

SESSION 3:

ARCHAEOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTION

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, we can know nothing about You unless You first reveal it to us. Teach us to firmly trust Your revelation in the Bible so that we may know You and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Opening Questions:

- Name one thing you find unbelievable.
- What would it take to convince you it was true?
- How would you prove your identity to a government official who refused to accept your word for it?

Watch the Video: Session 3**The Governor and the High Priest**

Imagine that Pontius Pilate and Joseph Caiaphas never existed. After all, for centuries the only evidence of their lives was in the Bible. For many scholars, the whole question about how Jesus ended up crucified—or if He even *was* crucified—was up for debate.

But the discoveries of Pilate's inscription and Caiaphas' bone box place the trial of Jesus firmly in history.

Read John 18:28-19:16.

- 28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled but could eat the Passover.
- 29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"
- 30 They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have handed Him over to you."
- 31 Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and judge Him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death."
- 32 This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death He was going to die.

33 So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

34 Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about Me?”

35 Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You over to me. What have You done?”

36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My kingdom is not from the world.”

37 Then Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.”

38 Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in Him.”

39 But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

40 They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

Chapter 19

1 Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged Him.

2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head and arrayed Him in a purple robe.

3 They came up to Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck Him with their hands.

4 Pilate went out again and said to them, “See, I am bringing Him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.”

5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!”

6 When the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.”

7 The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law He ought to die because He has made Himself the Son of God.”

8 When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.

9 He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from? But Jesus gave him no answer.

10 So Pilate said to Him, “You will not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You and authority to crucify You?”

11 Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over Me at all unless it had been given to you from above. Therefore he who delivered Me over to you has the greater sin.”

12 From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes Himself a king opposes Caesar.”

13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called the Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha.

14 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”

15 They cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

16 So he delivered Him over to them to be crucified.

- What effect does it have on your reading of this text to know we have archaeological evidence connecting Pilate with Judea, as well as some material remains associated with a Jewish high priest named Caiaphas?
- How do these archaeological discoveries help move the accounts in the Bible from the category of religious fable or wishful thinking to historical reality?

On the Sunday after Jesus' crucifixion and death, Thomas, one of the 12 apostles, heard his fellow apostles claim they had seen the risen Jesus. But not having seen Jesus Himself, he refused to believe them. (See John 20:24-29.)

- Describe the evidence Jesus gave Thomas to prove He had truly risen from the dead.
- Why did Jesus give so many different kinds of proofs that He was alive (walking with His disciples, talking to them, eating with them, showing the wounds in His hands and side, having them touch Him, etc.)?
- Why is it significant that Jesus kept appearing to them over a period of 40 days after His resurrection?

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, You have given us a remarkable revelation of Your love in the Bible. Give us confidence in its trustworthiness that we may firmly trust in Jesus our Savior. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.



Digging Deeper: Additional links and resources available at lhm.org/bibleontrial.

[Contributions of Biblical Archaeology](#)

SESSION 4: EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we prepare to look at the men You chose to be witnesses to record the life of Your Son Jesus Christ, give us confidence in their writings that we may know the truth about our Savior and His great salvation. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Opening Questions:

- What is the primary role of an eyewitness?
- What is appropriate for his testimony to include? What is not appropriate?

Watch the Video: Session 4

Eyewitnesses

In most court cases, neither the judge nor the jury were present at the scene of the crime. So to reach their verdict, they must weigh the testimony of those eyewitnesses who were. Since none of us were present during Jesus' earthly life, we, too, must weigh the testimony of His eyewitnesses. This involves determining how faithfully Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John report the things they actually saw or had learned from other eyewitnesses. Did they tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Or did they exaggerate and add their own interpretations and embellishments?

Consider the credentials of the four men who wrote the first four books of the New Testament:

Matthew - was written by an eyewitness named Matthew or Levi. He was a tax collector, and Jesus called him to be one of His 12 disciples (Matthew 9:9). He accompanied Jesus, heard His teachings, and witnessed His miracles. Though he was in hiding during Jesus' trial and crucifixion, he was a profound witness to the risen Lord.

Mark - was written by a near-eyewitness named John Mark (Acts 12:12). He accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:5, 13), then later became a close associate with the eyewitness Peter (1 Peter 5:1b), who was one of Jesus' 12 disciples (Matthew 4:18-20). Peter was one of three disciples Jesus chose to witness the rising of the daughter of Jairus, the synagogue ruler (Mark 5:35-43), Jesus' transfiguration (Mark 9:1-13), and His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42).

Luke - was written by a near-eyewitness named Luke. Luke was a physician who accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 21:1; Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). He carefully investigated the events of Jesus' life, even interviewing eyewitnesses to those events (Luke 1:1-3).

John - was written by an eyewitness named John. He was a fisherman whom Jesus called to be one of His 12 disciples (Matthew 4:21-22). With Peter and his brother James, John was in the inner circle of disciples who witnessed the three events mentioned above in connection with Mark's Gospel.

- These four writers come from diverse backgrounds. Does that strengthen or weaken their testimony to you? Why?
- The first near-eyewitness Mark used Peter as his source. How much weight does that add to the testimony of his Gospel?

In the Gospels, we are given the eyewitness account of two of the three inner-circle disciples. The testimony of the third, John's brother, James, was cut short when he became the first of the apostles to be executed for his testimony by Herod the king (Acts 12:1-2). In fact, the word "martyr" comes from the Greek verb which means "to witness," and the 12 apostles were witnesses of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (Acts 1:15-26).

- How does it affect your evaluation of the apostles' testimony when you consider their willingness to be exiled and executed rather than change their testimony about the things they saw Jesus say and do?

In his second letter, the apostle Peter describes how he and his fellow apostles testified about Jesus. He also reveals that God Himself guided their testimony.

Read 2 Peter 1:16-21.

- 16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.
- 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"
- 18 we ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.
- 19 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,
- 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Although Luke was educated as a physician, he clearly restricts himself to eyewitness testimony and adds no interpretation of his own to their testimony. The other Gospel writers and their eyewitnesses were simple, untrained men who had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

- How does their lack of training impact or influence the reliability of their eyewitness testimony?
- How does the Holy Spirit strengthen the reliability of their testimony?
- What is Peter saying to us when we are tempted to pick and choose what parts of the Bible's testimony we want to accept and which we want to reject?

Blind Faith or Faith Anchored in History?

God did not give us the Bible to create a blind faith that drifts around like a boat without an anchor. God stepped into human history through His Son Jesus Christ and touched people's lives through His life, death, and resurrection. The events of His life provide the anchor that gives shape to His message of faith, and it provides meaning for the events in our lives as well.

- How important is it to you for faith to be reasonable?
- Does your faith need to be grounded in historical events, people, and places? Explain why or why not.

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, remove the doubts that enter my mind when I think of the Bible. Give me confidence in Jesus my Savior, until the day I see You face to face when He returns. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



Digging Deeper: [The history of the Bible museum](#)

HOST DEDICATION:

"In celebration of the 15th anniversary of the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism and Human Rights in Strasbourg, France (www.apologeticsacademy.eu) and in honor of its Director, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, whose defense of Christ Our Advocate has never rested."

- Craig Parton



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