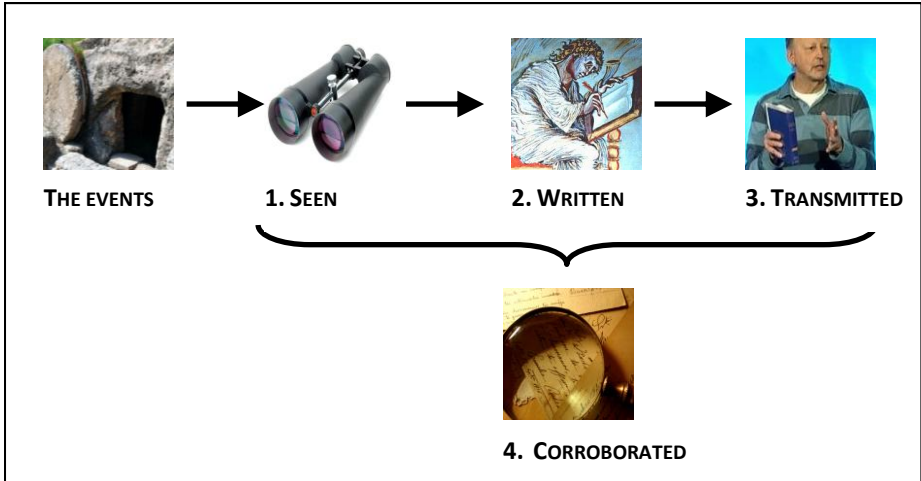


## 2. WHY TRUST THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS? SEEN AND WRITTEN

“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.” (Psalm 119:18)



### 1. SEEN: THE GOSPELS CONTAIN EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

Acts 1:21-22, “Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,<sup>22</sup> beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

Acts 2:22, “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.”

2 Peter 1:16, “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty.”

1 John 1:1-3, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.<sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.<sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

(a) The gospel is centered on public history

(b) The gospel events were seen

→ Question: why should I trust eyewitness testimony?

- Secular historians
- Each one of us

## 2. WRITTEN: EYEWITNESSES' TESTIMONY WAS ACCURATELY RECORDED

(a) In an oral culture the gospel was written down

John 21:24, "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true."

(b) The gospels were written speedily

<b>WRITING THE NEW TESTAMENT</b>	
Jesus' death	33AD
Paul's letters	c.48-65AD
Gospels	c.65-90AD
From crucifixion to writing NT	= <u>gap of 15-57 years</u>
<b>OTHER ANCIENT RELIGIOUS TEXTS</b>	
Muhammed dies	632AD
First biography	c.760AD
	= <u>gap of 125 years</u>
Buddha dies	400BC
First writings	c.40BC
	= <u>gap of 350 years</u>

**(c) The gospels were written carefully**

Luke 1:1-4, "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us,<sup>2</sup> just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,<sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

Papias (Bishop of Hierapolis, d.130AD): "For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely."

→ **Question: didn't they have a different idea of history back then?**

→ **Question: weren't they biased?**

- Yes, but...
- And what about *you*?

→ **A challenge: what other (credible) explanation do we have for the eyewitness evidence?**

John 20:24-31, "Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.<sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"<sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."<sup>30</sup> Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.<sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

## USEFUL RESOURCES

### **Introductory**

*Is the New Testament history?* Paul Barnett

*The Christ files: how historians know what they know about Jesus*, John Dickson (book and DVD)

*The Da Vinci Code: from Dan Brown's fiction to Mary Magdalene's faith*, Garry Williams

*The truth about Jesus: the challenge of evidence*, Paul Barnett

*Bethinking.org* – various resources

### **Advanced**

*Jesus and the gospels: an introduction and survey*, Craig Blomberg

*Jesus and the eyewitnesses: the gospels as eyewitness testimony*, Richard Bauckham

*A new Eusebius: documents illustrating the history of the Church to AD337*, J. Stevenson and W.H.C. Frend

*An introduction to New Testament textual criticism*, J. Harold Greenlee

*A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament*, B.M. Metzger

*The Old Testament documents: are they reliable and relevant?* Walter C. Kaiser Jr

## OTHER EVENTS AT IMMANUEL CHURCH BRENTWOOD

### **Carol service**

Carols old and new, Christmas Bible readings, plus a short and gripping talk about Jesus.

**Saturday 22 December at 6.00pm** at Brentwood County High School.  
Refreshments follow. Creche available.

### **Christmas Family Fun**

Fun, singing, puppets, Christingles & much more—for all the family.

**Sunday 23 December at 10.30am** at Brentwood County High School.  
Refreshments follow. Creche available.

### **Christianity Explored**

A seven week course introducing the Christian faith. A great place to ask questions or just listen to others as we work our way through the Gospel of Mark.

**For details of our next course** contact Andrew Grey  
[andrew.grey@immanuelbrentwood.org](mailto:andrew.grey@immanuelbrentwood.org).