

Explaining Away the Bible

Or, “*Did people invent the story of Jesus?*”

Who would compile these books?

Why would anyone *want to preach* such a message?

Who would be willing to suffer the consequences?

The simple fact that the Christianity exists requires an explanation. Intense efforts were made, especially in the earliest days following Jesus’ death, to eliminate His followers. One obvious way to counteract Christianity would have been to publish an opposing message, but although Jesus’ enemies were in political and religious power, no written counter-message remains from the time of Jesus to contradict the Bible account. But by far the *easiest* way to silence Christianity would have simply been to produce the dead body of Jesus. The Jews had control of the tomb, and enlisted the help of Roman guards to guard it, and the Roman guards would have been under penalty of death for allowing the body to be stolen. What’s more, the followers of Jesus had no political, military, or financial resources to access the body. But no body was produced.

Jesus’ enemies could say nothing from Scripture to counter His message, and they did not have a body to show, so they resorted to violence. Jesus’ followers were persecuted repeatedly, but persecution did not silence them. In fact, His followers *wrote* the message of Jesus’ life and death and resurrection, and more and more followers were added. As churches were established, Jesus’ apostles wrote letters of instruction and encouragement to them, and by the end of the first century after Jesus, these letters were combined with four accounts of Jesus’ life, and became known as the “New Testament.” The New Testament was combined with the books of the Old Testament (Written Torah), and are known as the Bible.

Massive efforts by those in religious or political control have been made more than once *to eliminate the Bible* from existence, and yet it remains on the perennial best-seller lists. Not only does the Bible *exist*, it is loved and read and followed.

So the mere existence of the Bible requires an explanation. Did this book develop as a result merely of human events, or was a divine hand guiding the events that inspired and preserved these writings? In order to answer this question, let’s consider some basic questions about the book.

Who would compile these books?

While Jewish scribes were responsible for many centuries for preserving and transmitting the 39 books of the Old Covenant (a.k.a., Old Testament, Written Torah, or the first major division of the Bible), they did *not* have a hand in copying the 27 books of the New Testament (that is, the part of the Bible relating the story and teachings of Jesus and His followers). Simply stated, the Jews didn’t believe the message about Jesus, and wanted to stay under the Law of Moses, awaiting someone besides Jesus as their Messiah. Those Jews who believed in Jesus as the Anointed of God (i.e., the “Christ” or “Messiah”) became Christians, and so were no longer Jews, religiously speaking.

While the New Testament writers all *claim* to be followers of Jesus, some people question the motives and affiliations of those who wrote the New Testament. For those who would *try to explain away the Bible* as coming merely from humans (thus implying that the message is fabricated), here are some possibilities:

Could the Bible writers *actually* have been ...

Insane people? This is silly, given the nature of the writings in question. But we're trying to consider all options, so this has been considered... and rejected.

Jews? (The Jews were in religious power in Palestine at the time of Jesus, and there were various Jewish sects with varying beliefs.) While most of the Bible writers were, in fact, Jews, and while many of the New Testament writers came from Jewish families, notice that the New Testament message claims to *fulfill* the Old Testament promises and prophecies, and bring all families of the earth together in one body, in Jesus Christ. No Jew *who wanted to remain a Jew* would want to spread or preserve this Bible message.

Romans? (After all, they were in political control of Palestine at the time of Jesus.) But the Romans, at best, are portrayed in the Bible as friends of the Jews, and at worst, are portrayed as enemies of Jesus. No Roman *who wanted to justify the execution of Jesus* would want to spread the New Testament message.

Well, this line of reasoning makes us realize that the enemies/detractors of Jesus would not want to spread the message of the Bible/New Testament. So, the only conclusion is that **the friends/followers of Jesus actually wrote the story.**

Now, what about these friends – were they honest, or were they liars?

Liars? Some would like to think that Jesus' followers fabricated (made up, or lied about) the story of Jesus, regarding His death, crucifixion, and especially resurrection. Perhaps out of denial or even wishful thinking, they concocted a story to promote their idea of a Savior.

Why would anyone *want to preach* such a message?

What motivations could anyone have to spread the message that Jesus came in human form, lived sinlessly and died willingly, was crucified and was raised from the dead, to pay the price of sin for all who would follow Him? The message itself *humbles us* and *exalts Him*. As someone said, "Jesus is the One who made us all Number *Two*." So those who preached Jesus (at least initially) were NOT motivated by ego. Unlike modern religious figures, the apostles did not accept people's worship (Acts 10:25-26; Acts 14:11-18), did not get rich off their preaching (Acts 20:33-35), and did not desire a personal following. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13) The only motivation we can attribute to Jesus' apostles and those early preachers was a desire to exalt Jesus.

This still leaves room for someone to want to spread the myth of such a Savior, but we must come to grips with the fact that, not only did his followers *claim and write* these things, they *lived and died* by the message. So, this is not a case of people off in

a corner somewhere making up a story, and then sitting back watching what happens when people start believing it (for example, hoping to watch *them* suffer persecution.) The Bible writers led by example, and showed their faith by their lives and deaths.

Who would be willing to suffer the consequences?

Christians were first persecuted by the Jews (starting with the crucifixion of Jesus, and continuing through about A.D. 70) and then by the Romans, who crucified Christians, fed them to lions, and slaughtered them at the hands of gladiators simply because they worshiped Jesus Christ rather than Caesar. All the apostles ultimately were imprisoned and/or executed for their faith. If these twelve original preachers who were trying to persuade others to follow Jesus had invented any part of the message, don't you think at least one of them would have recanted, when faced with the threat of death (as founders of certain modern religions have done)? But these men carried out their separate ministries and all met the same fate as their Lord Jesus – being persecuted for preaching submission to God, peace with our fellow man, and righteous living.

The only reasonable conclusion is that those twelve (apostles) eyewitnesses of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, believed with all their hearts that the events they witnessed were worth dying for.

Think...

- If the Bible is from men, you must explain away the miracles, the fulfilled prophecies, and most importantly, the empty tomb of Jesus.
- If it's from men, you must explain away all the eyewitnesses who died as martyrs for what they saw and heard.