

January Events

14 Youth Ministry and God's Backyard Team Meetings
Shaun Mitchell and Ryan Ouellette will be meeting with their respective teams in the ministry rooms.

20 Ladies' Ministry, 9:15am
If you would like to know more, contact Loni Bragdon, Heather Biron, or one of the other ladies on the ministry team.

21 New Members Workshop
If you are interested in learning more about Bedford Road and possibly joining the covenant membership, see Ray Pouliot.

Lord's Table Devotion Team Meeting, after worship
See Jim MacDuff for more information.

Detailed announcements are available via email. Sign up on the website or by sending us a message at info@bedfordroad.org.

Fellowship Before and After

We encourage you to spend time connecting and getting to know one another before and after the worship gathering. There is coffee and tea available in the room off the foyer (to the right as you enter the double doors. After the worship gathering, snacks are often available as well. (Sign up to help if you can!)

Financial Summary

2024 Budget	\$248,545	Budget to Date	\$4,779
Weekly Budget	\$4,780	Offerings to Date	\$2,705

You can give via the offering box in the back of the sanctuary, via mail, or online at bedfordroad.org/giving.

Website: <http://bedfordroad.org> Email: info@bedfordroad.org
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Pastor: Erik K. DiVietro pastor@bedfordroad.org

January 14
2024

**WELCOME
TO**

Bedford Road
Baptist
Church

Creating environments
where people encounter
Jesus and journey
together



What's So Wrong with "The Quest for the Historical Jesus"?

Forty years ago, articles began appearing in *Time* and other popular news magazines about "the historical Jesus." Ever since, there have been items, usually around Easter or Christmas season, talking about what Jesus "really said" about this or that. These articles are the public face of a field of scholarship known as "Jesus Studies," or "The Quest for the Historical Jesus," that argues the gospels do not record the "real" Jesus but rather a quasi-historical figure—sometimes called a myth or a construct—that was the product of the early Christian imagination.

This so-called "Quest" began in the 1700's with a German philosopher named Herman Samuel Reimarus. In 1906, another German theologian named Albert Schweitzer coined the term "Quest for the Historical Jesus" in a book of the same name. From 1985 until 2006, the most visible iteration was called the Jesus Seminar, a collaboration of about fifty fellows who met to develop a "scholarly consensus" on what of the biblical gospels was really from Jesus. To understand their way of thinking, here are their Seven Pillars of Jesus Scholarship, as laid out by their founder Robert Funk in *The Five Gospels*:

1. There is a distinction between the historical person of Jesus and the Jesus Christ of faith.
2. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are closer to the historical Jesus than John's gospel.
3. The Gospel of Mark is prior to and one of the sources of the other two Synoptics (Matthew and Luke)
4. There existed another source (German *Quelle* or Q for short) that provided material for Matthew and Luke that is independent of Mark (more correctly, pre-Mark).
5. Jesus was a non-eschatological moralist who used aphorisms and parables in his teaching.
6. There is a fundamental contrast between the oral culture of Jesus's day and our present-day print culture.
7. The biblical Gospels are assumed to preserve the historical memory of Jesus under layers of mythical and theological embellishments. These include:
 - A. Mythical elements that express the church's faith in him,
 - B. Plausible fictions that enhance the telling of the gospel story for first-century listeners who knew about divine men and miracle workers firsthand.

The Jesus Seminar *rejected* 90% (not hyperbole) of the gospels. They see instead a Jesus who was fully human who preached a sort of social justice message of equality and liberty from oppressive structures. Any supernatural elements of the narrative are myths constructed by later believers.

How do we answer such "scholarship"? The Jesus Seminar is no longer around, but its legacy is perpetuated in academic and popular media all the time. Is believing in the Jesus of the Bible a purely "faith" thing? We cannot truly know the historical Jesus?

First, we need to get a proper perspective on the scholars themselves and their motivations. As theologian N. T. Wright has correctly pointed out, these historians seem to be unconscious of the way their version of Jesus conforms to their own political and social expectations. Their "historical Jesus" looks a lot like a 20th century liberal. We can all fall into this trap of unconscious bias, so we need to be sure to acknowledge our own presuppositions as well. If we do not ask *why* people see Jesus as they do, we cannot understand *what* they believe.

Second, we need to ask fundamental questions about the methodology employed to "look behind" the biblical texts. This kind of Jesus Scholarship reads the Bible with the assumption it is false unless proven true to their satisfaction. They reject things like the resurrection because they are not "normal" experiences. But, as N. T. Wright has written, "[The resurrection] was the only reason why [Jesus's] life and words possessed any relevance two weeks, let alone two millennia, after his death" (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 658).

Third, we need to know the Jesus of the Bible better. This sounds cliché, but I do not mean do our devotions or read our Bibles. We need to do the hard work of understanding Jesus and the Gospel in their historical and grammatical context, to engage creatively and thoughtfully as well as faithfully and biblically. Only when we know the biblical Jesus well can we answer the unbiblical versions of him in popular preaching, academia and media.

These principles are useful not just for this area, but for all biblical study, especially when dealing with criticisms.