



"God pity the man of science who believes in nothing but what he can prove by scientific methods."

—J.G. Holland

**26-Mar-04**

## *Groping for Jesus*

Jesus has sure been in the public eye lately. With Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and last year's [The Gospel of John](#), not to mention the recent airing of *Judas* on television, people are getting a heavy dose of mankind's Savior. With the coming of spring, we are guaranteed a round of movies and documentaries on the life, death, and [resurrection of Jesus](#) of Nazareth, from *The Greatest Story Ever Told* to His life story on The Biography Channel. But are we getting the truth?

No.

Some, like Pilate, might answer, "What is [truth](#)?" ([John 18:38](#)), skeptically implying either that truth is in the eye of the beholder or that it does not exist. This is where our postmodern, ultra-tolerant society has taken us. While most people clamor that they want to get to the truth or that they are searching for the truth, real truth-seekers are quite rare. Others are willing to make compromises along the way—predominantly with the prevailing cultural biases—to ease their way, but those who genuinely pursue the truth continue on their quest despite the costs and no matter where it leads.

Over the past decade or so, scholars have been heatedly debating the "historical Jesus." Some have gone so far as to label Jesus as simply "an itinerant Jewish peasant," while others take varying positions from "Essene" to "Son of [God](#)." The real dividing line between scholars is their individual belief in the reliability of the Bible, particularly the New Testament. If they trust the biblical writers, they generally regard Him as a prophet, the Messiah, or even God in the flesh. However, if they feel the

gospels are late-first-century propaganda to make Him seem something more than human, they consider Him to be an antiestablishment preacher, a Zealot martyr, some sort of Jewish mystic, or something altogether human. But the real Jesus is far too complex to label so narrowly.

All of this is reminiscent of the three blind men trying to identify an elephant by touching only one of its body parts, and in the end none of them gets it right! Jesus Himself says:

Hearing you will hear and not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes *they* have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them. ([Matthew 13:14-15](#))

On the subject of Jesus, most scholars will not avail themselves of the only authentic, accurate, and reliable truth about Him because they willfully reject His own testimony. Like the Pharisees, they say, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true" ([John 8:13](#)), so they throw out the meat of the four gospels, relying instead upon what historians and archeologists have found out about Him from other sources. In terms of reliability, those sources are woefully inadequate compared to the richness of the biblical record.

Jesus' reply to them is, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know [these things]. You judge according to the flesh" (verses 14-15). And there is the key to their problem: Their carnal minds do not allow them to consider anything beyond what their five senses and their earthbound logic can ascertain. To them, the Father's revelation of His Son in the gospel accounts cannot be trusted because they lack the ability to quantify it, experiment with it, or make any sense out of it!

In a word, they lack God's [Holy Spirit](#). Paul tells us in [I Corinthians 2:11](#), 13-14:

No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. . . . These things we also speak, not in words which man's [wisdom](#) teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

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In other words, a person cannot know and understand the truth about Jesus without the extra facility of mind provided by God's Spirit. To the carnal mind, He will always be an enigma, or at best, a one-dimensional stick figure. He will be the Nazarene in agony or a carpenter-turned-rabbi or a brilliant preacher or a kindly healer and miracle-worker, but not all of them and more because the unaided human mind cannot grasp the depth and fullness of [Jesus Christ](#) of Nazareth. Even with the Spirit of God guiding us into all truth ([John 16:13](#)), it takes a lifetime of walking by His side to get a true and somewhat complete picture of all that He is.

So, just keep this in mind the next time you see a "Jesus" movie or documentary: At best, it is only a facet of the One who is all in all ([Ephesians 1:23](#); [Colossians 3:11](#)).

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Four Views of Christ \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh warns us that the Bible paradoxically is both simple and profound, understandable only to those who have been called, love the truth, and are given to careful scrutiny, enabling the searcher to describe every nuance of what it is they desire. The obsessiveness of both a lover and a sports-trivia enthusiast characterize the level of effort involved. The life sustaining manna of the Bible, while abundant and plentiful, is hidden'layered in types, symbols, and allegories. In the typology of the four Edenic rivers flowing from one source (Genesis 2:10) and the four living creatures (Revelation 4:6-8: lion, calf, man, and eagle) lies the foundation for understanding the gospels as four distinct representations of the same Life.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### [All in All](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Have you ever wondered what "all in all" means in relation to God and Christ? John Ritenbaugh explains how this term has great significance to us today!

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