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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 30 NUMBER 1

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HOUSE TO HOUSE/HEART TO HEART is published monthly. It is sent to select Gallatin routes and individuals free upon request. Send all correspondence to address above. To God be the glory.



Is Jesus REAL or only a LEGEND?

Allen Webster

To many, being called a “legend” is high praise, but for Jesus, the term falls short of the truth.

Those who deny His deity and the Bible’s record downgrade Him from “historical” to “legendary” status. Some scholars dismiss the historicity of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, contending that these reflect a legend that arose around Jesus after His death. Stories about Jesus are said to have grown more elaborate and grandiose over time—He began as a wise teacher and became “God” later. Thus, the writers created the events of His life, rather than reported them.

Critic Bart Ehrman, for instance, wrote, “Sometimes Christian apologists say there are only three options to who Jesus was: a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. But there could be a fourth option—legend.”¹ Rudolf Bultmann wrote, “I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary.”²

Reducing Jesus to a mere mythical figure removes His divine nature, trivial-

izing the purpose of His life and death. Was the notion of Jesus’ deity simply an exaggeration of the early church? Did He not personally claim to be the Son of God sent from heaven?

To accept the “legend” view, one must disregard ten key facts.

THE WRITERS’ EXPRESSED INTENT TO REPORT TRUTH

New Testament writers were aware of the importance of their records for future disciples. They explicitly stated their intent to record factual events, not folklore.

- Direct Eyewitness Accounts: Luke opens by emphasizing his investigation of eyewitness testimonies (Luke 1:1-4). John asserts firsthand knowledge: “This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24).
- Denial of Mythologizing: “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” (2 Peter 1:16).



- Claim of Divine Inspiration: Peter explained the process: “Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). As a ship is carried along by the wind, writers spoke the words God gave them (1 Corinthians 2:10–13; 2 Timothy 3:16).

HISTORICAL PRECISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A striking feature of the Gospel Accounts is embedding Jesus’ life within the well-documented reigns of Roman emperors, regional governors, and local officials.

- Luke carefully records specific details, such as the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the governance of Pontius Pilate, and the current Jewish priesthood. He notes that Jesus was born during the days of Augustus (2:1). Annas and Caiaphas were high priests (3:1–2). Luke mentions fifteen specific historical details in one verse (3:1) that have been confirmed: “In the [1] fifteenth year of the reign of [2] Tiberius Caesar, [3] Pontius Pilate being [4] governor of [5] Judea, [6] Herod being [7] tetrarch of [8] Galilee, his [9] brother [10] Philip [11] tetrarch of [12] Ituraea and the region of Trachonitis, and [13] Lysanias [14] tetrarch of [15] Abilene.” These details are corroborated by Roman records and supported by archaeology. Further, the disciples began preaching in Jerusalem, where Christ’s death and resurrection occurred and could be investigated.
- Over the past 150 years, archaeological finds have regularly confirmed, rather than contradicted, biblical accounts. Gleason Archer, a well-respected scholar, wrote, “Almost every problem in Scripture . . . has been dealt with in a completely satisfactory manner by the biblical text itself—or else by objective archaeological information.”³
- Renowned Roman historian A.N. Sherwin-White described the historicity of

Acts as “overwhelming.” He argued that any attempt to reject its reliability, even in minor details, appears absurd.⁴

These writings could easily be tested by contemporaries and future generations.

THE APOSTLES’ UNIQUE POSITION AS WITNESSES

The apostles did not rely on secondhand reports but were witnesses of Jesus’ life and resurrection. They demonstrate critical attributes pointing to reliability.

- Far from painting themselves in a good light, they openly admit faults. Paul confronted Peter over hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11–14), and John recorded Peter’s failure to stand by Jesus in His final hours (John 21).
- The apostles speak as “eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). This claim is reinforced by Hebrews 2:3–4, where the author writes that the message was confirmed “by those who heard Him.” In any legal context when an event is described by a credible witness who had the opportunity to observe what he depicts, his testimony possesses “the highest degree of credibility.”⁵
- The New Testament offers a convergence of testimonies that agree on key facts but vary in detail. When multiple witnesses do this, as the apostles do, their testimonies become highly credible (criterion of multiple attestation).

EARLY CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS REVEAL FULL THEOLOGY

If Jesus had been mythologized, one would expect a gradual evolution of beliefs. However, early Christian writings show a fully developed view of Jesus.

- Jesus as God: Jesus was acknowledged as divine from His earliest days. In Matthew 14:33, the disciples worship Jesus as God; in John 10:28; 11:25–26; and Matthew 25:31–33, He demonstrates divine authority over life, judgment, and salvation. He spoke with the authority of God (Matthew 5:18; 11:11; Mark 11:23; 14:9; John 5:25; 10:1).
- Early Sermons Reflect Christ’s Divinity: Acts 2 contains a sermon preached within weeks of the crucifixion. Its message focused on Jesus’ resurrection,

divinity, and prophetic fulfillment, and was scrutinized by those who knew Jesus personally, including enemies.

- Paul’s Letters Confirm Early Christology: Written between AD 49 and 65, Paul’s letters present Jesus as divine (Philippians 2:5–11) and the resurrected Lord (Romans 1:1–4). He speaks of the virgin birth (Galatians 4:4), sinless life (2 Corinthians 5:21), death on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:3), resurrection on the third day (15:4), and post-resurrection appearances (15:5–8). He rests Christianity on the resurrection’s historicity (1 Corinthians 15:12–19).

Paul’s teaching shows no sign of doctrinal evolution. Paul began his missionary journeys in AD 48, just fifteen years after Calvary. He preached Jesus as God:

- He created us (Colossians 1:15–16).
- He came to us (Colossians 2:9–10; Philippians 2:5–8; 1 Timothy 3:16).
- He spoke to us (Hebrews 1:1–3).
- He reigns over us (Hebrews 1:8–9).⁶

NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES CORROBORATE JESUS’ IDENTITY

Even non-Christian sources, hostile or neutral to Christ, verify aspects of Jesus’ life. Josh McDowell wrote a well-known two-volume defense of the Bible (*Evidence That Demands a Verdict; The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*). He said, “There are 16 total historians apart from Scripture that reference Christ.”⁷ Here are three examples:

- Pliny the Younger (AD 61–113): As a Roman governor, Pliny wrote about Christians singing hymns to Christ “as to a god,” acknowledging that followers worshipped Him as divine.
- Josephus (AD 37–100): This first-century Jewish historian refers to Jesus as “called the Christ” in what is known as the *Testimonium Flavianum*.
- Lucian of Samosata (AD 125–180): The Greek satirist observed that early Christians “deny the gods of Greece and worship the crucified sage.”

As to the facts of Christ’s life, McDowell said, “Almost everything about Christ we can find without ever going to the New Testament.”⁸ These external confirmations show that even those who did

not follow Jesus recognized His followers' belief in His deity.

A CLEAR "CHAIN OF CUSTODY" OF JESUS' TEACHINGS

The Gospel Accounts arose out of a Jewish culture which respected holy tradition and utilized careful oral transmission (Galatians 2:1–10; Colossians 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The disciples' relationship to Jesus was like a Jewish rabbi training disciples. In that orally-oriented culture, the disciples had the capability to (and were expected to) accurately memorize massive amounts of material. Jesus' disciples likely also wrote down many things. Most importantly, Jesus promised that they would be guided by the Spirit to remember all (John 16:13).

The apostles saw themselves as guardians of Christ's teachings. They say that they "delivered over" to others what they "received" (Romans 6:17; 1 Corinthians 11:2, 23; 15:3–8; 2 Peter 2:21; Jude 1:3). Jesus' teachings were preserved accurately, transmitted by the apostles to the church, and carefully passed around and down.

TESTIMONY FROM JESUS' OPPONENTS

Even Jesus' adversaries inadvertently verified His claims. Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy for claiming to be equal with God (John 5:18; 10:33), thus showing that His deity was not a late development. Early pagan critics disputed His divinity, but they did not deny that He had made such claims.

EARLY MANUSCRIPTS AND TIMELINE OF GOSPEL ACCOUNTS

The quantity and dates of early manuscripts about Jesus are unmatched in ancient history.

With four biographies and many letters about Him, Jesus has more surviving ancient manuscripts written closer to His lifetime than any other ancient figure. Tiberius Caesar's first known biographies appeared around 75 years after his death. Alexander the Great's earliest biography came about 450 years after his death.

This abundance of early records of Jesus' life indicates that His followers believed the details of His life.

GOSPEL CHRONOLOGY AND SCHOLARLY AGREEMENT

Even skeptical scholars have adjusted their theories, dating the Bible closer to Jesus' lifetime than once suggested.

- Matthew: between AD 50 and 55
- Luke and Acts: around AD 60
- Mark: AD 65–67
- John: AD 90–95

Written during the lifetimes of eyewitnesses, these books were early enough to be tested for accuracy.

THE "TWO-GENERATION RULE" AND RELIABILITY

How much time is required for historical facts to fade and legends to develop? Historian Sherwin-White suggests that it takes at least two generations.⁹

Since the Gospel Accounts were written within 20–60 years of Jesus' crucifixion, not enough time passed for a legend to be accepted. Myths can grow fast, but the rate at which the historical core is displaced is much slower. Oral history is regarded as reliable for about 150 years. Norman L. Geisler wrote, "No first century date allows time for myths or legends to creep into the stories about Jesus."¹⁰

In conclusion, the arguments for Jesus as a historical figure easily outweigh the legend theory.

Endnotes

¹ Quoted in Tucker, Neely. "The Book of Bart." *Washington Post*. March 5, 2006.

² Bultmann, Rudolf. *Jesus and the Word* (London: Collins Fontana, 1958), 14.

³ Archer, Gleason. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 12.

⁴ Sherwin-White, A. N. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 189.

⁵ Jackson, Wayne. "The Authenticity of the New Testament Documents." *Christian Courier*. <https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-authenticity-of-the-new-testament-documents>.

⁶ Wallace, J. Warner. "The Early High Christology of Jesus." *Cold Case Christianity*. May 27, 2016. <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/the-early-high-christology-of-jesus/>.

⁷ <https://x.com/CBNNews/status/1342113087827156992>

⁸ <https://x.com/CBNNews/status/1342113087827156992>.

⁹ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 189.

¹⁰ Geisler, Norman. *The Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 37–41.



The Rearview Mirror

Paul speaks of forgetting those things left behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead (Philippians 3:13). As we drive down the highway, we often look in the rearview mirror to see what is behind us. That view is somewhat limited. We see what is directly behind us, but not the things to the left and right.

When we look through the windshield, we have a much wider view of things in front of us because the angle also reveals things to the right and left.

Many live in the past spiritually. They see past problems and dwell on them. Have we considered that the past is a limited view? When we look to the future, the opportunities are endless.

Paul said, "To me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21) Can we say that? Consider the spiritual blessings that are found in Christ. Those of the world do not enjoy these spiritual blessings.

Instead of looking back, let us look forward.

God's Plan for Saving Man

- Divine Love:** John 3:16
- God's Grace:** Ephesians 2:8
- Christ's Blood:** Romans 5:9
- Holy Spirit's Word:** 1 Corinthians 2:12–13
- Sinner's Faith:** Acts 16:31
- Sinner's Repentance:** Luke 13:3
- Sinner's Confession:** Romans 10:10
- Sinner's Baptism:** Acts 22:16
- Christian's Love:** Matthew 22:37
- Christian's Work:** James 2:24
- Christian's Hope:** Romans 8:24
- Christian's Endurance:** Revelation 2:10

Watch on youtube





The Right Road

1. The right road is a way of purity and holiness (Isaiah 35:8).
2. The right road is protected. "The redeemed shall walk there" (Isaiah 35:8-9).
3. The right road carries you forward. It is a guide for your life (Isaiah 35:8).
4. The right road is a way of praise (Isaiah 35:10).

Which road are we on? If we find that we are on the wrong road in life, there is a way to return to the right road.

"Ponder the path of your feet."

PROVERBS 4:26



Like God

My grandson was visiting one day when he asked, "Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?"

I mentally polished my halo while I asked, "No, how are we alike?"

"You're both old," he replied.

"A merry heart does good."

PROVERBS 17:22



To watch videos, read articles, answer Bible questions, and more go to house-to-house.com



Indisposable, Indivisible

We live in a disposable age. We have disposable bottles, plates, diapers, and many other things. Consider marriage. When problems and difficulties arise, we tend to dispose of the marriage through easy divorce laws instead of working to improve the marriage.

We see a different picture when we examine marriage from God's standpoint. God's Word makes it clear that marriage is an institution older than the church and civil government. It has been blessed since Eden with God's approval. ALL marriages must be understood in accordance with God's Word to be successful. Marriage is:

A Divine Institution: It was established by God in Eden with Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:18-24; Mark 10:6). Solomon wrote, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22).

A Permanent Covenant: It is not a trivial experiment to be ended lightly. It is for "better or worse" and "unto death do us part." God allows for divorce and remarriage only in the case of sexual infidelity (adultery), and that right only belongs to the innocent partner (Matthew 19:9; Luke 16:18).

A Solemn Responsibility: It obligates two people to faithfulness, love, and companionship. Paul state, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" and "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church" (Ephesians 5:22, 25). As two people stand before God and make their vows, they assume a most intimate and solemn responsibility before God.

"What God has joined together, let not man separate."

MATTHEW 19:6

Just for Fun New Testament Books Word Search

V S T C A E D U J S P J T O S
 S J T Y X K O M N W L A N U N
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 V H V A K T I L S P K E M M I
 H M I S R T O R U T E S A Z H
 S E E L A K M M T Y K Q T R T
 C N B L I D S X I Z P T F I N
 O U A R H P M A T T H E W J I
 L G E M E X P H I L E M O N R
 O Q E T O W B I V S V H X U O
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 S R E P H E S I A N S U R A H
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 A R E V E L A T I O N N S B A
 N C K F X M F I B W J M B B X
 S T M Y P D T S K Y A A Z X G

Book numbers and repeated names are excluded. Words can go in any direction.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, Peter, Jude, Revelation



The Old Rugged Cross

George Bernard wrote “The Old Rugged Cross” in 1913. Its lyrics go like this:

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the
Dearest and Best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.

Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised
by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory
above
To bear it to dark Calvary.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.

In that old rugged cross, stained with
blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see,
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered
and died,
To pardon and sanctify me.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be
true;
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He'll call me someday to my home
far away,
Where His glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.

This song, like many others, has so
much meaning. People often wear a cross

as jewelry or place a cross in their yards or at the graves of loved ones. Jesus told His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24).

Consider five things that would not have happened if it were not for the cross.

1. There would be no church (Acts 20:28).
2. There would be no redemption (Ephesians 1:7).
3. There would be no observation of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:28; 1 Corinthians 11:23–28).
4. There would be no separation of the Old Covenant from the New (Colossians 2:14).
5. There would be no salvation (Romans 5:8–10).

Never lose sight of the cross. —Harry Goff

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”

JOHN 3:16

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 30:1

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark. We will grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark “Israel Map” as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____
Address: _____
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Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 29:11 “God’s Suffering Servant”: 1. Beauty (Isaiah 53:2); 2. Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3); 3. Faces (Isaiah 53:3); 4. Grievs, sorrows (Isaiah 53:4); 5. Our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5); 6. Peace (Isaiah 53:5); 7. Stripes (Isaiah 53:5); 8. Astray (Isaiah 53:6); 9. Every one (Isaiah 53:6); 10. The iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6); 11. Slaughter (Isaiah 53:7); 12. Sheep, shearers (Isaiah 53:7); 13. Rich (Isaiah 53:9); 14. Deceit (Isaiah 53:9); 15. Bruise (Isaiah 53:10); 16. Iniquities/sin (Isaiah 53:11–12); 17. Isaiah (Acts 8:30); 18. Sheep, slaughter (Acts 8:32); 19. Jesus (Acts 8:35); 20. Rejoicing (Acts 8:39).

V. 29:12 “Starts with the Letter ‘T’”: 1. Tabitha (Acts 9:36–42); 2. Talitha, cumi (Mark 5:41); 3. Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1–32); 4. Tarsus (Acts 21:39); 5. Tekoa (Amos 1:1); 6. Temple (Matthew 4:5); 7. Tabernacle (Hebrews 9:2); 8. Tent (Joshua 7:20–21); 9. Tetrarch (Luke 3:1); 10. Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3); 11. Tarshish (Jonah 1:3); 12. Theophilus (Acts 1:1); 13. Thessalonica (Acts 17:11); 14. Thomas (John 11:16); 15. Thorns (John 19:5); 16. Throne (Psalm 45:6); 17. Thyatira (Acts 16:14); 18. Timothy (1 Timothy 1:1–2); 19. Tongues (1 Corinthians 13:8); 20. Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20); 21. Troop (Psalm 18:29); 22. Terah (Genesis 11:31); 23. Tyrannus (Acts 19:9).

Facts about the Judgment Day

Find answers at housetohouse.com/seven-simple-facts-about-the-judgment/ or in Matthew 7:23; 25:21; 26:28; Luke 12:2–3; John 12:48; Acts 3:19; 17:30–31; Romans 14:10–11; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 2:10–11; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:15–17, 27; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:12–13. Questions from New King James Version.

1. _____ will be the Judge.
2. _____ person will be judged—no exceptions.
3. God commands all men everywhere to _____ before judgment.
4. At the name of Jesus every _____ will bow, and every _____ will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
5. One who rejects Christ and does not receive His _____ will be lost.
6. The word that Jesus spoke will judge all on the _____ day.
7. What are the stakes? “These will go away into everlasting _____, but the righteous into eternal _____” (Matthew 25:46).
8. The new covenant replaced the _____ covenant, which is the standard of judgment for those who lived before Calvary.
9. For those living today (since the resurrection), the _____ Testament will be opened.
10. Every day, every deed, every word, and every thought has been recorded and will be _____.
11. The only exceptions will be things expunged from our record by Christ’s _____ that are remembered no more (Hebrews 8:12).
12. The Lamb’s Book of Life has the _____ of all those who are in Christ (Revelation 21:27). Life’s number one goal for all of us is to make sure that we are in that book.
13. The dead will be judged according to what they have _____.
14. The _____ will give up the dead who are in it, and death and _____ will give up the dead that are in them.
15. “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the _____.”
16. “The day of the Lord will come as a _____ in the night.”
17. “_____ into the joy of your Lord.”
18. “I never knew you; _____ from Me.”

A Great Teacher

When we think of teachers, certainly many think of the greatest teacher of all, Christ: “No man ever spoke like this Man!” (John 7:46).

In Scripture there were many great teachers. The Bible records their great statements and instructions. Moses, David, Solomon, Peter, and Paul head up the list.

Have we considered the Bible itself as a teacher? We would do well to know not just what the Bible teaches but also how it teaches.

1. The Bible teaches by stating facts. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He

was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1–2). “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

2. The Bible teaches by commands. There are commands for the sinner: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31); “Repent, and . . . be baptized” (Acts 2:38). There are commands for the erring child of God: “Confess your trespasses” (James 5:16); “Repent . . . and pray God” (Acts 8:22). There are commands for God’s faithful children: “Love” (John 13:34–35); “Be an example” (1 Timothy 4:12); “Worship Him . . . in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24); “Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, . . .

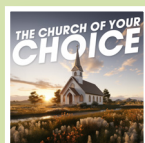
live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age” (Titus 2:12).

3. The Bible teaches by example. “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:26–29).

Let us use much of the time that God has granted us in reading and studying the Bible. It is our teacher. —Anonymous

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended Resource



How do you choose? This short program will help you identify the church of the Bible. Scan the QR code or visit CHURCHOFTHEBIBLE.ORG to get started.

I want to learn more about the Bible!

If you knew for sure that the religious path you are on would not get you to heaven, would you change? If there was the possibility of a doubt, would you investigate? Why not request a personal Bible study today?

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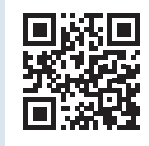
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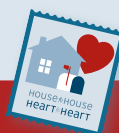
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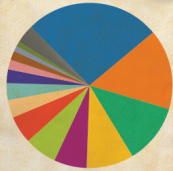


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VOLUME 30:1



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(2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17)

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6.4% David, Asaph, Sons of Korah, Moses, Solomon | 1 book | 30,147 Hebrew words

Psalms

6.3% Ezekiel | 1 book | 29,918 Hebrew words

5.4% Isaiah | 1 book | 25,608 Hebrew words

3.5% Solomon, Agur, Lemuel | 3 books | 16,478 Hebrew words

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

3.3% Joshua | 1 book | 15,671 Hebrew words

2.7% Job | 1 book | 12,674 Hebrew words

1.9% Daniel | 1 book | 9,001 Hebrew words

1.8% Nehemiah | 1 book | 8,507 Hebrew words

1.0% Mordecai | 1 book | 4,932 Hebrew words

Esther

1.0% Zechariah | 1 book | 4,855 Hebrew words

3.6% Various | 11 books | 16,982 Hebrew words

Hosea (0.8% | 3,615 words);
Amos (0.6% | 3,027 words);
Micah (0.4% | 2,118 words);
Joel (0.3% | 1,447 words);
Malachi (0.3% | 1,320 words);
Zephaniah (0.2% | 1,141 words);

Jonah (0.2% | 1,082 words);
Habakkuk (0.2% | 1,011 words);
Haggai (0.2% | 926 words);
Nahum (0.2% | 855 words);
Obadiah (0.1% | 440 words).

When a book's author is not identified in the book, the author listed here represents the most likely candidate identified by scholars.

*The number of words varies slightly across different versions of the text.

How Much Does It Cost?

The cost of consecrated living for Christ can be high.

- Abraham had to yield up his son (Genesis 22:1–19).
- Daniel was cast in the lions' den (Daniel 6).
- Stephen was killed by stoning (Acts 7).
- Paul spent years in prison (Act 7).
- Jesus died on the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

How much does it cost me?

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

LUKE 9:23

When You Were Baptized

When you were baptized . . .

. . . was your watch baptized, too, to give your time to the Lord? (Ephesians 5:16)

. . . was your wallet baptized, too, to not fill it with money obtained dishonestly? (Ephesians 4:28)

. . . was your mouth baptized, too, to tell others the gospel? (Mark 16:15)

. . . was your heart baptized, too, to choose a mate dedicated to Christ? (1 Corinthians 7:39; Proverbs 18:22)

. . . were your passions baptized too, to choose intimacy only within marriage? (Hebrews 13:4)

We must be wholly converted. With God, it is either all or nothing (Matthew 6:24, 33; 22:37).



Growing up watching my grandfather in his wood shop showed me some pretty amazing things. Not only have I seen beautiful pieces of furniture formed from even simple scraps of wood, I have also seen old pieces of furniture restored to their former glory. There is something about seeing an antique chair with broken arms and wobbly, scared legs return to its original beauty that brings joy to all who see it. Some pieces may even simply need some tender love and care to return them to their pristine condition. On the other hand, there are some pieces that need to be repurposed. For example, who still uses their ten-foot-long oak Victrola radio and record player or a marble wash basin? Items like these that do not stand the test of time are instead repurposed into unique kitchen islands or vintage bathroom sinks. In the end, it comes down to being useful, when making the decision to restore or repurpose.

Unfortunately, there are many today who feel that New Testament Christianity needs to be repurposed. They feel that it is behind the times and old fashioned and it does not fit with the “decor” of modern society. To that I ask, is it just as useful today? Of course it is. The words of Christ are forever relevant, and they make known to us an unchanging purpose to those who follow His word. Jesus taught about how everlasting His teaching and words were in Matthew 24:35, when He said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” Jesus further proved that true when He gave the great commission in Matthew 28:18–20, when He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

There are millions in the world today who are in the darkness of this world and, much like that old chair in the corner of a barn, need to be restored. The only way they can ever get out of that darkness is through the light that Christ offered, the same light He offered in the first century. In this day and age there are many who say that since we are different people, living in a different culture, then we must require a different purpose or pattern. However, the Lord’s



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purpose is clearly stated in the scriptures. Jesus said in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” That purpose meets the needs of what all of mankind needs most today: salvation from our sins. After all, Ecclesiastes 1:9 tells us there is nothing new under the sun, and as far as mankind is concerned we are all still sinners in need of a Savior (Romans 3:23).

For those who feel the New Testament church is outdated and needs to be repurposed, it really comes down to a “decorating” issue. They have decorated their lives with so much of themselves that they don’t have room for Jesus. Instead of making Jesus the centerpiece, they have pushed Him into a corner. This has caused a lack of focus on teaching and preaching the gospel and has deceived many into thinking that we can do the work of Christ without obeying His word. Instead of being restored and placing Christ in the center of all things, they have repurposed the church according to their own desires.

The New Testament church and the pattern given to us in the New Testament is just as useful now as it was then. Our mission hasn’t changed, and it is only accomplished by preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15–16). We do not bring people to Christ by making them loyal to us. Instead, we direct their loyalty to Him, because God is faithful even when man is fallible. We do not help people build their faith by making sure they are entertained, but by equipping them to be true disciples of Christ. There are many in the world today who teach a counterfeit gospel. Instead of teaching the whole council of God, they teach according to their own desires (2 Timothy 4:2–3). It is up to us to make sure that we are not guilty of the same. Instead, we should study to show ourselves approved (2 Timothy 2:15). We should actively do what scripture teaches. If we do not, then we are in the wrong (James 4:17). And we must be ready to seek the opportunities to preach the true gospel of Christ anytime we can, because it is the only through Christ that we can truly be restored. First Peter 5:10 says, “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” When we are baptized into Christ, we are restored and we can overcome the darkness of this world. “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4).