



General Topics :: The Jesus Seminar

The Jesus Seminar - posted by terrybob (), on: 2010/6/15 2:56

Any information please about the Jesus Seminar would be gratefully received. Our local church has introduced material from this organisation and I am unable to find anyone in the UK who has used it before. It comes from the US and Canada, I have had a quick look at their web site but this does not give me a clue as to the experience of ordinary Christians who have used this material on the ground.

Re: The Jesus Seminar, on: 2010/6/15 6:43

Craig A. Evans has much to say about it. <http://www.craigaevans.com/>

Whether in his books or in interviews, he points out the errors in their methods.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Seminar

Criticism of the Jesus Seminar

Many scholars and laymen have questioned the methodology, assumptions and intent of the Jesus Seminar. Scholars who have expressed concerns with the work of the Jesus Seminar include Richard Hays, Birger A. Pearson, Ben Witherington, Gregory A. Boyd, N.T. Wright, William Lane Craig, Craig A. Evans, Craig Blomberg, Darrell Bock, and Edwin Yamuchi. The specific criticisms leveled against the Jesus Seminar include charges that:

- * the Jesus Seminar creates a Jesus who is separated from both his cultural setting and his followers;
- * the voting system is seriously flawed;
- * the criteria defining what constitutes red/pink/grey/black are inconsistent;
- * it was an error to exclude apocalyptic messages from Jesus' ministry;
- * the attempt to popularize Jesus research degraded the scholarly value of the effort;
- * the conclusions largely represent the premises of the fellows, even though the seminar has warned themselves to "Be aware of finding a Jesus entirely congenial to you";
- * the Jesus Seminar is hypercritical of canonical accounts of Jesus, but unduly credulous and uncritical when it comes to relatively late extra-canonical accounts;
- * only about 14 of the fellows are leading figures in New Testament scholarship; and
- * the fellows do not represent a fair cross-section of viewpoints.

More extreme reactions have come from Christian organizations such as the Fundamental Evangelistic Association, and the Watchman Expositor. The Christian Arsenal go so far as to depict the Jesus Seminar as a tool of Satan, meant to undermine Biblical beliefs.

Not all of the Seminar's critics are conservative Christians. Garry Wills, a vocal proponent of liberal Catholicism, nonetheless strongly critiques the Seminar:

This is the new fundamentalism. It believes in the literal sense of the Bible—it just reduces to what it can take as literal quotation from Jesus. Though some have called the Jesus Seminarists radical, they are actually very conservative. They tame the real radical, Jesus, cutting him down to their own size...the sayings that meet with the Seminar's approval were preserved by the Christian communities whose contribution is discounted. Jesus as a person does not exist outside of the gospels, and the only reason he exists there is because of their authors' faith in the Resurrection. Trying to find a construct, "the historical Jesus," is not like finding diamonds in a dunghill, but like finding New York City at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

Divorcing Jesus from his cultural context and followers

One of the Seminar's tests for inauthenticity is that it "matches closely with beliefs of the early Church community". Matthias Zahniser of Asbury Theological Seminary criticizes this criterion as it prohibits the possibility that Jesus would be con

cerned with any issues that were of the concern of the early church. J. Ed Komoszewski and co-authors state that the Jesus Seminar's "Criteria for In/Authenticity" create "an eccentric Jesus who learned nothing from his own culture and made no impact on his followers". Others ask rhetorically, "why would such a Jesus be crucified?" The same criticism has been made by Craig Evans.

Use of a flawed voting system

The voting system has been criticized by, among others, NT Wright, who says '... I cannot understand how, if a majority ... thought a saying authentic or probably authentic, the "weighted average" turned out to be "probably inauthentic". A voting system that produces a result like this ought to be scrapped.'

Ignoring evidence for eschatological teachings of Jesus

Dale Allison of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, in his 1999 book *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*, cited what he felt were problems with the work of (particularly) John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg, arguing that their conclusions were at least in part predetermined by their theological positions. He also pointed out the limitations of their presumptions and methodology. Allison argued that despite the conclusions of the seminar, Jesus was a prophetic figure focused to a large extent on apocalyptic thinking. Some scholars have reasserted Albert Schweitzer's eschatological view of Jesus. Creating a Jesus based on the presuppositions of the members

Luke Timothy Johnson of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, in his 1996 book *The Real Jesus*, voiced concerns with the seminar's work. He criticized the techniques of the Seminar, believing them to be far more limited for historical reconstruction than seminar members believe. Their conclusions were "already determined ahead of time," Johnson says, which "is not responsible, or even critical scholarship. It is a self-indulgent charade."

Bias against canonical sources and for non-canonical sources

Daniel L. Akin, writing in the *Journal of the Southern Baptist Convention*, called the work of the Jesus Seminar "destructive criticism". Craig Blomberg notes that if the Jesus Seminar's findings are to be believed then "it requires the assumption that someone, about a generation removed from the events in question, radically transformed the authentic information about Jesus that was circulating at that time, superimposed a body of material four times as large, fabricated almost entirely out of whole cloth, while the church suffered sufficient collective amnesia to accept the transformation as legitimate." Craig Evans argues that the Jesus Seminar applies a form of hypercriticism to the canonical gospels that unrealistically assumes that "Jesus' contemporaries (that is, the first generation of his movement) were either incapable of remembering or uninterested in recalling accurately what Jesus said and did, and in passing it on" while, in contrast, privileging extra-canonical texts with an uncritical acceptance that sometimes rises to the level of special pleading.

Composition of the Seminar and qualifications of the members

Luke Timothy Johnson of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, in his 1996 book *The Real Jesus*, also argued that while many members of the seminar are reputable scholars (Borg, Crossan, Funk, others), others are relatively unknown or undistinguished in the field of biblical studies. One member, Paul Verhoeven, holds no Ph.D. but a M.Sc. in mathematics and physics, not biblical studies, and is best known as a film director. Johnson also critiqued the seminar for its attempts to gain the attention of the media for the 2000 ABC News program "The Search for Jesus" hosted by news anchor Peter Jennings.

Seminar critic William Lane Craig has argued that the self-selected members of the group do not represent the consensus of New Testament scholars. He writes:

Of the 74 listed in their publication *The Five Gospels*, only 14 would be leading figures in the field of New Testament studies. More than half are basically unknowns, who have published only two or three articles. Eighteen of the fellows have published nothing at all in New Testament studies. Most have relatively undistinguished academic positions, for example, teaching at a community college.

Others have made the same point and have further indicated that thirty-six of those scholars, almost half, have a degree from or currently teach at one of three schools, Harvard, Claremont, or Vanderbilt: all considered to favor "liberal" interpretations of the New Testament.

Re: The Jesus Seminar - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2010/6/15 7:20

When you say that your church has "introduced it," do you mean that they are promoting it?

I would be attending another church real quick if this was so. These people almost destroyed my faith when I was in High School. It is all lies straight from the lowest depths of hell. Very well articulated and acerbic lies...but lies nonetheless. The way they lie about it is so poisonous, all they do is cause you to question everything. I do not even think it would be healthy to discuss in any church format on any level unless every single believer is totally rock solid in their faith.

The Jesus Seminar is poison through and through. It is radio-active. None of its poisonous talk is based on fact, but pure, concentrated, speculation. For people weak in faith, and weak in biblical discernment, as well as weak in a Berean capacity, it can really cause some damage and anguish.

Albeit God was gracious and compassionate, and mighty strong, because he pulled me from the depths of despair, and the pit of despondency. I cried out to Him and he delivered me from all my fears and doubts. He truly is marvelously mighty to save.

Another brother in the Lord whom I know that has gone on to be a Pastor had the same experience I did, and even though we lived with one another for over a year, we refused to ever even talk about it together. We had been delivered from this wretched wickedness, and knew in our hearts that if we even talked about it, a foothold, or beachhead could have been established for the enemy.

Having gone through this, I know firsthand just how crafty that serpent in the Garden was. He has had a long time practicing his lies, and has gotten pretty good at it.

Run...RUN!!!

As Carter Conlon would say.

Edit

The Jesus Seminar is like Pornography for Liars.

Re: The Jesus Seminar - posted by Matthew2323 (), on: 2010/6/15 8:36

The book, Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus edited by Michael Wilkins and J.P. Morland is very helpful in dismantling this organization's falsehoods.

One of the authors, Craig Blomberg, has a book entitled, The Historical Reliability of the Gospels which is an expanded work of what he states in his chapter in JUF.

Re: The Jesus Seminar - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2010/6/15 9:50

I know nothing about this organization. I have heard of it but do not know what they believe other than what is posted here on this thread. One mentioned "Watchman's Expositor" and from our experience with them in the past consider their evaluations to be Biblical - most of the time.

Beyond all this, my question always is why bother with buying curriculum to teach your people? Are the people in your church so ignorant, so dumb they cannot take the WORD and teach directly from it? or write their own curriculum based upon the WORD? This exasperates me to no end. You do not need to be well educated in the secular sense to be able to teach from the WORD. The WORD is alive, all this other commercially produced stuff has limited value, plus you run the risk to getting snookered into error without realizing it.

Brother, we just got done with a week of vacation Bible school. I was also give lit to assist my teaching of the young teens. However, I could never get into it. It was a heavy burden that annoyed me to no end. Long story - short: the LORD led me to write my own. Result? the Lord used it because he was the one who inspired it. Would I use it in the future? Have no clue. If the Holy Spirit would tell me to do so, yes. But I do not think another person could use it simply because one person cannot preach another's sermon. Each has to get their own inspiration from the LORD and teach it. This is the bottom line.

Wishing you all the best...
ginnyrose

EDIT: The teacher of the males (at VBS) did something similar to what I did. He did not like the curriculum given but used the inspiration given to him by the LORD.

Re: The Jesus Seminar - posted by terrybob (), on: 2010/6/15 12:07

Thank you so much for your help and sharing your experience this is of real value to me. The local people have been looking at a video from this organisation with seemingly reasonable propositions put by Christian pastors, leaders and academics. Some of the outcomes from those watching and taking part in the discussion afterwards have been, to me, shocking. It did, however, give the opportunity to witness to the Lordship of Jesus and the reality of His saving grace in daily life and experience.

Thanks for the advice to run, I have but another member of my family is still there.

The earlier post giving chapter and verse is thorough and will be used - thank you all and may God bless you in your life and witness for Him.

terrybob

Re: The Jesus Seminar - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2010/6/15 12:15

I would also add that 2 Peter 1:16 is an apostolic statement utterly contradicting every single thing said by a "Jesus Seminarian." You either believe the word of God or you believe them. It is that simple. The seminarians will tell you the gospel is exactly what Peter says it is not in this verse.

Re: , on: 2010/6/15 17:58

Someone mention Cemeterians?
(this is not relative you you at allll Paul)

Re: - posted by ChrisJD (), on: 2010/6/15 18:41

Hi everyone.

I would like to re-emphasise somethings that Areadymind mentioned if I could. I think it is worth repeating:

"It is all lies straight from the lowest depths of hell."

and...

"The Jesus Seminar is poison through and through. It is radio-active. None of its poisonous talk is based on fact, but pure, concentrated, speculation."

I do not think it can be easily exaggerated to say things like this.

I believe that causing doubt is at the very heart of every Satanic assault upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His people and has been so from the beginning. He is the one that asked, hath God said?

Karl Marx wrote the following in 1843: whether he was actually a Satanist or not, his quotes here make him sound like the very mouthpiece of Satan.

"For Germany, the criticism of religion has been essentially completed, and the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of

all criticism."

"Thus, the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics."

- quotes attributed to Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, 1843.

Marx shrewdly observed that criticism (and especially if it has begun with Heaven itself), the end of which is to undermine and subvert the object of the critic, is the hinge pin upon which every door to anarchy and rebellion would ultimately turn and swing wide open; he (and he may well have been under the inspiration of Satan) accurately forecasted that the way to undermine the existing foundations was through criticism of them, especially criticism that began with the foundation of all of reality and being, that is, God.

And once the foundations are destroyed, he, or rather Satan, is free to erect whatever monstrous structure would suite his diabolical ends, which are always threefold:

to kill, to steal, and to destroy.

The modern information superhighway is the auto-strasse of criticism, speculation, and doubt, meant to drown out (through a cacophony of voices) the word that has been clearly spoken to mankind. That yes, God did say. And that, very clearly (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Re: - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2010/6/15 23:57

"I do not think it can be easily exaggerated to say things like this."

I hardly even scratched the surface about how I really feel about the filth propagated by this organization. When Jesus said that it was better that a millstone was tied around the neck of one who caused one of these "little ones to stumble," I know first hand why he was so stern. Jesus' hatred for this satanic practice is not only warranted, but must - in the end of all things - be brought to justice. I can totally relate to when Jesus called the Pharisees sons of the Devil.

"I believe that causing doubt is at the very heart of every Satanic assault upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His people and has been so from the beginning. He is the one that asked, hath God said?"

"Hath God really said," is the exact passage that has rung in my ears for so long as a result of the time I spent listening to this Seminarian vitriol. The fruit of the tree of knowledge caused this exact problem, doubting the goodness and best intention of God. I also agree that it is an assault on Jesus, and is one of the most destructive sins to fall into. Unbelief begets many wicked step-children.

I rarely, in fact, I never talk about what I went through specifically with people because there was collateral damage from doing so once. This topic is like a cancer.

I read your response this afternoon Chris and have been mulling it over since. You said a few things that triggered some sensitive memories, and actually shed some light on a few things I went through. Apart from specifics, I can honestly say that this doubt was by far the worst terror I have ever experienced in my life. The only way I can explain it is like it was as if the fabric of my soul was being plucked through my mind one thread at a time. I actually experienced physical trauma, and an aggressively increased heart rate and spent many nights crying myself to sleep.

As you described from the works of Marx, the spiritual vacuum this was creating within me opened me up to temptations and thoughts I had never before, and never since experienced. I can honestly say that if the devil had had his way, and

the root of faith had completely withered, I would be more than just another faithless individual. The thoughts I was led to as a result of doubting the full council of God were probably akin to some of the thoughts that gained seed in men like Marx, Hitler, Stalin, Nietzsche or Ted Bundy. All my life, from my youth, even though I was not regenerated, I had a general fear of God, this fear always kept at bay the full thrust of sin within me. But if there had been a complete lack of that fear, I do not even want to meditate on where I would have gone, or what I would have done. This is no exaggeration either. Any further elaboration at this point would be dangerous and glorifying that black mamba.

In spite of the fact that I absolutely resent and hate that I fell into this trap in my life, God did an absolutely amazing thing to deliver me from it. I saw exactly what the word means that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

After months of prayer, and agonizing I was reading Hebrews and it struck me that I was never going to answer any of the questions and doubts through my mind. Though God had used C.S. Lewis to keep me tethered to the mast while the sirens crooned so to speak, I was forced to make a decision, and even though Lewis countered Post-Modern thinking very well, he could not give me faith. I had to choose to place my faith and trust in God. The Spirit convicted me deeply to do so from Hebrews 11:1. At that point I knew I was at a cross-road. I was being given the choice to believe without being intellectually satisfied, and be saved, or choose a life of anarchy just like you suggested Chris.

When I just made a choice to believe...I cannot explain it, in this fashion I can only relate it to the blind man whom Jesus allowed to see. I audibly just said out loud to no one, for I was alone at the time, that I believed in Jesus Christ and trusted the word of God to be true. The joy of faith filled the vacuum of doubt and the wound has been healed ever since. When the word says that by His stripes we are healed...I believe it irrevocably.

I look back on that day now, even though it was so many years ago, as one of the single most prevalent moments where God invaded my life. Most of my walk with God has been ups, downs, and a general progress with a period of backsliding, but typically it has been an uphill process with very little "mountain tops," as some people put it. However, that day, I think Jesus stepped out of eternity and touched me in a way that no human being ever could.

Ever since then I have been asking God more and more questions about the nature of faith, and searching the scriptures, and like a mustard seed it has been growing and growing ever since. The nature of faith, though emphasized so much in modern protestant thinking, has hardly even been tapped as to what it exactly is, and how its outworking progresses. Faith is something eternal, and is beyond the intellect.

"And once the foundations are destroyed, he, or rather Satan, is free to erect whatever monstrous structure would suit his diabolical ends, which are always threefold: to kill, to steal, and to destroy."

Chris...these are the exactly things Jesus pre-delivered me from. I was not far from becoming a poster child of this economy. This is one reason we need to guard against a critical spirit, if one is not careful they could find themselves eating fruit from this same tree of criticism that leads to textual criticism that leads to all out doubt and frenetic hatred of all things of God. The devil is crafty. The pot of faith, hope, and love ought to be constantly stirred up, to the radiant glory of God through the manifest Son and King of ALL Creation, that King of sundry times, and originator of diverse manners, the resolute and adamant heir of ALL things, the very mouthpiece of God...Jesus Christ. My King...my beloved King. There is none...I tell you...none like Him.

God Bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you my brothers and sisters.

Re: - posted by sheela2000, on: 2010/6/20 6:19

The Jesus Seminar Forum is an introduction to the research of the Jesus Seminar of the Westar Institute & a bridge to Jesus scholarship on line.

Convened in 1985 by Robert W. Funk, the Jesus Seminar has become a lightning rod for international debate about the "historical Jesus" - that is, the real facts about the person to whom various Christian gospels refer. The Seminar's ongoing project has been to evaluate the historical significance of every shred of evidence about Jesus from antiquity (about 30-200 CE). Over the past twenty years more than 200 scholars from North America & beyond have participated in its semi-annual meetings. Seminar Fellows include prominent scholars from Canada, Great Britain, Germany, South Africa

, Australia and New Zealand as well as the U.S. For a roster of active participants click here.

The first phases of the Seminar's work on the evaluation & interpretation of Jesus tradition are complete & the results have been published. The Seminar is now turning its attention to analysis of the historical value of materials about & by the first generation of Jesus people: e.g., the Acts of the Apostles & letters of Paul.

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Re: The Jesus Seminar - posted by DesertRose, on: 2010/6/20 9:13

The Jesus Seminar. Really? This is the product of liberal biblical scholars with way too much time on their hands. This is the fruit of men like John Dominic Crossan of DePaul University and Marcus Borg of Oregon State. It is not even worthy to post what they have said about Christ's life, death, or resurrection.

Re: - posted by ChrisJD (), on: 2010/6/20 11:58

It looks like the post of Sheela2000 was possibly spam. I say that because of the signature they left and the post looks like cut and paste.