

Answering Myths
About the Bible

Newsweek



- Kurt Eichenwald writes that the Bible is so misunderstood because it is wrongly translated.
- He presumes the Bible to be unreliable and gives seven examples to prove his point.

Newsweek

- “They wave their Bibles at passersby, screaming their condemnations of homosexuals. They fall on their knees, worshipping at the base of granite monuments to the Ten Commandments while demanding prayer in school. They appeal to God to save America from their political opponents, mostly Democrats. They gather in football stadiums by the thousands to pray for the country’s salvation.”

Newsweek

- “They are God’s frauds, cafeteria Christians who pick and choose which Bible verses they heed with less care than they exercise in selecting side orders for lunch. They are joined by religious rationalizers, fundamentalists who, unable to find Scripture supporting their biases and beliefs, twist phrases and modify translations to prove they are honoring the Bible’s words.”

Four Criticisms

- The Telephone Game and the Bible
- Mistranslation of the Bible
- The Emperor and the Canon
- Contradictory Gospels

1. Telephone Game

- *Newsweek*: “No television preacher has ever read the Bible. Neither has any evangelical politician. Neither has the pope. Neither have I. And neither have you. At best, we’ve all read a bad translation, a translation of translations of translations of hand-copied copies of copies of copies of copies, and on and on, hundreds of times.”



Oral Transmission

- Darrell Bock: “The telephone game analogy (where such reports can go anywhere) has been countered by two other models: one rabbinic and the other community based.”
- “The rabbinic model shows that when a community cares about the content, it can pass it on and recall it with a high degree of accuracy.”

Oral Transmission

- Darrell Bock: “The argument here is that accounts people care about are passed on in such a way that the core or gist is passed on but allowance is given for some variation of detail.
- The most revealing illustration of this is how Luke retells Jesus’ appearing to Saul on the Damascus Road in Acts 9, 22 and 26.”

Bible & Literature

<i>Work</i>	<i>Earliest Copy</i>
Plato	1,200 yrs.
Thucydides, <i>History</i>	1,300 yrs.
Caesar, <i>Gallic Wars</i>	1,000 yrs.
Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>	1,000 yrs.
Herodotus, <i>History</i>	1,350 yrs.
Homer, <i>Iliad</i>	500 yrs.

Bible & Literature

New Testament—authored between A.D. 40-100

<i>Earliest Fragment</i>	<i>A.D. 125</i>
<i>Earliest Book</i>	<i>A.D. 200</i>
<i>Most of NT</i>	<i>A.D. 250</i>
<i>Complete NT (Codex Sinaiticus)</i>	<i>A.D. 325</i>

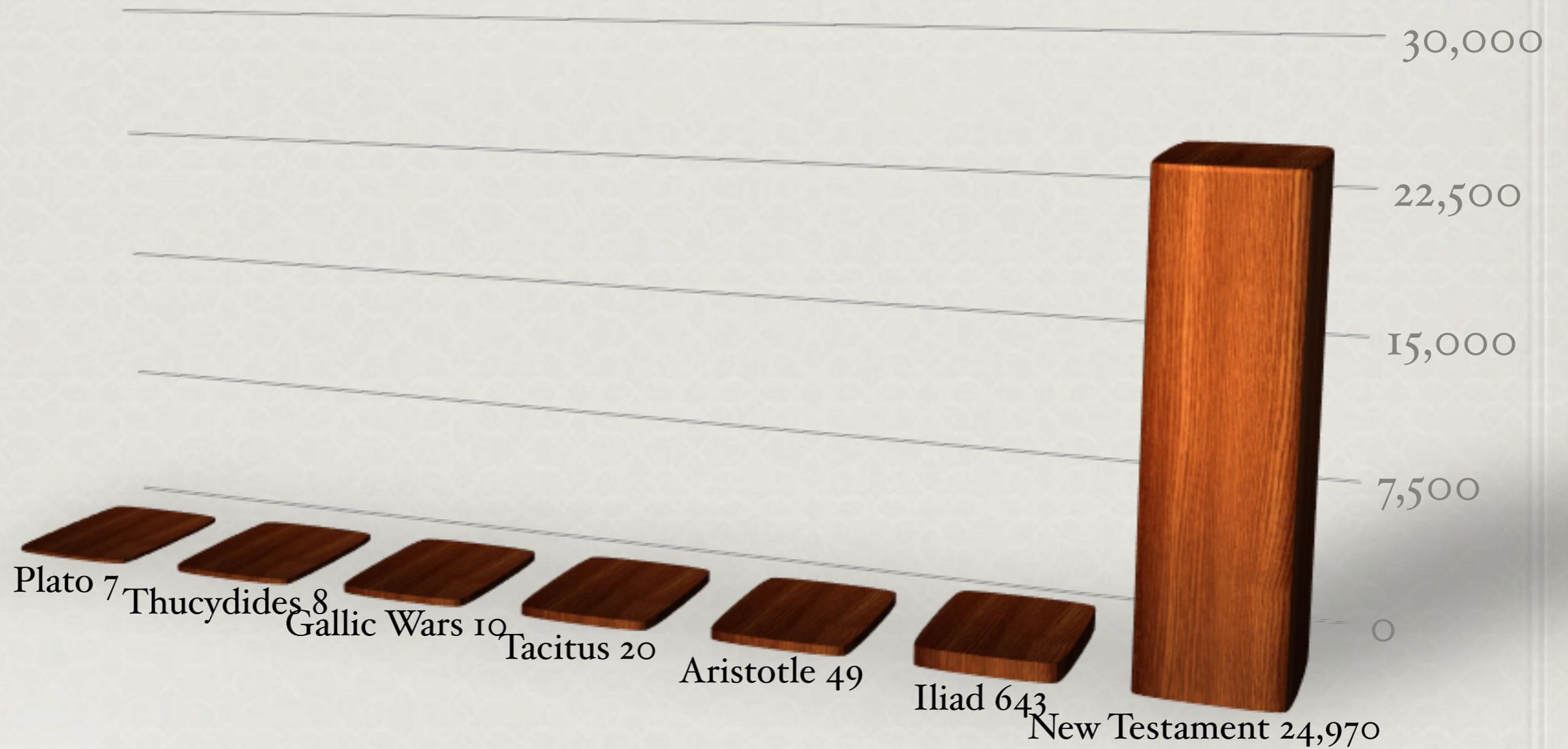
Bible & Literature

<i>Work</i>	<i>Copies</i>
<i>Plato</i>	7
<i>Thucydides, History</i>	8
<i>Caesar, Gallic Wars</i>	10
<i>Tacitus, Annals</i>	20
<i>Homer, Iliad</i>	643

Bible & Literature

<i>Greek manuscripts</i>	<i>5,700</i>
<i>Latin Vulgate</i>	<i>10,000</i>
<i>Other Translations (Coptic, Ethiopian)</i>	<i>9,200</i>
TOTAL	24,900

Bible & Literature



2. Mistranslation

- *Newsweek*: “Many words in New Testament Greek don’t have clear English equivalents. Sentence structure, idioms, stylistic differences—all of these are challenges when converting versions of the New Testament books into English. . . . This is why English translations differ, with many having been revised to reflect the views and guesses of the modern translators.”

Mistranslation

- Darrell Bock: “Eichenwald is right that the manuscript base for the KJV was not the best (based on what we now know). But this is another misleading direction.”
- “The translations we now have do a better job of getting us to that more original text. More than that, even these differences have little impact on the major themes the Bible teaches.”

3. Emperor and Canon

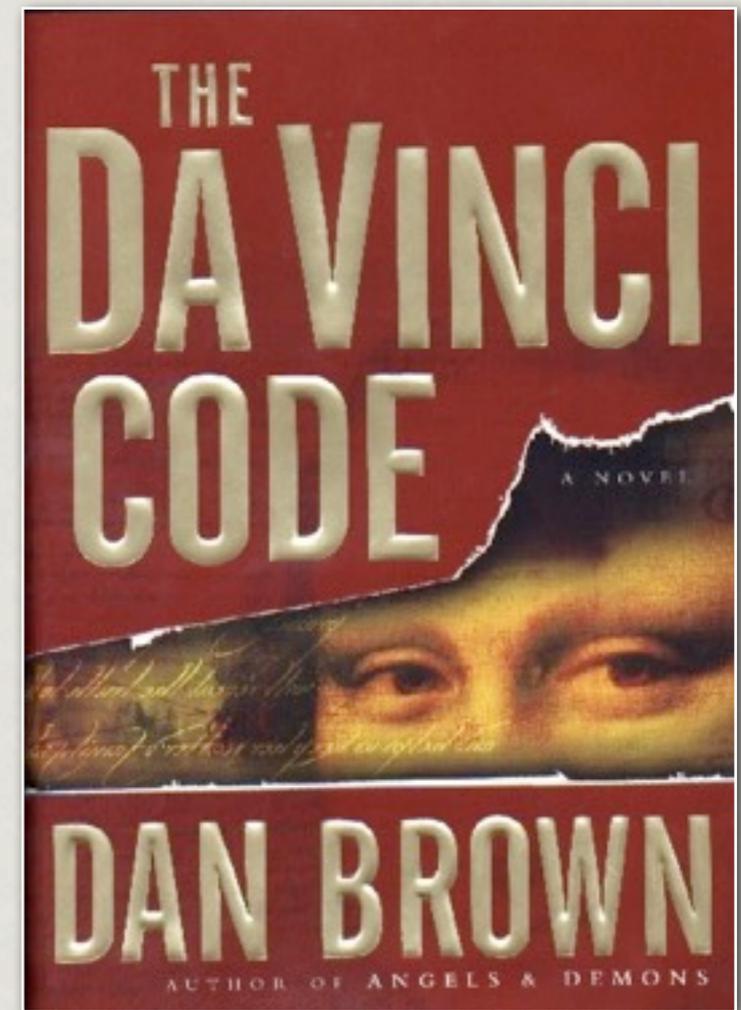
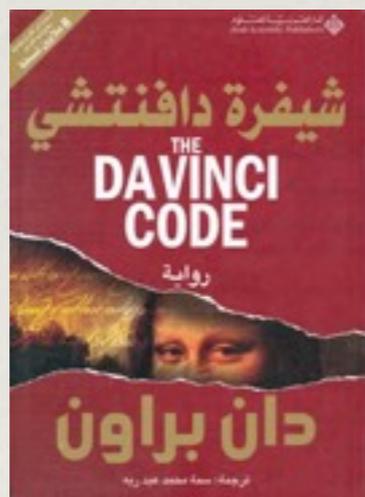
- *Newsweek*: “Indeed, for hundreds of years after the death of Jesus, groups adopted radically conflicting writings about the details of his life and the meaning of his ministry, and murdered those who disagreed. . . . The reason, in large part, was that there were no universally accepted manuscripts that set out what it meant to be a Christian, so most sects had their own gospels.”

Biblical Canon

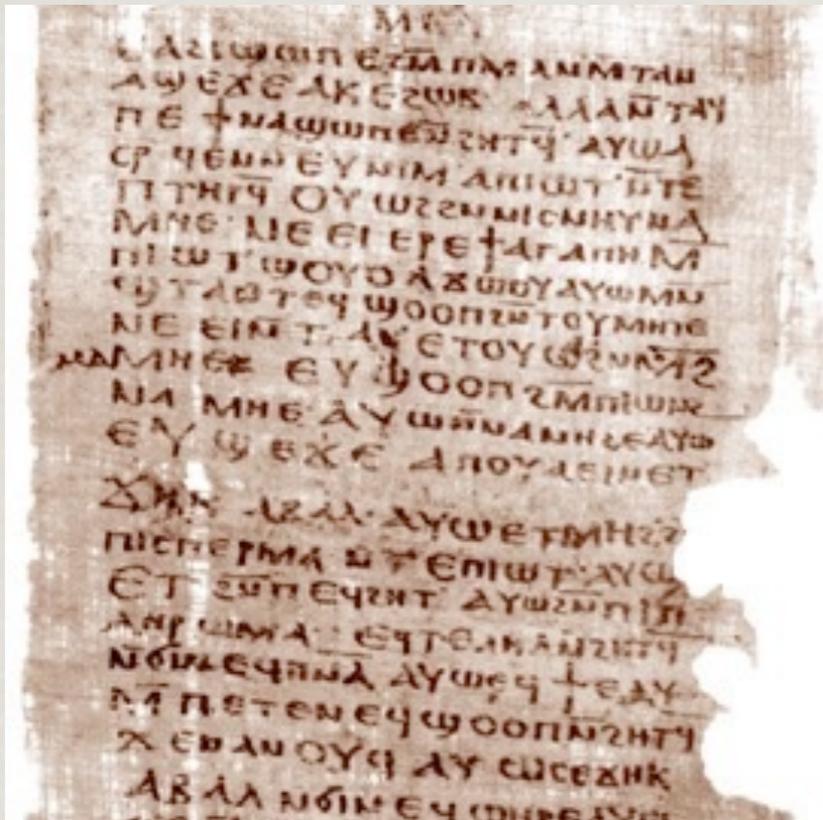
- Darrell Bock: “The suggestion that there were lots of texts out there kind of randomly chosen to make up the canon is another misleading discussion.”
- “The groups alluded to did exist and they did appeal to other texts, but these texts had less of a claim to be rooted in the origin of the movement than those in the canon.”

Gnostic Gospels

- The book was on the New York Times bestseller list for many years. Over 40 million copies in print.

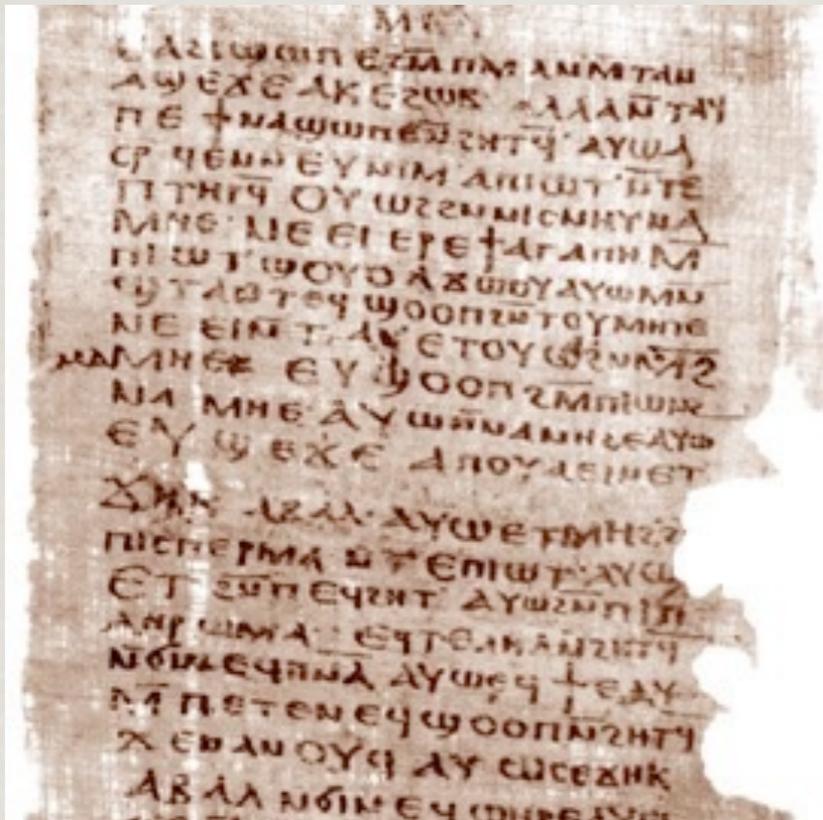


Gnostic Gospels



- Two of the gnostic texts are cited in *The Da Vinci Code* to prove that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene.
 - Gospel of Mary (2nd C.)
 - Gospel of Philip (3rd C.)

Gnostic Gospels



- They are not ancient
- They are not apostolic
- They are not orthodox
- They were not accepted
- They do not support the basic premise of *The Da Vinci Code*.

4. Contradictory Gospels

- *Newsweek*: “The stories in the four Gospels of Jesus’s death and resurrection differ as well. . . . In Matthew, it was Mary and another woman named Mary, and an angel met them there. In Mark, it was Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, and a young man met them. In John, it was Mary alone; no one met her.”

Genealogies

- Charge: Matthew and Luke give different genealogies for Jesus.
- Response: Matthew (written for the Jews) gives the genealogy of Joseph. The genealogy in Luke is the genealogy of Mary (and focuses on His conception and birth).

Key Principle

- Key principles to use in resolving apparent Bible contradictions:
 - A partial report is not a false report.
 - Example: inscriptions on the cross.

Inscriptions - Cross

- Matthew: This is Jesus _____ King of the Jews.
- Mark: _____ The King of the Jews.
- Luke: This is _____ the King of the Jews.
- John: ___ Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

The complete inscription was:

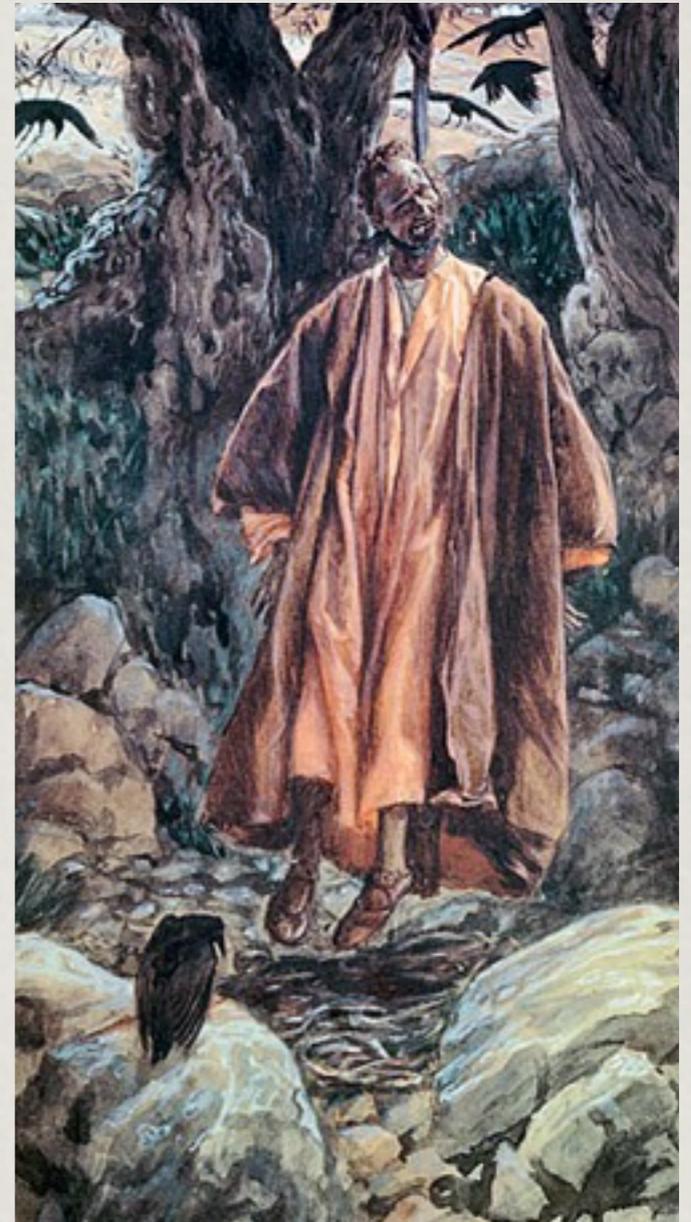
This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

Women and Angels

- Charge: Matthew and Mark mention only one angel at the tomb of Jesus. Luke and John refer to two angels at the tomb. And they mention different women at the tomb as well.
- Response: The discrepancy clears up when we realize that there were two groups of women.

Death of Judas

- Charge: Matthew 27:5 says Judas hung himself. But Acts 1:18 says Judas fell and was burst asunder.

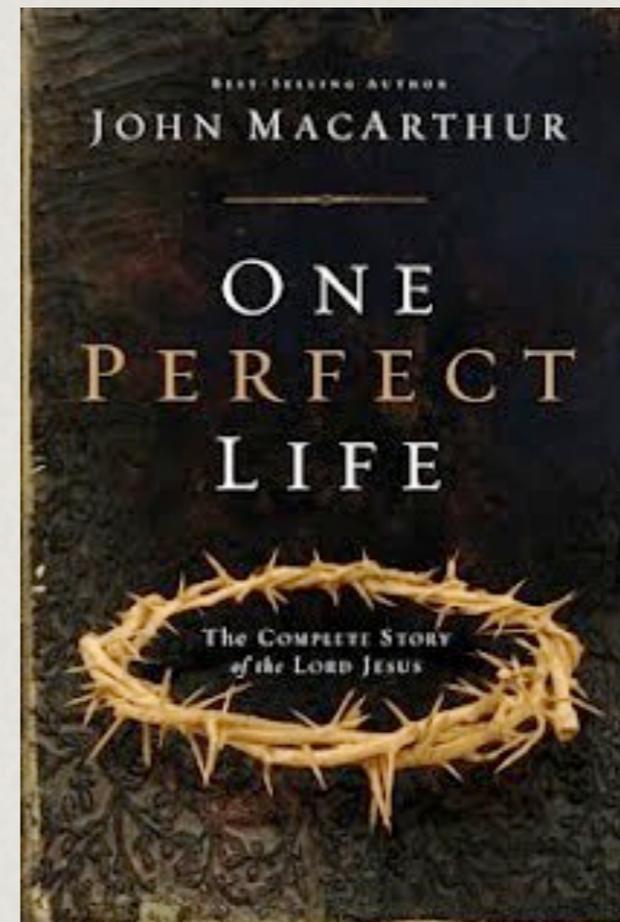
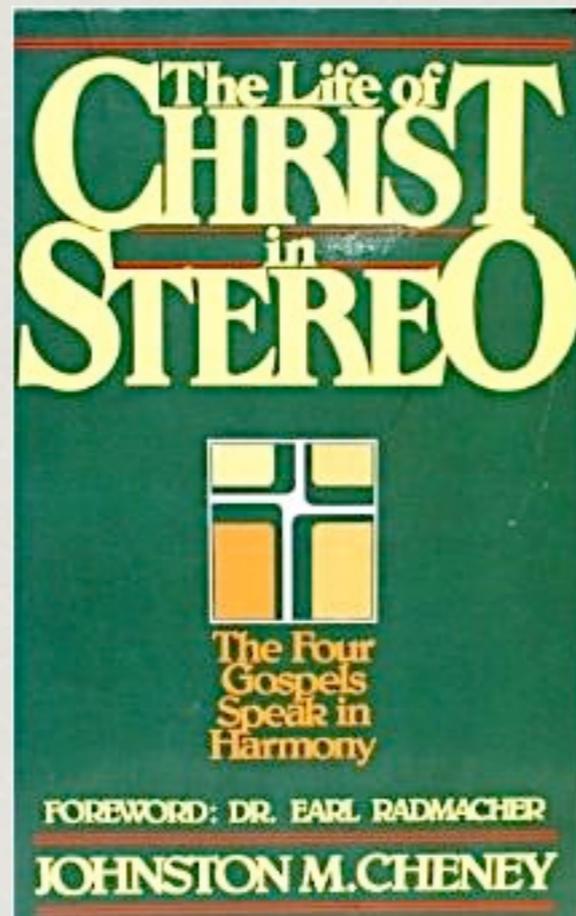


Death of Judas

- Response: Judas hung himself on a precipice over the valley of Hinnom. The rope gave way, his body fell, and burst open and was mangled as described in Acts.



Resources



The Federalist



RELIGION

The Eight Biggest Myths About The Bible

Newsweek is right: Americans are biblically illiterate. But it missed some of our biggest cultural myths about the Bible.

1. Thou Shalt Not Kill

- *The Federalist*: “This declaration has been propagated far and wide by the film industry.”
- There is even a movie from 1982 titled “Thou Shalt Not Kill”, and two from 2014 titled “20:13 Thou Shalt Not Kill” and “La Guapa: Thou Shalt Not Kill.”

Kill or Murder?

- *The Federalist*: Twelve Bible translations, including the massively popular New International Version and the English Standard Version, translate Exodus 20:13 as “Thou shalt not murder.”
- The King James translation of Exodus 20:13, along with three or four more obscure translations, reads “thou shalt not kill.”

Context

- Numbers 35:20 reads, “Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer, but only on the testimony of witnesses.”
- Justified killing extends beyond capital punishment, as Exodus 22:2 indicates: “If a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed.”

Context

- The myth isn't in the actual word choice, but the way it has been interpreted by pop culture.
- The English word "kill" is very clearly different from the word "murder."
- While every murder is a killing, not every killing is a murder.

2. Judge Not

- *The Federalist*: “Judge Not, Lest Ye Be Judged,” on anything, anywhere, at any time, no matter who’s making the critique. That’s the pocket-verse interpretation of Matthew 7:1. The very next verse is familiar to many, and critical to an accurate interpretation of the previous verse: “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye”?

Judging

- This passage is about hypocrisy, not a blanket restriction on judging others.
- As Paul points out in his letter to the Corinthians: “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?”
- In other words, it is the church’s duty to judge those within its body.

Judging

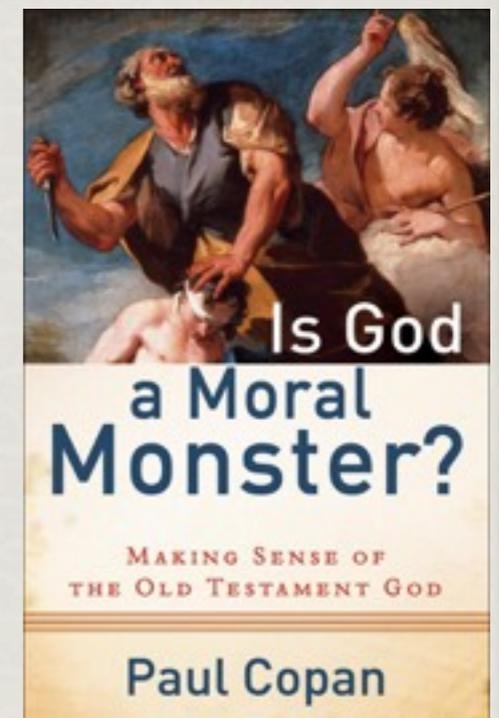
- “Judge not” has an important message, but it has been merged with a “go along to get along” mentality that promotes the relativism of all sin while deterring those who have removed their plank.
- Moreover, it promotes the idea that judgment cannot be made in love, that it is somehow antithetical to it.

3. Bible and Slavery

- *The Federalist* : You hear this one all the time. “The Bible also supported slavery, so if our enlightened culture has discovered the Bible is wrong about other things, we should listen to our culture and not the Bible.”

Definition of Slavery

- The slavery of Bible times was very different from the slavery we know and hate. It actually would have been much closer to indentured servitude.
- In ancient Israel, slaves were not expected to be enslaved for life (Exodus 21:2).



Definition of Slavery

- In the era of the New Testament, people embraced slavery as a form of voluntary employment. Many of them were highly educated.
- That's not to say slavery was a positive good, else Paul would not have said to slaves: "If you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity" (1 Corinthians 7:21).

Paul and Slavery

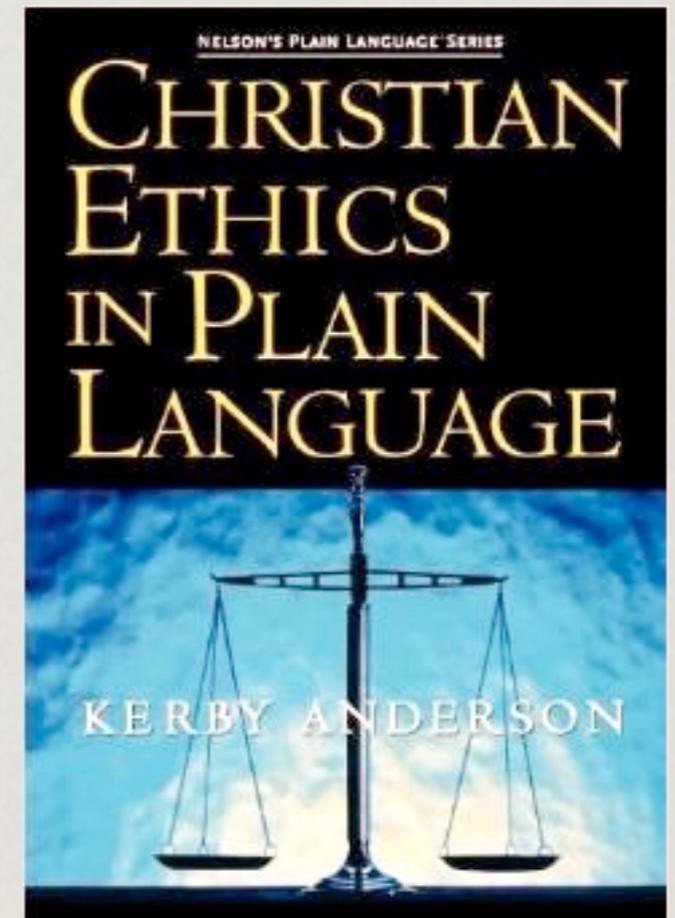
- The Apostle Paul wrote a short letter to a fellow believer named Philemon. Philemon's slave, named Onesimus, escaped his master, encountered Paul, and became a Christian.
- Paul sent him back to Philemon with the letter, encouraging Philemon to release his slave for the service of ministry, and to now see his slave as not a slave but instead a “beloved brother” (Philemon 16).

4. Gay Marriage

- *The Federalist* : A Christian is asked why he opposes the practice of homosexuality. He explains biblical teaching on sexuality, and meets the reply, “Well, yeah, but the Bible also condemns eating shellfish and wearing blended fabrics!”

Discontinuity

- Ceremonial law – Temple sacrifices
 - *Discontinuity* – no more sacrifices
- Civil law – Jewish theocracy
 - *Discontinuity* – not under the Law



Eliminated Prohibitions

- Jesus “declared all foods clean” (Mark 7:19).
- God tells the Apostle Peter in a vision: “What God has made clean, do not call common” (Acts 10:15).
- At the Jerusalem Council, the apostles and elders of Jerusalem decide to oppose the Pharisees, who wanted to order the Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:5).

Moral Continuity

- As we would therefore expect, we do not see any prohibitions in the New Testament about wearing mixed fabrics or eating particular foods.
- We do encounter many exhortations to sexual purity, including three references to homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Timothy 1:9-10).

Resources

