

-they NEED ADEQUATE and IMMEDIATE communication with each other to keep the lie going

-Investigators use this against them:

Separated and questioned separately...!

3. A short time span

-Lies are difficult by themselves...they are even harder to repeat consistently and accurately over a long period of time

-the shorter the length of the conspiracy...the better

-hard to lie for a year...than it is a day..!

-2 conspirators...one kills the other immediately...(that might work)

4. Close friendships

-need to be very close...friends don't rat each other out...typically!

-According to criminal investigators:

-when co-conspirators are FAMILY...it's very tough to get one "to break"...

5. Low pressure

-no one puts any pressure on the person telling the lie...the better chance of pulling it off...if no one is bugging you about your lie...it's easier keep it a secret

-unless pressured to confess...the lie will continue

-Doesn't have to physical pressure...

-fear of incarceration or even condemnation from peers will work

E. Let's look at this as it relates to the "Christian Conspiracy"

5 things needed to pull off a CONSPIRACY

1. A very small number of conspirators

2. Great communication

3. A short time span

4. Close friendships

5. Low pressure

1. Let's approach this Jesus Story using this method...OBJECTIVELY!

2. A SMALL NUMBER NEEDED TO PULL OFF CONSPIRACY

a) Jesus had just ascended into Heaven...

(1) The apostles and others all met together right after this event

(a) Had to get their story straight...

(i) Just one or two of them...NOPE!

3. Slide:

4. Acts 1:12-15

12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. 13 When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying.

Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James). 14 They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

15 During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them.

5. Come on...120...that's a bunch of folks to keep a lie straight..!
- F. We could stop there:...but let's say the writer...Luke (a doctor) exaggerated Let's for argument's sake...decrease the number by a factor of 10
 1. Just the apostles...the 12 (addition of Matthias for Judas)
 - a) 1. A very small number of conspirators (120...we'll say 12)
 - b) 2. Great communication
 - (1) They dispersed from Jerusalem
 - (a) Scattered across the Roman Empire
 - c) We know from historical accounts:
 - (1) They were interrogated and martyred FAR from each other
 - (2) 1st century: they didn't FACETIME...call...
 - (a) Peter: Rome
 - (b) James: Jerusalem
 - (c) Thomas: Mylapore (southern India)
 - (i) Geographical challenges of communicating in a timely manner
 - (3) 11 hours to fly from Jerusalem to southern India
 - (4) No idea if one of them had 'given up the lie'
 - d) 3. A short time span
 - (1) This went on way too long to not be true
 - (a) Most people can't go a day...
 - (2) The apostles went for years...decades..
 - (a) John lived the longest:
 - (i) 60 years after the resurrection
 - e) 4. Close friendships:
 - (1) Think about this one:
 - (a) Complete strangers to each other
 - (b) Some were brothers...
 - (2) But: Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Simon the Canaanite, and Matthias had ZERO family ties within the apostles
 - (3) Less than 3 years together...work with someone...it takes time to build trust...professionally...
 - (a) Doesn't compare to the decades apart
 - (b) At some point, friendship can only go so far
 - (i) Especially as they were tested and their lives put in jeopardy!

f) 5. Low pressure

(1) For a conspiracy to end up successful...IT HAS to be
PRESSURE-FREE!!!

(a) These guys were beyond 'pressed'...

(2) According to accounts of local communities, each suffered
horrific harm, punishment and a martyr's death...

(a) That's NOT LOW pressure...!

(i) You would give in...

(a) Not worth the hurt...

(b) Not worth my life!

(3) Ancient writings:

(a) Peter was crucified upside down in Rome

(b) James was killed with a sword in Jerusalem

(c) Thomas murdered by a mob in Mylapore

(4) Their lives were lost:

(5) yet none of the 12 recanted their stories...EVER!

2. How did 12 men not "fold" and come clean...!!!!

a) Wait..that's right it was 120 in that room that night...

G. That's sounds impossible for 120 people to keep a story straight...to keep a lie
going for so long..!

1. How did they make sure their stories matched...lined up...TRUTH!...

a) Eyewitnesses...

b) 120...!!! Or maybe there was even more...!!!

H. Slide:

I. 1 Corinthians 15:3-7

J. 3 I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed
on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. 4 He was buried,
and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. 5
He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. 6 After that, he was seen by more
than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some
have died. 7 Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.

1. Hundreds of witnesses...and no one recanted their story...!!!

a) No one ever EXPOSED THE LIE!...

b) Because it wasn't...!!!

K. Yes...some conspiracies are successful...I guess...

L. But...they involved a very SMALL NUMBER of participants..

1. WHO ARE BEST FRIENDS/FAMILY

M. With the ability to keep in CONSTANT CONTACT..!

1. And the conspiracy only lasts a short time...!

a) They ARE NEVER PRESSURED...

2. With all those factors...maybe you can pull it off!

N. These men and women...the 12...the 120...the 500...

1. They are all part of the GREATEST CONSPIRACY in the history of the world.....!!!!
2. Or...
 - a) They were simply eyewitnesses who just reported what they saw...THE TRUTH!!!!...
- O. When you truly sit down and ponder this...study...research...it begins to make so much more sense...
 1. Discovering whether or not the Jesus story is a conspiracy...
 - a) involves studying the Bible...involves studying ancient writings...records...
 - b) Human psychology...social behavior...
 - c) Putting all that together to form a CONFIDENT belief that Jesus' story is TRUE..!
 2. There's also another way to check the validity...of the New Testament
 - a) It's called...
- III. Textual Criticism: (biblical criticism) the process of attempting to ascertain the original wording of a text.
 - A. Compare copies of manuscripts to one another...
 1. Before the 15th century...all books were written by HAND
 - a) Called a manuscript: latin for "something that has been written by hand"
 - B. Obviously: the more copies the easier it is to validate
 1. Textual Criticism is practiced with all forms of ancient writings...
 - a) Not just the Bible...
 - b) There are no original manuscripts: Shakespeare, Plato, Aristotle, Homer...
 2. However,...they take the copies and compare/contrast and are ultimately able to RECONSTRUCT the works to their original SUBSTANCE...
- IV. For instance:
 - A. Homer's Iliad...originally composed 800 years before Christ
 1. The earliest copy is dated 3rd century AD...
 - a) There are 1,565 copies dated on or around 3rd century
 - b) That's 1100 years from its inception...!
 - c) THERE'S ONLY ONE OTHER ANCIENT WRITING with more authenticated early copies than the Iliad...!!!
 - (1) The New Testament
 - d) Archaeologists have recovered 5,843 copies...of the Greek New Testament...!!!
 2. That's 4 times more than 2nd place (Iliad)
 - a) A fragment from the Gospel of John was found in Egypt in the 2nd century AD...
 - (1) Less than 30 years from the 'original' to the copy..!
 - (2) Iliad: 1100 years...1565 copies

(3) NT: less than 30 years...5,483 copies...!!

B. After Illiad & NT...

1. Next writings of Sophocles: 100 copies
2. Plato: 7 copies
3. Aristotle: 5 copies
 - a) Stated that if you lay the surviving copies of Aristotle's work...
 - (1) 4-ft stack
4. NT works..surviving copies
 - a) Mile high!!!
 - b) NOTHING ELSE IN HISTORY COMES CLOSE!!!
5. Why is all this important..?
 - a) To create boldness...confidence...true belief and understanding the Truth of Jesus Christ...!
 - b) It's the why?...we believe...
 - (1) The next time someone asks:
 - (a) Why are you a Christian?
 - (b) You can expand your response:
 - (i) Grew up in church
 - (ii) Experience
 - (c) Because it is the TRUTH!!!!...
6. Here's just one more reason we need to study this...!
7. Slide:
8. 1 Peter 3:15

Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.