

Is the New Testament Reliable: Discussion Questions

Segment 1: An Introduction to Bart Ehrman

1. Previous to viewing this video, had you heard of Bart Ehrman?
 - a. If so, how did you hear of him?
 - b. What impact, if any, has Ehrman's writings had on you or a friend?
2. Do you think it's important for Christians to answer skeptical scholars who are influential? Why or why not?
3. Do you think the media is biased against the Christian view? What led you to your opinion?

Segment 2: Is Most New Testament Literature a Forgery?

1. Why does Ehrman believe the Gospels are forgeries?
2. What are some of the points Mike made in response?
3. What did you learn or discover that you did not previously know?
4. Has this clarified or altered your previous view of Scripture? How?
5. How does this impact . . .
 - a. your personal beliefs or faith?
 - b. your discussions about the Bible with others?

Segment 3: Does the New Testament Contain Eyewitness Testimony?

1. Ehrman claims that the passing along of stories about Jesus was like the game of telephone and that the stories got corrupted. Licona claims that passing along stories about Jesus more closely resembled teaching forms in the martial arts. Which of the two do you think is a more accurate analogy and why?
2. Licona notes that in numerous places Luke reported many accurate details. Does this mean we can trust Luke where his information cannot be corroborated?
3. Is the following conclusion justified: We can demonstrate that some of what is reported in the New Testament is true. Therefore, we can know that all of it is true. (In other words, it's like saying, "If any of it is true, it's all true.")
 - a. What about the inverse: "If any of the Bible is false, it's all false." Why is this statement misguided?

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4. Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-17, 25-28.
 - a. Identify 3 types of teaching (vss. 6 & 25, 10, 12)
 - b. Did Paul take liberties and change the teachings of Jesus?
 - c. Can we have confidence that Paul accurately reported what the original apostles had passed along to him?

Segment 4: Are There Contradictions in the Gospels?

1. Would contradictions in the Gospels rule them out as reliable biographies of Jesus? Why or why not?
2. Mike said that contradictions in peripheral details do not rule out the occurrence of the main event. He provided the sinking of the Titanic as an example. Some of the survivors reported that the ship went down in tact while others reported that she broke in two prior to sinking. While separate investigations by the American and British governments could not arrive at a firm conclusion regarding what had actually occurred, they did not conclude that the Titanic had not, in fact, sank. So, while contradictions in the peripheral details would impact belief in biblical inerrancy, they would not discredit the general reliability of the Gospels.
 - a. But what about if the contradictions were not just in the peripheral details. What sort of contradictions would be problematic for the reliability of the Gospels?
3. What do you regard as a contradiction?
 - a. When Luke reports that the resurrection of Jesus, all of the appearances, and his ascension occurred on Easter morning, is his time compression an error? Why or why not? Do you ever use time compression in your conversations with others?
 - b. Matthew 4:1-11 tells the story of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness in the following order: (1) change stones to bread; (2) throw yourself down from the temple; (3) be given the kingdoms of the world. However, the order of the second and third temptations is reversed in Luke's Gospel (4:1-13). Do you regard this as an error? Why or why not? Is this important? Does it mean that we cannot trust the Gospels?
4. How many of you would be interested in having a short series on apologetics?
 - a. Recommended resource: *The Case for Christ: A Six-Session Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (DVD-ROM) and participants guide. (Also available in the same format for group discussion: *The Case for Faith* and *The Case for a Creator*.)
 - b. **4truth.net** is an apologetics web site created by the North American Mission Board. It has more than 150 articles, videos, and audio interviews. The articles are available in 5 languages.