

# THE CHRIST EXPERIMENT

## EXPERIMENT NO. 6 - A NEW REVELATION?

### INTRODUCTION

When we began these Experiments, we stated our intention to examine extra-Biblical writings, and to consider ideas that may disrupt one's comfort zone. We hope to promote a fair and open examination of God, Jesus, and all things Biblical in light of known and discovered facts. Our previous Experiments laid a foundation for a greater understanding of the Christ based on *The Bible*. Now we delve into extra-Biblical writings, particularly those writings that might serve to expand our understanding of Jesus.

### BACKGROUND AND OBSERVATION

For such a well known and beloved personality, the world in general knows so little about the man Jesus. Our history books are replete with details about far lesser known personalities, men and women who have had far less of an impact on society. But with Jesus, we do not even know when he was born! The information is so sparse that some people doubt Jesus was a real, living person, and instead promote the idea that he was a character made up by a handful of uneducated fishermen. But if that were the case, those fishermen were some of the wisest men to ever walk the planet. To be able to fabricate such a loving and enduring personality whose teachings conquered the Roman world and continue to influence peoples and governments down to this 21<sup>st</sup> century would be a miracle far greater than those attributed to Jesus.

But we must admit that having so little information about him does add fuel to the doubt. If more were known about Jesus, if we knew about his childhood, his upbringing, if we had a more complete record of his teachings and his doings, surely that would cause non-Christians to take another look at Jesus and deepen the appreciation and love Christians already have for him. So, we wonder, is there more information?

The world of Christianity, now numbering in the billions, was built on the four so-called 'gospel accounts' – *The Bible* books of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* – the only widely recognized accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, the information contained in those accounts is quite sparing. We are given a brief account of the pregnancy of his earthly mother, a couple of incidents that occurred from birth to about 2 years old, an account that occurred when he was 12 years old, a few dozen experiences during his 3½ year ministry from age 30 to 33, his death, and a few brief accounts of his 40-day post-resurrection ministry. Clearly, a great deal of his life and ministry is missing from those accounts. In fact, it is estimated that the gospel accounts cover about 28 days of Jesus entire 33+ years on earth!

Although there are four gospels, the first three – *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke* – appear to be based on the same source. In other words, it appears that the writers of those gospel accounts wrote their accounts based on the same set of notes. Otherwise, it is unlikely that three different individuals would write separate accounts that are nearly identical in sequence and in the

selection of stories.

In the concluding verse of the *Gospel According to John*, the writer wrote:

“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” – **John 21:25**

So, clearly, there are many, many more things Jesus said and did that are not contained in the four gospel accounts. But where can we find that information?

The best source would be eyewitnesses to Jesus’ life and ministry – eyewitnesses who understood what they were witnessing. *The Bible* reveals that thousands of people witnessed various events in Jesus’ life. No doubt many of these people wrote down what they saw and heard. But most of these writings were lost or destroyed. Some remain as part of the New Testament apocryphal books and gnostic writings, including *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Book of Enoch*, and the texts found in the Nag Hammadi Library in Egypt. We have read most of these books, and while they are all quite interesting, many of them do not seem consistent with the personality and teachings of Jesus as portrayed in the gospel accounts. And, more importantly, they only cover a few accounts in Jesus’ ministry. They do not present a comprehensive portrayal of his magnificent 3½ year ministry, nor do they fill in the long gaps in the life of this majestic personality. Even after reading the apocrypha, we are left wanting more.

Let’s propose another possibility. Jesus often referred to angels who were accompanying him and ministering to him. (**Luke 22:43; Matthew 4:11; Matthew 26:53**) Surely these angels were witnesses to what Jesus said and did. Surely they would have an accurate recollection of Jesus’ life and ministry, more accurate than any human. But would angels provide such a record? And if so, how would they go about it?

Late in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, an angel appeared to the Apostle John and gave him a message from Jesus:

“The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. **He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John**, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” – **Revelation 1:1-2**

And an angel with a loud voice told John what to write:

“On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: **“Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches:** to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.” – **Revelation 1:10-11**

John wrote down what was given and much of that record is preserved today in what is known as the book of *Revelation*. So we wondered, was that a one time, unique, never-to-be-

repeated experience? Or is it possible that Jesus could again direct his angels to reveal more about his life and ministry in a writing that was given to mankind?

We ask these questions because there is a writing that claims to be such a book – a book written by angels commissioned by the glorified Jesus that details his life and ministry from infancy up to his resurrection and ascension. This book takes you through his life from year to year. It explains what he was doing during the so-called missing years. And it adds context and detail to his teachings as recorded in *The Bible*. It does not claim to be the infallible word of God. It purports to be a historical writing – revealing the history of mankind, his origin and his destiny. It is called simply “*The Urantia Book*” and the section devoted to Jesus is Part IV.

There is much controversy about the book’s origin. In spite of the numerous accounts of angelic activity during the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and specifically their work in giving the *Revelation* to John, many Christians doubt that angels would be similarly active in modern times. They have more confidence in the ability of demons to inspire or direct the writing of a book, than they do in the ability of angels to do so.

And those same individuals who would reject extra-Biblical material with an angelic origin have no problem accepting extra-Biblical material written by fallible men associated with their religious organization. For example, Jehovah’s Witnesses revere the extra-Biblical literature of their organization such as *The Watchtower*, *The Awake*, and dozens of other Watchtower publications. Other religious organizations freely receive newsletters and books by their pastors and leaders. Still others closely follow writings on religious websites, such as this one. And let’s not forget the many movies and dramatizations that Christians regularly view that have served to strengthen their faith. The fact is, Christians regularly and freely receive extra-Biblical information as part of their spiritual development.

Of course there is a need to be cautious in one’s selection of reading material and exposure to information. As Jesus said, ‘many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.’ (*Matthew 24:11*) What is needed is spiritual maturity and the skill of critical thinking so that one can “distinguish good from evil.” (*Hebrews 5:14*) As the Apostle Paul wrote, some people simply are not ready to receive what might be termed ‘meat’ or ‘solid food,’ because they are still being nursed on elementary doctrines. (*Hebrews 5:11-13*) It is our hope that those who visit this site are spiritually mature and capable of distinguishing good from evil, right from wrong – like the parable of the wise fishermen who caught all kinds of fish, but had sufficient discretion to throw back the unsuitable ones. (*Matthew 13:47-48*) And, of course, we have the guidance of the Spirit of Truth that helps us in this endeavor by bearing witness with our own spirit as to the truthfulness of what we are exposed to. (*John 16:12-15*)

When we first discovered *The Urantia Book*, we approached the book as a secular writing, not as a divinely inspired writing, and we examined and critiqued its contents as we would any other book. And since we already accepted the ‘gospel accounts’ in *The Bible* as true, we used them as our guide as we reviewed *The Urantia Book*.

In so doing, we were quite fascinated with the results. Many of the hard to understand stories in *The Bible* were clarified. Many of the conflicts between science and *The Bible* were

resolved. We found the book to be in harmony with *The Bible* and with the personality and teachings of Jesus. In fact, it appears to be a kind of ‘teacher’s guide’ to *The Bible*. It seems like *The Bible* is the preview and *The Urantia Book* is the full blown movie!

At the end of our analysis of this Experiment, we will provide information on the contents of *The Urantia Book* and we encourage our readers who are not fearful of examining an extra-Biblical writing to consider that information and share their thoughts, either in reasonable support of, or in fair opposition to, *The Urantia Book*, especially as it relates to the life and teachings of our Lord Christ Jesus.

In this Experiment, we want to examine the potential effect such a book could have on the world of religion in general, and on Christianity in particular. We want to know if the visitors to this website are open to the possibility of a new revelation, or whether they believe God wants mankind to limit their spiritual search to the four corners of the canonized *Bible*.

Please note that we are merely readers of *The Urantia Book*. We have no connection with the publishers of the book. And we understand that some of our visitors will elect not to review the book, but for those who do, at the end of our Analysis, we provide a link to where you can read the book free on line. We encourage you to begin with **Part IV – The Life and Teachings of Jesus**.

### THE HYPOTHESIS AND PREDICTION

Based on the above, we wonder: If *The Urantia Book* is what it purports to be, what effect would its contents have on religion in general and Christianity in particular? If there was a new revelation of God, Jesus, the heavens, man’s origin, man’s history and man’s destiny, how would it change society?

We hypothesize that if *The Urantia Book* is what it purports to be, then its contents could bridge the gap between Christian sects, between differing religions, between religion and science, between man and God. In the way the New Testament writings dramatically changed the world, perhaps a new revelation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century could kickstart a new religious paradigm through which the long hoped for peace on earth could be achieved.

### THE EXPERIMENT

In light of the above, we ask our readers to share their thoughts about the Background and Hypothesis to Experiment No. 6, by responding to questions such as:

1. Do you believe there exists information about the life of Jesus that is true, but not contained in *The Bible*? Why or why not?
2. Is it possible that angels commissioned by the glorified Christ could have provided a detailed account of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth? Why or why not?

3. Do you think its time, after 2,000 years, for a further revelation of God's purpose for mankind? Why or why not?
4. How do you think 21<sup>st</sup> century society could benefit from a fuller account of Jesus life and ministry?