



# The Case for Christmas

## Part 1: "Evidence that demands a verdict"

Luke 2:1-6 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup>So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.<sup>4</sup>Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. <sup>6</sup>So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.

“As a youngster, like countless other wide-eyed children, I listened with rapt fascination to the annual Bible story about Christmas. But as I matured, skepticism set in. I concluded that not only is Santa Claus merely a feel-good fable, but that the entire Christmas tale was itself built on a flimsy foundation of wishful thinking.”



**Is there any evidence to support the claims of Scripture?**

**Luke 1:1-4** Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup>just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup>it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup>that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

**1 Jn 1:1-3** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life <sup>2</sup>the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us <sup>3</sup>that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

**2 Pet 1:16** For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

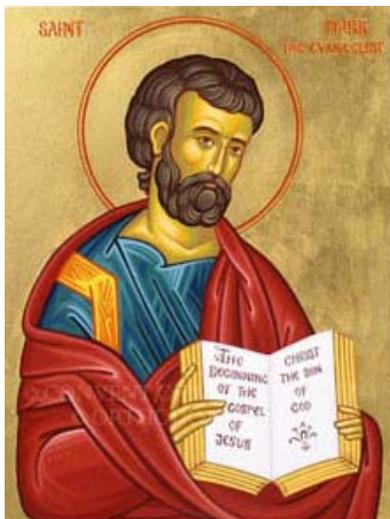
**Exhibit 1: Eyewitness testimony**

**Matthew:** Levi the tax collector and disciple wrote the book of Matthew

**John Mark:** companion of Peter wrote the book of Mark

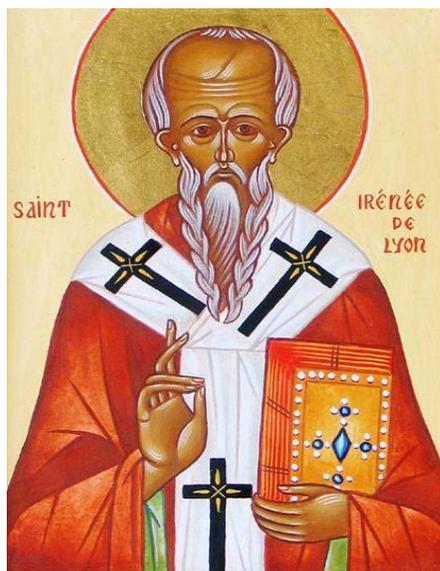
**Luke:** Paul's "beloved physician" wrote the book of Luke and the book of Acts

**John:** the son of Zebedee wrote the book of John



**Papias, Christian writer, wrote in 125 A.D. that Mark:**

“carefully and accurately recorded Peter’s eyewitness observations. ... [Mark] made no mistake and did not include any false statement.”



**Irenaeus wrote in 180 A.D.:**

“Matthew published his own Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome and founding the church there.”

## **Exhibit 2 – the time interval**

### **Extremely conservative dates for the Gospels:**

Mark – 70 A.D.

Matthew – 80s A.D.

Luke – 80s A.D.

John – 90s A.D.

### **The book of Acts was written in 62 A.D.**

- Since Luke wrote the book of Luke before the book of Acts, that dates Luke earlier than 62 A.D.
- Since Luke incorporates parts of the book of Mark, that means that Mark is earlier even still.
- This means that the book of Mark was written no later than 60 A.D. and quite possibly in the late 50s.
- If Jesus was crucified in 30-33 A.D., then Mark was written about 30 years after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.



Sir Frederic Kenyon  
British paleographer &  
biblical/classical scholar

“The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”

- The *Illiad* is reconstructed using only 643 manuscripts
- Caesars’s *Gallic Wars* are reconstructed with 9 or 10 manuscripts
- Titus Livy’s *History of Rome* is reconstructed using 20 manuscripts
- The writings of Tacitus are reconstructed using only 2 manuscripts

- The N.T. is confirmed using 5,366 Greek manuscripts
- The manuscript closest to Caesar's *Gallic Wars* dates to 900 years from the original.
- The manuscripts used to reconstruct Tacitus' writings are 800 & 1000 years from the original.
- The manuscripts used to confirm the N.T. date from a few decades to 200 years from the originals.

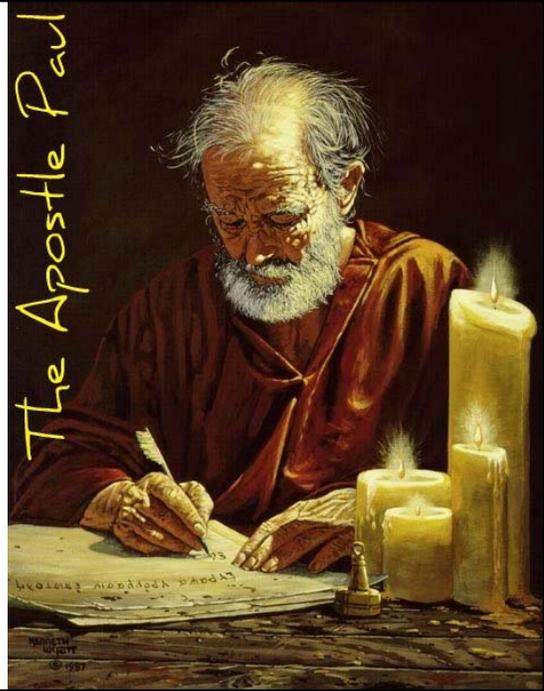


**Comparable example:**

The two earliest biographies of Alexander the Great were written almost 500 yrs. after Alexander died in 323 B.C.

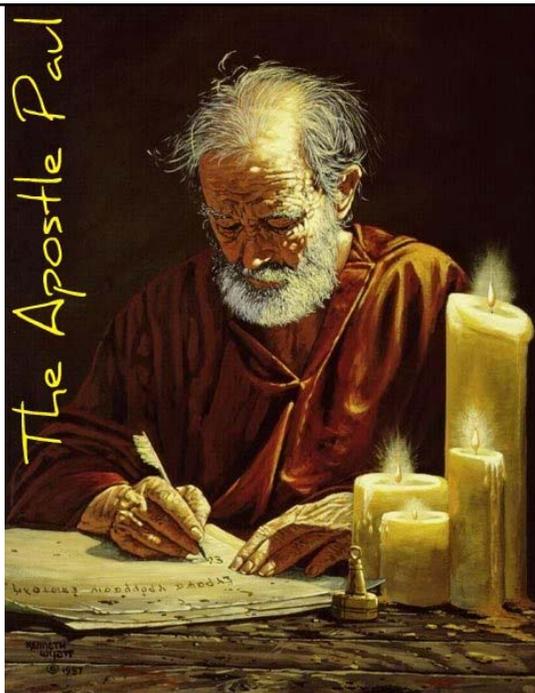
## The fundamentals of the Christian faith:

**1 Cor 15:3-4** For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures



- If Jesus was crucified in 30 A.D.
- Paul's conversion was about 32 A.D.
- Paul met the disciples in about 35 A.D.
- It was during the period from 32-35 A.D. that Paul received much of what the Lord gave him.

Paul's writing ministry began in the 40s A.D. and most of his letters were written in the 50s A.D.



### **Exhibit 3 – Archaeological discoveries**

“There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition.” William F. Albright



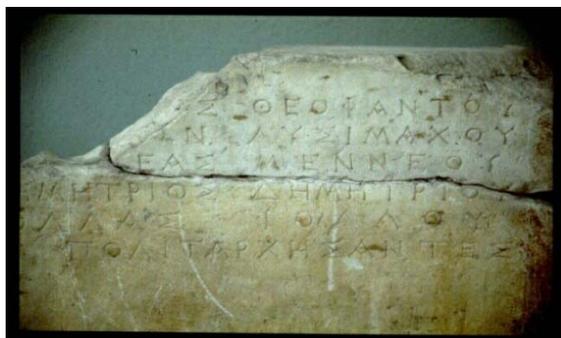
“It may be state categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.” Nelson Glueck



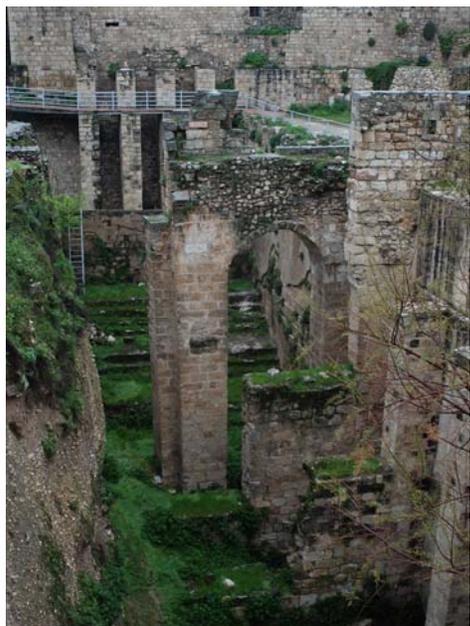
“More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine.”

Millar Burrows

In Acts 17:6, Luke refers to city officials in Thessalonica as politarchs.



An inscription was found on a 1<sup>st</sup> century arch which can be seen today in the British Museum which begins with “In the time of the politarchs ...”



John 5:1-15 says the Pool of Bethesda had 5 porches.

Recently the Pool was found 40' below ground and it had 5 porches.



The Pool of Siloam has been found (Jn 9:7)

Critics have said that Nazareth didn't exist during the time of Jesus. Then a list was found that gave the places the priests would live after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. listing Nazareth as one of the places where they lived.

1<sup>st</sup> century tombs have been found near Nazareth that prove it existed during the time of Jesus.



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“We would know that first, Jesus was a Jewish teacher; second, many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms; third, some people believed he was the Messiah; fourth, he was rejected by the Jewish leaders; fifth, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius;



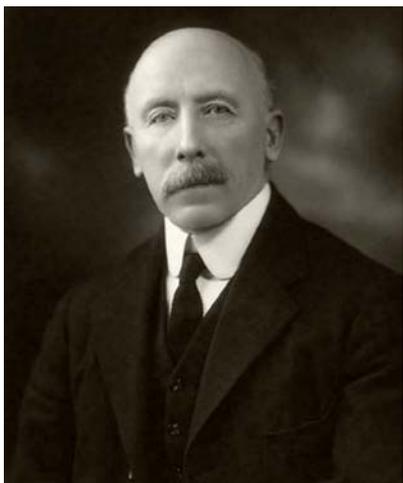
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sixth, despite his shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by A.D. 64; and seventh, all kinds of people from the cities and countryside – men and women, slave and free – worshiped him as God.”



professor of history  
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“We have better historical documentation for Jesus than for the founder of any other ancient religion.”



Sir Frederic Kenyon  
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“The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries. ... The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.”

A boy was reading a murder mystery one day, and he became anxious about whether the heroine was going to live. To alleviate his anxiety, he read the last chapter and discovered that she survived! Afterwards, when he read that the villain was planning a dastardly deed, he chuckled to himself and thought, "If you knew what I know, you wouldn't be so haughty." Christians know the last chapter, and that helps us cope with the present. Indeed, the glories of the future can help dilute the sorrows of the present. The devil's doom is pronounced in Genesis – and it's executed in Revelation."

-Dr Adrian Rogers

