

## AFTER THE PASSION

Answering Questions People Have After Seeing  
Mel Gibson's movie: *The Passion of the Christ*

Pt. 1

### *HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS CHRIST?*

Because of the controversy surrounding the Mel Gibson's movie, ***The Passion of the Christ***, Jesus Christ is currently popular in American culture. Both curiosity and sympathy has been stirred up toward the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who is called the Christ. Yet there are still many people today who boldly claim that Jesus never existed, and that He was only a mythical character. Much of what is said and written against Christ and Christianity along these lines is not based on honest, unbiased research, but is said out of spite and hatred toward Jesus, Christianity and the Bible. An examination of their findings and papers reveals that their statements are tainted by their animosity toward all things having to do with these.

For instance, the atheistic rationalist philosopher Bertrand Russell, in his book, ***Why I Am Not a Christian***, once wrote, ***"I may say that one is not concerned with the historical question [concerning Jesus]. Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him, so I am not concerned with the historical question, which is a very difficult one. I am concerned with Christ as He appears in the Gospels."***<sup>1</sup>

Were you aware that this same kind of baseless, cynical skepticism has been putting forth great effort for years trying to convince people the Holocaust never existed<sup>2</sup>? Unbelievable, isn't it? Yet it is true. In spite of the eyewitnesses amongst the Jewish prisoners, American and Allied soldiers liberating those in the concentration camps, actual photos of the concentration camps, gas chambers and ovens, mass graves, heaps of human corpses and piles and piles of documentation from the war trials at Nuremberg, there are those convinced it was over-exaggerated, or even merely a conspiracy.

This same kind of skepticism and cynicism fills the Internet. So called research papers, written by either outright enemies of the truth, the paranoid or conspiracy theorists (or both), continue to try to convince us that America never landed on the moon<sup>3</sup>, there was no moon walk, President Kennedy was assassinated by the mafia, or the CIA, or multiple gunmen, etc; that Elvis is still alive, extra-terrestrials are being bred at Roswell, Area 51, and underground research laboratories, and the list goes on and on. It is amazing what these people

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<sup>1</sup> Why I Am Not a Christian, p. 11, note 8

<sup>2</sup> [Military History, World War 2, The Holocaust, Crimes, Heroes and ...](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Moon Landings Were NOT Faked](#)

are willing to believe off of little, poor or no evidence, and what they are unwilling to believe in the light of an abundance of credible evidence.

However, this kind of biased, cynical thinking doesn't get very far with those who are professionally trained investigators and researchers. One such researcher wrote, "Some religions, both ancient and modern, require no historical basis, for they depend upon ideas rather than events. Christianity is not one of these"<sup>4</sup>.

The reality of the person of Jesus Christ stands or falls upon the events of history. Did Jesus of Nazareth ever live? Are the New Testament data regarding Him reliable? Or is Jesus just a mental invention of zealous followers of the Christian religion, like Mel Gibson?

### A. Jesus' Biographers Tell Us A lot About Him

1. The oldest biographies on Jesus are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
2. For just a moment, lets suspend judgment on whether the Bible is really the inspired word of God, which Christians believe. Instead, lets take it for granted for the sake of argument, that it is what it is, a collection of ancient documents claiming to record historical events surrounding the life of Jesus Christ.
3. The question on the table goes like this: is this collection of ancient documents called the Gospels reliable in what they record about Jesus?
  - a. In his book, *The Case for Christ*, ex-journalist Lee Strobel says such an investigation into the reliability of the Gospels as historical records needs to begin b asking the question: "How many eyeballs are there?" The term "eyeball: is journalistic slang for eyewitnesses.<sup>5</sup> It's a question concerning whether any available, convincing eyewitness testimony can be established as to whether an event actually happened the way people claim it happened.
  - b. Have you ever heard people slam the four gospels by saying they can't be trusted as reliable testimony about Jesus because they contradict one another? How can two Gospels be considered accurate testimony if they give different accounts of the same event, in some cases?
  - c. I once was an expert witness in a case involving sexual misconduct of a teacher with a student, and the prosecuting attorney who enlisted me told me something very interesting. I was worried that so much time had elapsed from the time of the actual incident,

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<sup>4</sup> (E.F. Harrison, 1968, p. 11)

<sup>5</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case For Christianity*, p. 54

that I might be unsure of some points in my testimony. He assured me that that was perfectly normal, and actually adds credibility to a person's testimony, because it comes off more real. Then he told me that irregardless of whether your speaking to a lawyer or historian, or any other historical researcher, it is widely considered that minor variations in historical evidence and in multiple testimonies favors the truthfulness of an account. The theory here is that if the witnesses or writers were lying, they'd make sure to get their stories straight, and that they agreed in every detail. And if the critics of the Bible were interested in playing fair, which they are not, they would plainly see that what seems to be a contradiction is often just the same event viewed from a different perspective, and reported to different audiences.

- d. So how many witnesses do we have who actually knew Jesus of Nazareth? How many acknowledged that they actually heard His teachings? How many witnessed His miracles, and saw the signs and wonders he performed? How many actually saw Him after he allegedly arose from the dead? Are these accounts backed up by credible witnesses? How can a person make a rational decision on whether these historical witnesses are telling the truth or not, since they lived thousands of years ago?
- e. Well, for starters, we have a whole bunch of witnesses that testify that they knew Jesus Christ personally, and ate with him, walked with him, talked with him, went on mission trips with him, and otherwise lived with him for three years.
  - i. The historian Mark, who wrote his findings in the Gospel of Mark, actually served as secretary to the Apostle Peter, and recorded Peter's first hand account in his gospel.
  - ii. Luke, a medical doctor who served as a kind of first century reporter, wrote a biography of Jesus solely and carefully based off of eyewitness testimony.
  - iii. There is no "He said-she said" type of information recorded in the 4 biographies of Jesus of Nazareth. Instead of second hand reports about what others said, these 4 biographies contain actual writings by several of the eyewitnesses themselves.
  - iv. Jesus' right-hand-man, Peter, wrote two letters that are included in the New Testament.

Matthew and John were both eyewitnesses whose gospels record what they saw and heard Jesus did and said. James and Jude wrote two New Testament letters from their eyewitness – further strengthened by the fact they were Jesus’ flesh and blood ½ brothers!

v. Peter stated forcefully that his testimony was an accurate accounting of firsthand knowledge that did not rely on “cleverly invented stories” but rather was an eyewitness account “of His majesty.”

vi. John testified that his letters were merely written records about those things both he and the other apostles and disciples had seen and heard with their eyes and ears, and touched with their own hands (1 John 1:1-5).

vii. My point is that the Gospels and New Testament writings that form the biographies of Jesus do not come from second hand testimony, but are based on firsthand, eyewitness accounts.

In other words, We got plenty of eyeballs!

- f. But are these eyewitnesses trustworthy? Can we trust the fact that they are telling us the truth about Jesus? Is it possible to know for sure what they tell us is true and factual?
- g. Let me give you an example that will help illustrate why it is reasonable to accept the testimony of the NT writers.
- h. It would be one thing if I recounted to you the last Football game I played at the homecoming game at Valley Junior College at San Bernardino. I could give you a play by play of the game against the most formidable opponent in the entire state of California. I could conclude with an “on the edge of your seat” thrilling finish, in which I sacked the quarterback, hitting him so hard he fumbled the ball, which I recovered and ran all the way back for the winning touchdown. Now some of you might be tempted to suspect that I might be exaggerating slightly, but since you weren’t there, you wouldn’t really know for sure whether I was telling the truth, ½ truth, or outright lying.
- i. However, what if I was recalling in your hearing your homecoming game, which you attended (you were in the stands or on the playing field yourself)? You have to admit, you would have a better chance of spotting any inaccuracies or outright lies in my testimony.

- j. And that is exactly why you can trust the Biblical eyewitness accounts of Jesus of Nazareth. The biographers of Jesus were reporting what they saw and heard **to people who were there**, who lived at the time Jesus walked the shores of Galilee, and ministered throughout Judea. This is a very important fact for you to know, because if the disciples were exaggerating or rewriting history in any way, those who heard them or read their writings would have known it and called them on it like – right now!
- k. At this point, you have to ask yourself – “Would Christianity have ever had a chance to take off as quickly as it did, taking root throughout Asia Minor and the Greco Roman world in just a few years, if those preaching and teaching, witnessing and writing about the Jesus they all knew, were fabricating anything?”
- l. Check it out: Jesus hadn’t risen from the dead very long, when Peter stood up and addressed a crowd in the same city where Jesus crucifixion had taken place. Many people who were in the crowd had witnessed firsthand the whole ordeal. Peter started his sermon in a way that would either make him out to be a liar or validate his testimony. He began by saying:

***“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you, yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).***

- m. Notice Peter is appealing to things they themselves knew about firsthand. Then he went on to say,

***“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we were all witnesses of the fact” (Acts 2:32).***

- n. Now again, the fascinating thing about Peter’s testimony before this crowd was that he got away with what he said because what he said was true and they knew it. The audience reaction to what he said is profound. Not a single one of them said “We don’t know what your talking about” or “That’s not how it really happened.” Instead, they panicked and wanted to know what they should do in light of Peter’s testimony of Christ’s resurrection. The end result of Peter’s eyewitness account before a crowd full of eyewitnesses who agreed that what he was saying was true, was that 3000 of them came to saving faith in Jesus Christ and were baptized that very day! And thousands more followed in the days ahead. The only explanation that

naturally fits to the honest seeker for the truth about Jesus is that the writers and biographers of the New Testament record of Jesus Christ were telling the truth about Him.

4. Now there are those who still believe the myth that the writers and biographers and historians who wrote the New Testament accounts about Jesus, did so long after the facts, and therefore distorted the real facts beyond recognition.
  - a. These biased researchers intentionally ignore the most recent archaeological discoveries that completely disprove their biased assumptions. The most up-to-date research has proven beyond rational doubt that the New Testament writers wrote **within 30 years from the time Jesus was put to death**, which means the NT was in writing near enough to the original events for plenty of eyewitnesses to still be alive to attest to the truthfulness of the facts as they were being presented.
  - b. Take for instance **the conversion of the Christian killer, Saul of Tarsus**, later called Paul. Paul became a convert to Christianity soon after Christ's ascension into heaven. After he came to faith in Jesus, he began to visit those who knew Jesus, and heard His teachings – the apostles. During these visits he was taught a Christian creed that had already formed amongst the Christian churches and was confessed by all genuine believers in Christ. He wrote about it in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. He called these tenets of faith of foremost importance among those things Christians believe, teach and confess. They include that Christ died for our sins, as the scriptures foretold, was buried, and was raised from the dead on the third day, again, as the scriptures foretold. He then added that Jesus appeared to 500 people after he rose from the dead (500 people who saw him crucified to death) most of whom were still living to corroborate what Paul was writing.
  - c. See the significance in this? The point here is that by the time Paul got his first lessons in Christian discipleship, there had already been a creed formed, and passed on amongst Christians about Christ's death, burial and resurrection. These things didn't come about 100 years after Christ's death and resurrection; 50 years, or 30 years; but **2-5 years afterwards**.
  - d. Historians will tell you that is far too soon for legends to develop to the point where they could wipe out core historical facts about someone's life.

- e. But there is usually one more objection along these lines of whether we can trust these NT “eyeballs” when it comes to telling us the truth about Jesus Christ. And that is: they may have very well told us the truth and nothing but the truth when they recorded their firsthand, eyewitness biographies about Jesus of Nazareth, *“in the original manuscripts.”* But **nobody is holding in their hands an original manuscript, but a copy of a copy of a copy, etc...**
- f. Let me give you another illustration to help clarify why this assertion is bogus. There used to be a child’s game called **“Telephone”**<sup>6</sup> in which a bunch of kids whisper in each others ears a garbled message, so that, by the time the last person gets it, it doesn’t at all resemble what was actually said at first. For instance, the lead kid might whisper in his friends ear: **“All cows eat grass.”** The second kid the giggles as he whispers it in the next kids ear, and so on, until by the time it gets to the sixth kid, he hears “I have lousy gas.”
- g. To complicate this game a little, lets say one kid whispers something like “Jesus is Lord” to two others, each of whom whispers this to two others, and each of those whispers it to two others, etc...At the end of the line it is a pretty good assumption that you will end up with not one version, but dozens of versions.
- h. If one version is “Jesus is bored” another may be “Pieces of board” and a third may be “freeze us a gourd.” This can be assumed in the transmission of information: distortions occur along the way.
- i. However, what if the final version in the above scenario in every case was “Jesus is Lord” and every kid at the end of the line repeated the same line? Wouldn’t you assume that this was a good indication that the original message was accurately and successfully passed down without error in the transmission?
- j. Were you aware that there is incontrovertible proof that the information about Jesus Christ as contained in the NT was almost flawlessly transmitted, and that, in fact, there is more proof that this is so when it comes to the NT than almost any other famous written work of history?
- k. There are in existence **24,000 New Testament manuscripts in existence today**, which were taken from the original manuscripts; 5,000 Greek copies, 10,000 Latin copies, 8,000 more in other languages,

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<sup>6</sup> I’ve taken this idea from Lee Strobel’s book, *The Case for Christianity*, p. 61

and about 1,000 miscellaneous manuscripts. And the amazing thing is that no matter the language of these copies of the original manuscripts, they all almost flawlessly say the same thing. I say almost because a few contain some variations in spelling or a minor typo here and there, but nothing that changes the meaning of the message. And the original manuscripts were flawless.

1. Now if your honest and fair, and you heard 29 out of 30 kids at the end of the telephone game all saying “Jesus is Lord” you would naturally and logically deduce that that was what the original statement was. When 24,000 NT manuscripts say virtually the same thing no matter what language they are in, as the originals say, it makes sense that they are accurate copies of the originals.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

5. So there you have it. One of the ways we know what we know about Jesus is because of the absolutely trustworthy testimony from the firsthand, eyewitness biographies of Jesus written by those closest to Him and attested to by those who also witnessed these same things.

### **B. Extra-Biblical Testimony tells us a lot about Jesus**

1. One doesn't have to only rely on what the Bible tells us about Jesus. Some would argue that the Biblical biographers of Jesus can't be trusted because they are biased due to their loyalty and faith in Christ.
2. But there happens to be corroborative evidence that exists outside of scripture, some of which was written by those who did not believe in Christ and who themselves, were Christians.
3. Let me explain what corroborative evidence is. <sup>7</sup>  
“It's 11:35 P.M. when you pull the car into the driveway. As you open the car door, a blinding light shines full in your face and a voice says to you, ‘Hold it right there! We've got some questions to ask you.’”

Following the reading of your rights, the uniformed officer informs you that a driver your age driving a car that fits the description of the one your driving, is wanted in connection with a series of crimes committed over the last four hours. The officer invites

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<sup>7</sup> I TOOK THIS ILLUSTRATION FROM Lee Strobel's book, *The Case for Christianity*, p. 65-66

you to share any information that might persuade him that you are not that driver.

Quickly you explain that you spent the evening in a law-abiding fashion. You picked up some friends and went to McDonald's, where you noticed that the happy Meal toy was a promotion for the latest animated film. You ended up ordering the value meal #3, super-sized, and you had to finish the fries in the car in order to make the 8:15 showing of the new Lord of the Rings movie. One of your friends must have stepped on some gum in the theater, because when you got back to the car he noticed that it was all over your floor mat, so you spent a little time in the parking lot scraping the floor mat with some leftover napkins from your value meal, before going to Bakers Square for a piece of pie – cherry – Rhubarb is the flavor of the week – and afterward, you dropped your friends off and came straight home.

The officer who was scribbling down notes on what you were saying on a small note pad, then said to his partner, 'I'll call the theater and see what time LOTR was playing tonight; The other officer flashes a warrant and tells you he is going to search your car.

Now suppose that this officer searches the inside of your car, but does not find a shred of evidence that you ate McDonald's or had even been to McDonald's. Does that prove your story is false and that your heading 'down town'? Of course not. Not yet anyways. But you have to admit, the lack of physical evidence doesn't help your testimony.

On the other hand, suppose the other investigating officer finds out that the McDonalds where you said you ate, was in fact giving away the toy you described in it's Happy Meals; and that the theater you said you went to was showing LOTR at 8:15 just as you said; and that Baker's Square was indeed serving cheery-rhubarb pie as it's flavor of the month. To top off the investigation, a closer inspection of the floor mat on the passenger side reveals a piece of paper that could have been part of a napkin, stuck to a tiny fragment of gum stuck to the mat. Wouldn't this add to the credibility and reliability of your testimony" Sure it would."

4. The reason your testimony was bolstered was because a careful investigation by the officer discovered corroborative evidence to substantiate and support what you stated were the facts. My point is that there is likewise corroborative testimony outside of what the Gospel writers wrote about Jesus, to support the facts in their testimony and substantiate their eyewitness account.
5. For instance, there are scraps of evidence that have come down to us in the writings of ancient historians like Josephus, Tacitus and Suetonius.
  - a. The first Roman historian to mention Christ is **Cornelius Tacitus** (A.D. 55-120) was considered the greatest historian of ancient Rome. who wrote his last significant work, the *Annals*, around A.D. 115. In this treatise, Tacitus describes the great fire of Rome during the reign of Nero and the emperor's subsequent persecution of the Christians there. He wrote:

*"Nero created scapegoats and subjected to the most refined tortures those whom the common people called 'Christians'....**Their name comes from Christ, who, during the reign of Tiberius, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate, 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 15:44).*

- b. The historian Suetonius wrote a biography of the emperor Claudius, written around A.D. 120. In it he makes a small remark about the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in A.D. 49, that is very illuminating, in which he states: **"Since the Jews were constantly causing disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome"** (Claudius 25:4).
  - i. Chrestus was a popular misspelling of the Greek *Christos* (Christ). Suetonius obviously didn't know much about Jesus, mistaking him for a zealot or a Jewish slave during the riots of A.D. 49. But, again, his account does validate that Jesus was indeed a real person in history, who lived during the time the gospel writers said he did, and was a controversial figure.
- c. **Pliny the Younger** was proconsul of Bythnia, in Asia Minor, between A.D. 111 and 113. Pliny wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan asking for advice on

how to deal with the rapid growth of the Christian community in his area. ***Among other things, he describes the Christian custom of holding weekly meetings to sing praises "to Christ as to a god"*** (Letter 10. 96).

- i. This passage is significant, because it is the only non-Christian source that tells us that Christians treated Christ as a "god."
  - d. Lucian was a Roman satirist who lived from A.D. 115-200. In *The Passing of Perigrinus*, Lucian mocks the Christian life, writing, ***"The Christians . . . worship a man to this day--the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. . . . [It] was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws."***
  - e. The Jewish historian Josephus (A.D. 38-100+) wrote about Jesus in his *Jewish Antiquities*, saying that ***Jesus was a wise man who did surprising feats, taught many, won over followers from among Jews and Greeks, that Jesus was believed to be the Messiah, was accused by the Jewish leaders, was condemned to be crucified by Pilate, and was considered to be resurrected.***
  - f. From the Jewish Talmud, ***we learn that Jesus was conceived out of wedlock, gathered disciples, made blasphemous claims about himself, and worked miracles, but these miracles are attributed to sorcery and not to God.***
6. Now let this settle in your head: Not some, not a few, not most, but **ALL** the relevant Roman and Jewish historical sources writing at the time of Christ mention Jesus of Nazareth! This plainly refutes the statements made by those who boldly say there is no historical evidence for the existence of Jesus.
  7. Some have said: "If Jesus was so important, why didn't more historians write about Him?" But the truth of the matter is, **They All Did! Every ancient historian writing about the land of Palestine under the**

**Roman rule of the emperor Tiberius mentions the existence and the impact of Jesus Christ. Wow! These sources validate how we know what we know about Jesus.**

8. The latest version of Encyclopedia Britannica, referring to the multiple extra-biblical witnesses to Jesus Christ says: ***"These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus...."***
9. The point I'm trying to make here is this: if you never read the Bible or any Christian writings, you could still learn from non-Christian sources these things about Jesus Christ:
  - a. That he was a Jewish teacher
  - b. That many people witnessed him performing supernatural healings, signs and wonders
  - c. That his followers believed he was the long awaited Messiah
  - d. That he was rejected and condemned by Jewish leaders
  - e. That he was crucified under the authority of Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius
  - f. That His followers believed He rose from the dead and confessed that He alone was Lord, and that He would return.
10. After examining the evidence about the life of Christ from contemporary sources apart from the New Testament, Roderic Dunkerley concluded, ***"In none of these various testimonies to the fact of Christ is there any slightest hint or idea that he was not a real historical person. Indeed it has been argued—and I think very rightly—that myth theories of the beginnings of Christianity are modern speculative hypotheses motivated by unreasoning prejudice and dislike."***
11. Quoting another scholar, Dunkerly writes, ***'It would never enter anyone's head, to ask whether Jesus had lived, unless before asking the question the mind had been darkened by the wish that he had not lived'***" (Roderic Dunkerley, *Beyond the Gospels*, pp. 29, 30).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> - Excerpted from Josh McDowell, *Answers to tough questions: Skeptics ask about the Christian faith* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1993 by Josh McDowell and Don Stewart.

### C. Archaeology tells us a lot about Jesus

0. The problem with archaeological evidence is that it can be interpreted one way by those sympathetic to Jesus as confirming what the Bible says about Him, as well as support the skepticism of unbelieving archaeologists.
1. This is why the testimony of the atheist Sir William Ramsay of Oxford University, in England, is so fascinating. He was one of history's greatest "diggers" and was, in fact, a confirmed atheist. In fact, he was so hostile to Christianity, that he devoted 25 years of his life doing archaeological digs to try to disprove the book of Acts, which was written by Luke, the medical doctor turned historian.
2. But instead of finding enough evidence to discredit Luke, Ramsay discovered that his findings kept supporting Luke's writings about Jesus. He was forced to finally conclude that Luke was the most accurate historian who had ever written. Influenced by the archaeological evidence, Ramsay became a Christian.<sup>9</sup>
3. Contrast this with archaeological evidence in support of other major religions. Take Mormonism, for example. When author Lee Strobel asked the Smithsonian Institute whether any evidence supported the information contained in the book of Mormon, he was told unequivocally that archaeologists see "no direct connection between the archaeology of the New World and subject matter of the book."
  - a. Scholars have discovered that none of the cities the book of Mormon mentions as existing in America
  - b. There has been no discoveries of artifacts relating to the book of Mormon
  - c. No one has uncovered any inscriptions that confirm the book of Mormon
  - d. Not on person, place, nation, or name mentioned in the Book of Mormon has been identified and confirmed through the archaeological artifacts.
  - e. No one has ever become a Mormon off of corroborative evidence.
  - f. Hundreds of historians, researchers, scientists, lawyers, investigators, archaeologists, physicists, etc, have approached the research of Christianity with hostile intent to disprove it

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<sup>9</sup> Lee Strobel, The Case for Christ, p. 69

and expose the foolish of the Christian faith, only to be brought to their knees before Christ in saving faith due to the weight of the extra-biblical evidence they uncovered.

- g. The November 4th edition of Time Magazine described one of the most recent archeological findings that support and validate the existence of Jesus and the integrity of the NT writings.
- h. It's a 2000 year old box carved out of limestone. The box is an ossuary, a burial box made to hold the bones of a Jewish man during the first century. On it's side is clearly carved an inscription that says; **“James the son of Joseph, the brother of Jesus.”** This is very significant because the Bible speaks of James, the brother of Jesus who became one of his disciples and who wrote the book of James.
- i. Scholars, Christian and non-Christian, have thoroughly examined this burial box and it's inscription. Six different pieces of the stone have been subjected to laboratory examination. The verdict has been overwhelming that it is a authentic. It is from the right place, at the right time and the inscription is real. The laboratory studies affirm that it isn't a fake and it hasn't been tampered with. **It's been called the oldest existing archaeological evidence of Jesus.**<sup>10</sup>

D. How many questions does a person need to have answered before they can make a rational decision to put their faith in Jesus Christ?

1. Faith is not merely intellectual or mental assent
2. Faith is not an entirely emotional response
3. Faith is an act of the will; a voluntary surrender of the will in response to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ
4. Not “I think I will put my faith in the death and resurrection of Christ alone for forgiveness of sins and eternal life.”
5. Not “I feel that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true and so I believe”
6. But “I am convinced by the sheer volume and weight of the evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ in history, and by the integrity of the eyewitness accounts of His birth, life,

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<sup>10</sup> Facts given in a sermon by Pastor Larry Kirk, November 10, 2002, entitled, The Credibility of Christianity; quoting from an article in Time Magazine, November 4, p. 73

burial and resurrection; and together with the witness of my conscience that I am a sinner in need of forgiveness, and a traveler in need of guidance, and a seeker in need of truth, I will surrender my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in His substitutionary death on the cross as payment for my sins and eternal life.”