

# Cruci-Fiction and Resuscitation

*A paid advertisement in a campus newspaper declaring Christ's resurrection a hoax was deeply disturbing to its readers. This essay raises 9 problems with the ad and answers them.*

*This article is also available in [Spanish](#).*



The title used above was the headline of a paid advertisement in a campus newspaper from a major university. Allegedly written by a university student named “Daniel,” the ad appeared as a result of Resurrection Week on that campus in the spring of 1997.

I received a copy of the ad in a letter from a long-time friend of my son. He was angry, confused, and scared by the article. He opened his letter by saying, “This is one of the most upsetting articles that I have ever read. This paid advertisement’ has contradicted everything that I believe in. It makes a mockery out of the way I have chosen to pattern my life. It even frightens me.”

In this essay we are going to address the misleading statements and half-truths found in the article. A few days after receiving this correspondence, I took the article and broke it down into nine significant errors or issues raised by the author. My procedure will be quote each half-truth or misleading statement, then address it.

I do not presume that this brief treatment will completely answer all of the objections raised by the “paid advertisement,” but these thoughts were a great help to my son’s friend as he took a deeper look at his faith. I trust that they will be equally helpful to you.

# Christian Scholars and the Bible

## Problem #1

*"Have you ever wondered why so many biblical experts are so skeptical about Jesus' resurrection' and why even a growing number of Christian scholars and theologians are heard saying that his resurrection is not so central to Christianity" ("Cruci-fiction").*

It appears that Daniel is only interested in going to those "biblical experts" and "Christian scholars" that support his position. It is no secret that there are a number of Christian scholars who hold a low view of the Bible and the deity of Christ, i.e., they do not believe in the veracity or trustworthiness of the Scriptures or the deity of Christ.

They very often question not only the deity of Christ and His resurrection, but also the Trinity, His uniqueness as a Savior, and His second coming. They also tend to discount hell as a place for eternal damnation and consider sin as only a mistake. They see guilt as being of no consequence because it is imposed on humanity by those who would enforce a strict moral code of conduct.

Daniel's comment about Christian scholars and theologians not considering the resurrection of Jesus being of any real importance is a ridiculous notion that denigrates the uniqueness of Jesus and ultimately places Him on the same plane as Buddha, Krishna, or any other "holy man" in history. Jesus is totally unique and that distinct difference is based on His resurrection in bodily form. Without the Resurrection, there is no salvation for we are still in our sin.

Next, we will look at Daniel's assumption that there were tens and possibly hundreds of "gospels" in existence at the time the church selectively chose the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as a basis for understanding God's truth, along

with his assertion that the Apostle Paul fabricated these writings to alter the truth.

## Numerous Gospels

### Problem #2

Now we are going to look at the question of the canon: just where did the Bible come from and how can we know that it is trustworthy?

Our antagonist, Daniel, continues by making this statement:

*"Since preachers have often failed to inform the people of what really happened in events surrounding the so called resurrection,' I will make an attempt to give the most possible accurate picture. Our information source will be the four surviving gospels even though they have been carefully selected by the Church from a pool of a multitude of gospels' tens, possibly hundreds. . . . The four surviving gospels were edited and corrected over time to best fit the doctrines worked out earlier by Paul" ("Cruci-fiction").*

There is no doubt that there were a number of "gospels" circulating during and after the first century. But, Daniel's problem is that he does not have an understanding of how the Bible was canonized. There were several ways various writings were judged to be authentic. If they failed in any one area, they were suspect overall.

First, for a gospel or other book to be considered authentic by the early church, the author must have been an Apostle, one who had been with Jesus during His ministry.

Remember that Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit would enable them to remember His teachings so that they could communicate them accurately to others. He said to the Apostles, "These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father

will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 16:25-26). Jesus, who is absolutely reliable, believed that what the disciples wrote about Him would be just as true as if He wrote it Himself. That means that it would be historically accurate.

Second, the book had to be authoritative. Did it come from the hand of God? The previous passage indicates that a genuine message from God would come through the Holy Spirit.

Third, is it prophetic? Was it written by a man of God?

Fourth, is it authentic? When in doubt about a manuscript, the Church fathers threw it out.

Fifth, is it dynamic? Did it contain the life-transforming power of God?

Sixth, was the book received and used by the people and considered to be authentic and authoritative?

Daniel uses Irenaeus as a source for the idea of tens, even hundreds, of possible gospels circulating in the first century and subtly implies that he (Irenaeus) questioned their authenticity out of hand. However, we know that Irenaeus, according to historical documentation, gave credence to the four Gospels of the Bible.

Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, had been a Christian for eighty-six years, and was a disciple of John the Apostle. Irenaeus wrote the following regarding the four Gospels of the New Testament:

*So firm is the ground upon which the Gospels rest, that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them, and, starting from these (documents), each one of them endeavors to establish his own particular doctrine. For as there are four quarters of the world in which we live, and four universal winds, and as the Church dispersed over all the earth, and*

*the gospel is the pillar and base of the Church and the breath of life, so it is natural that it should have four pillars, breathing immortality from every quarter and kindling the life of men anew. Whence it is manifest that the Word, the architect of all things, who sits upon the cherubim and holds all things together, having been manifested to men, has given us the gospel in fourfold form, but held together by one Spirit (Against Heresies III).*

It seems as if Irenaeus would probably differ with Daniel on this count.

The latter part of Daniel's statement, "The four surviving gospels were edited and corrected over time to best fit the doctrines worked out earlier by Paul" holds no water as well.

Daniel makes it seem that Paul was the official editor of the New Testament and that nothing made the canon unless he approved of its inclusion.

Daniel seems to overlook the fact that the books of the Bible were decided upon by Church Councils and not individuals. Plus, there is an overwhelming amount of manuscript evidence to help the inquiring student to recognize that there was no wholesale editing of the Gospels. (For more information on this, see the Probe article [Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?](#))

Remember these manuscripts were being used daily by the Church and those using the Scripture were contemporaries of Paul. If, in fact, he had edited or distorted the writings of the Apostles, he would have had his hand called (see Acts 17:10-11) and would have been ostracized. The fact is, it didn't happen.

## **Crucifixion and Prophecies**

**Problem #3** Next, our antagonist, Daniel, questions the fact

that Jesus really died on the cross and makes this statement regarding the event.

*"In order to speed up death of the crucified , he ordered the soldiers to break the legs of both criminals, but not those of Jesus" ("Cruci-fiction").*

It appears that Daniel is not familiar with prophecy and, in particular, those prophecies relating to Jesus' death. Psalms 34:20 says, "He keeps all his bones; Not one of them is broken." The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in John 19:33 where it is said, "But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs."

The Romans were not novices when it came to crucifixion and death. They knew a dead person when they saw one. It seems that Daniel cannot accept this possibility.

#### **Problem #4**

*"But one soldier thrust a lance into his side. How can one see that a person is dead without a careful close inspection of signs of life as heartbeat and breathing? How many times are people pulled from water, fires, car wrecks who appear to be dead, but then are resurrected?" And if the soldier saw that Jesus was dead, why the lancing? No reason for it.*

*"Moreover, Romans never lanced the crucified. If the soldier did not get special orders from Pilate and if he was only a bit suspicious that Jesus was alive (as he had all reasons to be), he would have broken Jesus' legs like anyone else's, no preferential treatment. It seems that the lancing (was) observed only by a mysterious anonymous witness" ("Cruci-fiction").*

Once again Daniel is allowing his bias to overtake his lack of understanding of the prophecies surrounding the Crucifixion

Zechariah 12:10 says, "They will look on me whom they have pierced."

John 19:34 offers the fulfillment of this prophecy. It reads, "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear."

Daniel is caught up with the notion that Jesus did not die on the cross, but seemed to have fainted and was resuscitated at a later time, thereby ignoring some basic facts regarding the death of Christ. There is no record that any of the onlookers questioned the fact of Jesus' death; also the centurion gave testimony of the death of Jesus to Pilate (Mark 15:44).

Furthermore, the piercing of His side confirmed that Jesus was indeed dead. But, equally important is the fact that from the wound came both blood and water. John 19:34 35 gives us an eyewitness account of the effect of the piercing. We read that blood and water poured from the wound, but had Jesus been alive at the time of the piercing, strong spurts of blood would have come forth with every heartbeat. Instead, we are told that a semi-dark red clot was seeping out and was separate from a flow of watery serum. These signs are evidence of massive clotting of the blood in the main arteries and, therefore, proof of death.

## **Problem #5**

Next in our analysis of Christ's crucifixion, we are going to deal with several problems about which our antagonist, Daniel, attempts to create doubt. In doing so, we catch Daniel using poor logic to make his case against the Resurrection.

Daniel continues by observing that the lancing of Jesus was *"observed only by a mysterious anonymous witness which appears only in John's gospel (and) was the author's initiative to correct the previously written three gospels which did not document any such lancing"* ("Cruci-fiction").

Each of the gospel writers had different interests: Matthew

was a tax-collector; Mark was the son of Mary and close to the Apostles; Luke was a physician; and John was a fisherman. Each of these men likewise had a different perspective in their Gospel narrative. Luke, although he was a physician, wrote his Gospel as a historical account. John offers the reader no account of the birth of Jesus, His baptism, or His temptations; it tells us nothing of the Last Supper, nothing of Gethsemane, and nothing of the Ascension, to name just a few omissions.

However, if we are to use Daniel's logic we would have to discount all these facts because they were not mentioned in all four Gospels that "survived the editing of Paul."

## Genealogies of Christ

### Problem #6

*"When Matthew and Luke were independently editing the earlier Mark's gospel, they knew that its contemporary critics pointed out that the Messiah must come from David's line and Mark did not mention Jesus' genealogy. So each made up his own list of names" ("Cruci-fiction").*

Here, Daniel seems to be a bit lazy. Instead of doing a little research to gain an understanding of Jesus' lineage, he simply makes the comment that each writer just made it up to suit his own wishes.

In Judaism a man's lineage was his pedigree. It was a matter of high regard for a Jew to have direct lineage from Abraham, thereby proving his Jewishness. The Gospel writers had different reasons for including Jesus' pedigree.

As Daniel points out, the genealogies given by Matthew and Luke are quite different. There are several possibilities for this occurrence.

Luke includes the genealogy between Adam and Abraham. The



section between Abraham and David is the same in both Matthew and Luke. However, the genealogies between David and Joseph are almost completely different. Why is this?

One school of thought is that both genealogies are symbolic and that Matthew gives us the line of royal descent of Jesus and Luke gives us the line of priestly descent.

Another school of thought is that one genealogy (Matthew's) gives Christ's ancestral line from Abraham through Joseph (Jesus' legal father, though not His natural one) establishing Jesus' legal right to the throne of David. This fits the Jewishness of the Gospel of Matthew. The second part of this approach is that the genealogy in Luke traces Jesus' ancestry from Mary (Jesus' physical mother) back to Adam (physical father of the human race). (There are some minor concerns about the spelling of some names in this genealogy, but this seems to be the best answer.) It is also very compatible with the universal character of the book of Luke.

The fact is that we do not fully know which genealogical approach is more correct. However, we do know that genealogies were extremely important to the Jews and the idea of making them up is preposterous and would have been exposed.

Our next discussion will center on the claim that Jesus did not die on the cross, but only swooned.

## **Burial of Christ**

### **Problem #7**

*"Thus Jesus was taken off the cross after approximately three hours by Joseph of Arimathea and was buried on his property in his new tomb that he (Joseph) had hewn in the rock." Why there? Why didn't Joseph bury Jesus in the ground as most people were buried, but instead he put him into his own tomb? Because in the ground Jesus would have certainly suffocated. Moreover, Joseph knew that he would be able to reuse the tomb*

*in the future*" ("Cruci-fiction").

It is true that the Romans normally buried those who were crucified in a pit unless the body was claimed. The body of Jesus was not claimed by a family member or by one of the disciples. They were evidently too scared and feared the possible outcome of doing so. It was Joseph of Arimathea who desired a more appropriate resting place for the body of the Lord.

Joseph realized that he had to move quickly in order to accomplish his goal of burial because the Sabbath was close. There was no time for elaborate preparations, and Joseph did what any other believer would have done he made his newly hewn sepulcher available to our Lord.

The tomb was in close proximity to Golgotha and spared Joseph and Nicodemus the trouble of preparing a burial site along with the need to prepare the body.

### **Problem #8**

*"What would you do in Joseph's place knowing Jesus had only been on the cross three hours and had not had his legs broken? Exactly what Joseph did. Once dark settled, he took several of his servants and unrolled the stone to get Jesus out. According to all expectations, Jesus was alive, so Joseph got him out and rolled the stone back. Only the next day did the Pharisees realize their mistake and asked Pilate to guard the tomb, by which time Jesus was resting in Joseph's house"* ("Cruci-fiction").

On the surface this argument sounds plausible. However, it does not take into account the fact that Joseph fully believed and recognized that Jesus was indeed dead. If he were to follow through, as Daniel suggests, by removing the stone and taking Jesus to his home for recuperation, he would have been directly disobeying Jewish law.

Jewish law prohibited a Jew from working on the Sabbath. They had very strict ideas about what comprised work. It is highly unlikely that Joseph would have risked the penalty for breaking the Sabbath for removing a body that he believed was dead. For what purpose? To risk the penalty of death for breaking the Sabbath?

According to scholars, the stone that was placed at the entrance of the tomb was not only larger than what would normally be used, but one that would take twenty men to move. Beyond the above, if Joseph did return with twenty men to remove the stone and release Jesus, it would be most unlikely that it could have been kept secret. It is untenable to think that such a conspiracy would have succeeded.

Likewise, it is ludicrous to suggest that after the Roman guard was posted and the tomb sealed, that evidence of tampering—should someone be so foolhardy as to try it—would have escaped the notice of the highly trained Roman soldiers. They knew the penalty for failure was death.

## **Problem #9**

*“Next we are told that after Sabbath was over women came to the tomb. Why? To anoint the body with spices as Mark 16:1 says? No! It is not a Jewish custom to open graves and anoint corpses which have already been buried and which have been fermenting for two days!” (“Cruci-fiction”).*

Here Daniel is correct. However he does not take into account the special circumstances under which Jesus was interred.

Under normal conditions a body would have been properly prepared with ample time in which to complete the task. Joseph and Nicodemus had very little time to accomplish their duty before the Sabbath restrictions were imposed. The women sitting at the preparation site saw that the process was incomplete according to their custom and subsequently desired to prepare the body in the proper way. Therefore, they made

plans to return after the Sabbath and finish the process by anointing the body with sweet spices, nard, or some costly unguent.

Perhaps the most damaging piece of information to Daniel's hypothesis is the fact that the grave clothes were left undisturbed in the place where the body was laid. The body of Jesus was wrapped from the armpits to the ankles with strips of linen twelve inches wide. The linen wraps were then wound around the body placing spices, aloes, and other fine ointments between the wraps. It is believed that a minimum of seventy pounds of spices were used in the process and as much as a hundred pounds were used for someone of Jesus' position.

The grave clothes constituted quite a mass encasing the body. If we are to assume Daniel's position that Joseph and several of his servants took the body, we would expect that they were concerned about being detected. Therefore, they would have likely been in a great hurry, and we should expect that the grave clothes would have been left in great disarray with spices trailing out the doorway, not to mention that it would have been difficult to have placed the grave clothes neatly back on the resting place in the dark while being in a great hurry to do so.

However, the observers did not find spices and wrappings trailing out of the doorway. The grave clothes were intact, undisturbed with the exception of the head napkin that was placed slightly above where it should have been found.

John R. W. Stott in his book, *Basic Christianity*, makes this observation: "The body had disappeared. It would have vaporized, being transmuted into something new and different and wonderful. It would have passed through the grave clothes, as it was later to pass through closed doors, leaving them untouched and almost undisturbed. For the body clothes, under the weight of one hundred pounds of spices, once support of the body had been removed, would have subsided or collapsed,

and would now be lying flat.”

The grave clothes represent an undeniable fact: Jesus was not bodily or physically removed from their bondage, but He was indeed raised, transmuted from them in the glorious act of the Resurrection.

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## The Deity of Christ

*The belief that Jesus was and is God has always been a non-negotiable for Christianity. Don Closson explains that this belief is based on Jesus’ own words as well as the teachings of the early church.*



*This article is also available in [Spanish](#).*

I recently received a letter from someone who argues that there is only one God, and that He is called many names and worshiped by many different people who hold to many different faiths. This kind of thinking about God is common today, but its popularity does not reduce the intellectual problems that may accompany it. For instance, does this notion of god include the god of the Aztecs who required child sacrifice? What about the warrior gods of Norse mythology: Odin, Thor, and Loki? How does the Mormon belief that we can all become Gods if we join their organization and conform to their system of good works fit into this theological framework? Even John Hick, an influential religious pluralist, believes that only some of the world’s great religions qualify as having a valid view of God. Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism are valid, but Satanism and the religions of the Waco, Texas, variety are not. Belief that all religious

systems worship one God raises difficult questions when we see how different groups portray God and seek to describe how we are to relate to Him.

The issue becomes even more acute when one religious tradition claims that God took on flesh becoming a man and walked on the earth. The Christian tradition has claimed for almost two thousand years that God did just that. The Gospel of John proclaims that, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John is, of course, talking about Jesus, and this claim presents an interesting challenge for a religious pluralist. If what John and the rest of the New Testament writers claim about Jesus is true, then we literally have God in the flesh walking with and teaching a small band of disciples. If Jesus was God incarnate as He walked the earth, we have a first hand account of what God is like in the biblical record. Truth claims about God that counter those given in the Bible must then be discounted. In other words, if Jesus was God in the flesh during His time on earth, other religious texts or traditions are wrong when they teach about God or about knowing God in ways that contradict the biblical record.

In this essay we will consider the evidence for the deity of Christ. Christianity's truth claims are dependent on this central teaching, and once accepted, this claim reduces greatly the viability of religious pluralism, of treating all religious beliefs as equally true. For if God truly became flesh and spoke directly to His disciples about such things as sin, redemption, a final judgment, false religions and true worship, then we have the God of the universe expressing intolerance towards other religious claims- -specifically claims that discount the reality of sin and remove the need for redemption or the reality of a final judgment. Some might not agree with God's religious intolerance, but then again, disagreeing with God is what the Bible calls sin.

Rather than begin with a response to attacks on Christ's deity by modern critics like the Jesus Seminar or New Age gnostics, our discussion will begin with Jesus' own self-consciousness, in other words, what did Jesus say and think about himself. From there we will consider the teachings of the Apostles and the early church. My goal is to establish that from its inception, Christianity has taught and believed that Jesus was God in the flesh, and that this belief was the result of the very words that Jesus spoke concerning His own essence.

## **Christ's Self-Perception**

As we begin to examine evidence that supports the claim that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh or God incarnate, a good starting point is Jesus' own self concept. It must first be admitted that Jesus never defines His place in the Trinity in theological language. However, He made many statements about himself that would be not only inappropriate, but blasphemous if He was not God in the flesh. It is important to remember that Jesus' life was not spent doing theology or thinking and writing about theological issues. Instead, His life was focused on relationships, first with His disciples, and then with the Jewish people. The purpose of these relationships was to engender in these people a belief in Jesus as their savior or Messiah, as their only source of salvation. Jesus told the Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders of His day, that they would die in their sins if they did not believe that He was who He claimed to be (John 8:24). And to one Pharisee, Nicodemus, Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Millard Erickson, in his book *Christian Theology*, does a nice job of laying out evidence that Jesus considered himself equal in essence with God.(1) Unless He was God, it would have been highly inappropriate for Jesus to say, as He does in Matthew 13:41, that both the angels and the kingdom are His.

Elsewhere, angels are called “the angels of God” (Luke 12:8 9; 15:10) and the phrase Kingdom of God is found throughout the Scriptures. But Jesus says, “The Son of man will send **His** angels, and they will gather out of **His** kingdom all causes of sin and evildoers” (Matt. 13:41).

When the paralytic in Mark 2:5 was lowered through the roof by his friends, Jesus’ first response was to say that the man’s sins were forgiven. The scribes knew the implications of this statement, for only God could forgive sin. Their remarks clearly show that they understood Jesus to be exercising a divine privilege. Jesus had a wonderful opportunity to set the record straight here by denying that He had the authority to do what only God can do. Instead, His response only reinforces His claim to divinity. Jesus says, “Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, Rise, take up your pallet and walk’?” To confirm His authority to forgive sins, Jesus enabled the man to pick up his pallet and go home.

Two other areas that Jesus claimed authority over was the judging of sin and the observance of the Sabbath. Both were considered God’s prerogative by the Jews. In John 5:22-23 Jesus says, “The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.” Jesus also claimed authority to change man’s relationship to the Sabbath. Honoring the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments, and the Jews had been given strict instructions on how to observe it. In the book of Numbers, Moses is told by God to stone to death a man who collects wood on the Sabbath. However, in Matthew 12:8 Jesus says that “the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

These examples show that Jesus made claims and performed miracles that reveal a self awareness of His own divinity. In our next section, we will continue in this vein.



## Christ's Self-Perception, Part 2

At this point in our discussion we will offer even more examples of Jesus' self knowledge of His essential equality with God.

A number of comments that Jesus made about His relationship with the Father would be unusual if Jesus did not consider himself equal in essence with God. In John 10:30 He says that to see Him is to see the Father. Later in John 14:7-9 He adds that to know Him is to know the Father. Jesus also claimed to have existed prior to His incarnation on earth. In John 8:58 He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Some believe that the words used here by Jesus constitute His strongest claim to deity. According to the *Expositors Bible Commentary* this passage might more literally be translated, "Before Abraham came into being, I continuously existed." The Jews recognized the phrase "I am" as one referring to God because God used it (1) to describe himself when He commissioned Moses to demand the release of His people from Pharaoh (Exodus 3:14), and (2) to identify himself in the theistic proclamations in the second half of Isaiah. Jesus also declares that His work is coterminous with the Father. He proclaims that "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23). The Jews hearing Jesus understood the nature of these claims. After His comment about pre-existing Abraham, they immediately picked up stones to kill Him for blasphemy because they understood that He had declared himself God.

In Jesus' trial He makes a clear declaration of who He is. The Jews argued before Pilate in John 19:7, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." Matthew 26 records that at Jesus' trial, the high priest tells Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of

God." Jesus replies, "You have said it yourself, . . . But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." This would have been a wonderful opportunity for Jesus to save himself by clearing up any misconceptions concerning His relationship with the Father. Instead, He places himself in a position of equality and of unique power and authority. Again, the Jews understand what Jesus is saying. The high priest proclaims, "He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy." He calls for a vote of the council, and they demand His death (Matt. 26:65-66).

Another indicator of how Jesus perceived himself is in His use of Old Testament Scripture and the way He made His own proclamations of truth. In a number of cases, Jesus began a sentence with "You have heard that it was said, . . . but I say to you. . . ." (Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28). Jesus was giving His words the same authority as the Scriptures. Even the prophets, when speaking for God, would begin their statements with: "The word of the Lord came to me," but Jesus begins with: "I say to you."

There are other indications of how Jesus saw himself. For example, Christ's claim to have authority over life itself in John 5:21 and 11:25, and His use of the self referential "Son of God" title point to unique power and authority and His essential equality with God.

## **The Apostles' Teaching**

We will turn now to look at what Jesus' followers said of Him. The Gospel of John begins with a remarkable declaration of both Christ's deity and full humanity. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." Later in verse fourteen John remarks that this "Word" became flesh and walked among them and points to Jesus as this "Word" become flesh. What did John

mean by this remarkable passage?

The first phrase might literally be translated: "When the beginning began, the Word was already there." In other words, the "Word" co-existed with God and predates time and creation. The second phrase "The Word was with God" indicates both equality and distinction of identity. A more literal translation might be "face to face with God," implying personality and relational coexistence. Some groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, make a great deal of the fact that the word "God" in the third phrase "The Word was God" lacks an article. This, they argue, allows the noun God to be translated as an indefinite noun, perhaps referring to "a God" but not "the" almighty God. Actually, the lack of an article for the noun makes the case for the deity of the "Word" more clearly. The Greek phrase, *theos en ho logos* describes the nature of the "Word," not the nature of God. The article *ho* before the word *logos* shows that the sentence describes the nature of the Word; He is of the same nature and essence as the noun in the predicate; that is, the Word is divine. It is interesting to note that verses 6, 12, 13, and 18 of the same chapter refer unambiguously to God the Father and use an anarthrous noun, i.e., a noun without the article.(2) Yet strangely the Jehovah's Witnesses do not dispute the meaning of these passages.

The author of Hebrews writes plainly of Christ's deity. The first chapter states that, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word." The passage also states that Jesus is not an angel nor is He just a priest. In Colossians 1:15 Paul adds that, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." Although Paul clearly

attributes godlike qualities to Jesus, the use of the word firstborn often causes confusion. The word can be a reference to priority in time or supremacy in rank. Since Jesus is described as the Creator of all things, the notion of supremacy seems more appropriate. Philippians 2:5-11 also talks of Jesus existing in the form of God. The Greek term used for form is *morphe*, denoting an outward manifestation of an inner essence.

Mention should also be made of the use by New Testament writers of the word *Lord* for Jesus. The same Greek word was used in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, as the translated word for the Hebrew words Yahweh and Adonai, two special names given to God the Father. The Apostles meant to apply the highest sense of this term when referring to Jesus.

## The Early Church

Thus far we have been examining the Christian claim of Christ's divinity, first considering Jesus' own self-concept and then the thoughts of those who wrote the New Testament. It is not within the scope of this essay to argue that the words attributed to Jesus by the writers of the New Testament are indeed His. Instead, we have argued that the words attributed to Jesus do claim an essential equality with God the Father. The traditional view of the Christian faith has been that God has revealed himself to us as three separate persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who shared a common essence.

Belief in Jesus' essential equality with God the Father was communicated by the Apostles to the church fathers to whom they handed the task of leading the church. Even though these early leaders often struggled with how to describe the notion of the Trinity with theological accuracy, they knew that their faith was in a person who was both man and God.

Clement of Rome is a good example of this faith. Writing to the church at Corinth Clement implies Jesus' equality with God

the Father when he says "Have we not one God, and one Christ and one Spirit of grace poured upon us." Later, in his second letter, Clement tells his readers to "think of Jesus as of God , as the judge of the living and dead." Clement also wrote of Jesus as the preexistent Son of God; in other words, Christ existed before He took on human flesh. Ignatius of Antioch spoke of Christ's nature in his letter to the Ephesians, "There is only one physician, of flesh and of spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, life in death, Son of Mary and Son of God." A little later, Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. A.D. 140-202.) had to stress the humanity of Christ because of Gnostic heresy that argued that Jesus was only a divine emanation. Irenaeus wrote, "There is therefore . . . one God the Father, and one Christ Jesus our Lord, who . . . gathered together all things in himself. But in every respect, too, he is man, the formation of God: and thus he took up man into himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impassible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man, thus summing up all things in himself" (*Against Heresies III*, 16). During the same time period, Tertullian of Carthage (ca. A.D. 155-240) wrote of Christ's nature that "what is born in the flesh is flesh and what is born in the Spirit is spirit. Flesh does not become spirit nor spirit flesh. Evidently they can (both) be in one (person). Of these Jesus is composed, of flesh as man and of spirit as God" (*Against Praxeas*, 14). Later he added, "We see His double state, not intermixed but conjoined in one person, Jesus, God and man" (*Against Praxeas*, 27).

By A.D. 325 the church had begun to systematize Christianity's response to various heretical views of Christ. The Nicene Creed stated, "We believe in God the Father All-sovereign, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all the ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not created, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into

being.”(3)

The belief in Jesus Christ being of the same essence as God the Father began with Jesus himself, was taught to His Apostles, who in turn handed down this belief to the early church Fathers and apologists. Christ’s deity is the foundation upon which the Christian faith rests.

## Notes

1. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 684-90.
2. Merrill C. Tenney, *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), pp. 28-29.
3. Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 26.

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# Jesus Must Have Risen: Disciples’ Lives Changed

At Easter, some might wonder what all the fuss is about. Who cares? What difference does it make if Jesus rose from the dead?

It makes all the difference in the world. If Christ did not rise, then thousands of believers have died as martyrs for a hoax. If he did rise, then he is still alive and can offer peace to troubled, hurting lives. Countless scholars—among them the apostle Paul, Augustine, Sir Isaac Newton and C. S.

Lewis—believed in the resurrection. We need not fear committing intellectual suicide by believing it also. Where do the facts lead?

Paul, a first century skeptic-turned-believer, wrote that “Christ died for our sins... he was buried ... he was raised on the third day ... he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve (disciples). After that, he appeared to more than 500 at the same time, most of whom are still living” (I Corinthians 15: 3-6). Consider four pieces of evidence:

**1. The explosive growth of the Christian movement.** Within a few weeks after Jesus was crucified, a movement arose which, by the later admission of its enemies, “upset the world.” What happened to ignite this movement shortly after its leader had been executed?

**2. The disciples’ changed lives.** After Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, most of the disciples fled in fear. Peter denied three times that he was a follower of Jesus. (The women were braver and stayed to the end.) Yet 10 out of the 11 Disciples (Judas committed suicide) were martyred for their faith. According to traditions, Peter was crucified upside down; Thomas was skewered; John was boiled in oil but survived. What turned these cowards into heroes? Each believed he had seen Jesus alive again.

**3. The empty tomb.** Jesus’ corpse was removed from the cross, wrapped like a mummy and placed in a solid-rock tomb. A 1 1/2 to 2-ton stone was rolled into a slightly depressed groove to seal the tomb’s entrance.

A “Green Beret”-like unit of Roman soldiers guarded the grave. Sunday morning, the stone was found rolled away, the body was gone but the grave clothes were still in place. What happened?

Did Christ’s friends steal the body? Perhaps one of the women sweet-talked (karate-chopped?) the guards while the others moved the stone and tiptoed off with the body. Or maybe Peter

(remember his bravery) or Thomas (Doubting Thomas) overpowered the guards, stole the body, then fabricated—and died for—a resurrection myth.

These theories hardly seem plausible. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy and the disciples too spineless to attempt such a feat.

Did Christ's enemies steal the body? If Romans or Jewish religious leaders had the body, surely they would have exposed it publicly and Christianity would have died out. They didn't and it didn't.

The "Swoon Theory" supposes that Jesus didn't really die but was only unconscious. The expert Roman executioners merely thought he was dead. After a days in the tomb without food or medicine, the cool air revived Him. He burst from the 100 pounds of graveclothes, rolled away the stone with his nail-pierced hands, scared the daylights out of Roman soldiers, walked miles on wounded feet and convinced his disciples he'd been raised from the dead. This one is harder to believe than the resurrection itself.

**4. The appearances of risen Christ.** For 40 days after his death, many different people said they saw Jesus alive. Witnesses included a woman, a shrewd tax collector, several fishermen and over 500 people at once. These claims provide further eyewitness testimony for the resurrection.

As a skeptic, I realized attempts to explain away the evidence run into a brick wall of facts that point to one conclusion: Christ is risen.

The above does not constitute exhaustive proof, rather a reasoned examination of the evidence. Each interested person should evaluate the evidence and decide if it makes sense. Of course, the truth or falsity of the resurrection is a matter of historical fact and is not dependent on anyone's belief. If the facts support the claim, one can conclude that he arose.



In any case, mere intellectual assent to the facts does little for one's life.

Major evidence comes experientially in personally receiving Jesus' free gift of forgiveness. He said, "I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

Worth considering?

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## **An Easter Quiz**

Written by Dale Taliaferro

**1. What emotional state were the disciples in when they left the upper room to go to the garden?**

Anxious, fearful, troubled (John 14:1, 27).

**2. What is John 13-17 called?**

The Upper Room Discourse.

**3. Why were the disciples so troubled?**

a. They had probably been excommunicated by this time for professing Jesus as Christ (John 9:22).

b. The religious leaders had determined to kill Jesus and His followers (John 11:16).

c. One of the inner core was going to betray Him (John 13:20-30).

d. Peter was going to deny Him three times (John 13:38).

e. Jesus was going to leave them in the lurch (John 13:33).

**4. For what did Jesus pray before they arrived at the garden?**

Eternal security and temporal protection of the disciples (John 17:1-26).

**5. What is the name of the garden?**

Gethsemane.

**6. Where is it located?**

At the base of the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39).

**7. What was the subject matter of Jesus' great discourse upon this mountain?**

Prophecy (Matt. 24-25).

**8. What ravine did they have to cross to get to the garden?**

The Kidron Valley (John 18:1).

**9. What did they do just before going out to the Mount of Olives?**

Sang a hymn (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26).

**10. Who accompanied Jesus the furthest into the garden?**

Peter, James, and John (Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33).

**11. What command did Jesus give His disciples at this time?**

"Remain here and keep watch with me" (Matt. 26:38).

**12. How far did Jesus remove Himself to pray?**

A stone's throw (Luke 22:41).

**13. What posture was Jesus in when He prayed?**

On His knees, face down on the ground (Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:35).

**14. What was Jesus' emotional state at this time?**

Deeply grieved to the point of death (Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34).

**15. How did Jesus address His prayer?**

To the Father (Matt. 26:39).

**16. What petition did Jesus make?**

“Let this cup pass from Me” (Matt. 26:39).

**17. With what concession did Jesus close His prayer?**

“Yet not as I but as Thou will” (Matt. 26:39).

**18. How long did Jesus pray this time?**

One hour (Matt. 26:40).

**19. Upon finding the disciples sleeping, what warning did He give them?**

Once again, “Watch and pray” (Matt. 26:41).

**20. What rationale does Jesus use to strengthen His warning?**

“For the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41).

**21. What did Jesus pray the second time?**

The same words (Mark 14:39).

**22. When Jesus found the disciples asleep the second time, what excuse did they offer?**

None (Mark 14:40).

**23. What did Jesus pray the third time?**

The same thing (Matt. 26:44).

**24. How many people did Judas bring with him to arrest Jesus?**

A multitude (Mark 14:33).

**25. From whom was the crowd sent?**

From the religious leaders (Matt. 26:47).

**26. What happened to this multitude when Jesus identified Himself?**

They fell backward upon the ground (John 18:4-6).

**27. What did this signify?**

As He had prophesied, none would take His life; He would give it up voluntarily (John 10:16-18).

**28. What sign did Judas use to designate whom the crowd should arrest?**

A kiss (Matt. 26:48).

**29. How did Jesus convict Judas of his sin?**

Confronted him *before* the kiss, stating, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48).

**30. Which disciple drew his sword to protect Jesus?**

Simon Peter (John 18:10).

**31. What part of the body did Peter slice off when he attacked the servant of the high priest?**

The ear (John 18:10).

**32. What was the servant's name?**

Malchus (John 18:10).

**33. What did Jesus say to Peter in rebuke?**

- a. "Live by the sword, die by the sword."
- b. "My Father could send 12 legions of angels."

**34. How did Jesus heal the servant's ear?**

By touching it (Luke 22:51).

**35. Name two evidences that Jesus was in control during His arrest and that His arrest was moving along as it had been divinely appointed.**

- a. It was prophesied (Matt. 26:54; Mark 14:49; John 18:8-9).
- b. Jesus' comment, "The cup the Father gave me, I must fulfill," reflects His earlier prayer to the Father.

**36. What three things did Jesus say to rebuke the multitudes, including chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders?**

- a. "Have you come out to arrest Me as you would a robber with swords and sticks?"
- b. "You did not try to arrest Me when I *daily* sat teaching in the temple."
- c. "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53).

**37. Who was the young man who fled Gethsemane naked?**

Tradition identifies him as John Mark (Mark 14:51-52).

**38. To whom was Jesus presented first?**

Annas the high priest (John 18:24).

**39. To whom did Annas send Jesus?**

Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57).

**40. Which two disciples followed?**

Peter and John (Matt. 26:58; John 18:15).

**41. Where did Jesus meet with Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin?**

Caiaphas's house (Luke 22:54).

**42. How did they attempt to convict Jesus?**

By bringing in false witnesses (Matt. 26:59-60; Mark 14:55-56).

**43. Of what did two false witnesses accuse Jesus?**

The claim to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days (Matt. 26:61; Mark 14:57-59).

**44. How did Jesus respond to all of the charges?**

He remained silent (Matt. 26:63; Mark 14:61).

**45. What question did Caiaphas then ask Jesus?**

Was He the Christ, the Son of God? (Matt. 26:63; Mark 14:61).

**46. How did Jesus answer the question?**

He said "*Egoeimi*," "I am" (Mark 14:62).

**47. What did those who heard Him take His response to mean?**

That He was the Messiah and also the Son of God, making Himself equal in person with God the Father (Matt. 26:65-66; Mark 14:63-64; John 5:18).

**48. Had Jesus ever clearly claimed His deity before?**

Yes (Mark 2:1-12; John 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9).

**49. How did those with the priest respond to Jesus after**

**Caiaphas sentenced Him to death?**

- a. They spit in His face.
- b. They blindfolded Him and beat Him.
- c. They asked Him to prophesy who hit Him.
- d. Many other things that Scripture does not specify (Matt. 26:67-68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-65).

**50. What dilemma do Peter's denials present to the reader?**

The need to harmonize them. One can apparently list ten different denials by Peter.

**51. How many denials did Jesus clearly prophesy that Peter would give?**

Three.

**52. What was the purpose of the regathering of the Sanhedrin at dawn?**

Jesus was formally condemned by the Sanhedrin at that time. This action by the council was an effort to make the proceedings and the passing of judgment upon Jesus legal. But, as Greek expert A. T. Robertson writes, "No ratification of a wrong can make it right" (*A Harmony of the Gospels*, 215).

**53. What did Judas feel when he realized he had helped condemn Jesus to death?**

Remorse (Matt. 27:3).

**54. How much did the chief priests and elders give Judas to betray Jesus?**

Thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 27:3; 26:15).

**55. How much would that be worth today?**

The exact amount is unknown; it was the redemption price for a slave (Exod. 21:32).

**56. What did Judas do with the money after he realized what he had done?**

He tried to give it back. When they wouldn't accept it, he threw it into the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies (Matt.

27:3-5).

**57. What did Judas do next?**

Hanged himself (Matt. 27:6).

**58. What did the religious leaders do with the returned money?**

Bought a field in which to bury foreigners— Potters Field or Field of Blood (Matt. 27:6-7; Acts 1:18-19).

**59. What is significant about this action?**

It fulfilled prophecy of both the price and the consequence (Matt. 27:7-10).

**60. To whom did the council now take Jesus?**

To Pilate (Matt. 27:2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28-29).

**61. What principle can we learn from the Jews' legalism or "works" mentality at this point?**

Legalism—actually any system of works—blinds one to his own sinfulness (John 18:28). They didn't want to defile themselves by going into the palace, but they were willing to kill an innocent man.

**62. What accusations did the religious leaders bring against Jesus?**

- a. He perverted the nation (Luke 23:2).
- b. He prohibited the giving of tribute to Caesar (Luke 23:2).
- c. He said He is Christ, a king (Luke 23:2).
- d. He stirred up the people (Luke 23:5).

**63. What conclusion did Pilate come to after questioning Jesus?**

- a. "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).
- b. "I find no crime in Him" (John 18:38).

**64. To whom did Pilate send Jesus?**

Herod Antipas the Tetrarch (Luke 23:7).

**65. What was the stated reason Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas?**

Jesus was a Galilean and under Herod's jurisdiction (Luke 23:6-7).

**66. How did Herod Antipas receive Jesus?**

Gladly (Luke 23:8).

**67. Why did he receive Jesus this way?**

He wanted to see a miracle (Luke 23:8).

**68. How did Jesus respond to Herod's interrogation?**

With silence (Luke 23:9).

**69. How did Herod respond to this silent treatment?**

He mocked Jesus (Luke 23:11).

**70. What custom did Pilate attempt to use to keep from condemning Jesus?**

The custom of freeing a prisoner during the feast (Matt. 27:15, 17; Luke 15:6, 9; John 18:39).

**71. After Jesus' interrogation by both Herod and Pilate, what was the governor's verdict?**

Neither he nor Herod had found Jesus worthy of death (Luke 23:15). In fact, Luke 23:14b says, "[I] have found no basis for your charges against Him."

**72. What was the name of the other man Pilate offered to release?**

Barabbas (Matt. 27:16; Mark 15:7; Luke 23:18; John 18:40).

**73. What motive did Pilate detect which propelled the chief priests to demand Jesus death?**

Envy (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).

**74. Why was Barabbas imprisoned?**

Insurrection and murder (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19).

**75. From whom did Pilate receive a warning to have nothing to do with Jesus?**

His wife (Matt. 27:19).



**76. What motivated her to warn Pilate?**

She had suffered many things that day in a dream because of Jesus (Matt. 27:19).

**77. How did Pilate respond to Jesus before he again told the crowd he could “find no crime in Him?”**

a. Pilate scourged Him (John 19:1).

b. He allowed the soldiers to (1) plait a crown of thorns and place it on His head; (2) array Him in a purple garment; (3) while mockingly hailing Him as the King of the Jews, beat Him with their fists (John 19:2-3).

**78. How many times did Pilate confess he could find no cause for putting Jesus to death?**

Three (Luke 23:22).

**79. At this point, what accusations do the Jews make to claims that Jesus is worthy of death?**

“He made Himself [out to be] the Son of God” (John 19:7).

**80. After Pilate again tried to release Jesus, what threat did the Jews use to obtain Jesus’ condemnation?**

“If you release Him, you are no friend of Caesar’s. Everyone who makes a king speaks against Caesar” (John 19:12).

**81. What symbolic gesture did Pilate make to declare himself innocent of condemning a righteous man?**

He washed his hands before the multitude and said, “I am innocent of the blood of the righteous man (Matt. 27:24).

**82. When, exactly, did this happen?**

This is the subject of a huge debate, but it was probably just before dawn on Friday.

**83. What did Pilate do to Jesus before he handed Him over to be crucified?**

a. He had Jesus scourged a second time! (Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15).

b. He delivered Jesus over to his guards, who first mocked and

beat Him, then crucified Him (Matt. 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19).

**84. Who was enlisted to carry Jesus' cross for Him?**

Simon of Cyrene (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26).

**85. What is the name of the way that Jesus walked to His crucifixion?**

The Via Dolorosa, "Way of Suffering."

**86. Who accompanied Jesus along the path?**

The two thieves (Luke 23:32).

**87. What is the name of the place where Jesus was crucified?**

In Hebrew, Golgotha (Matt. 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17).

**88. What is this place called in Greek?**

The cranium, the skull (Luke 23:33).

**89. What is this place called in Latin?**

Calvary.

**90. Of what significance were the inscriptions on the crosses at crucifixions?**

They identified the crime for which the person was being executed.

**91. What were Jesus's first words from the cross?**

"Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

**92. What is the first fulfillment of prophecy by those who crucified Jesus after He was nailed to the cross?**

They cast lots over Jesus' garments (John 19:24).

**93. What inscription did Pilate place on Jesus' cross?**

"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19).

**94. In what languages was it written?**

Aramaic, Latin, and Greek (John 19:20).

**95. Who are the three women named in scripture who stood by**

**the cross (John 19:25)?**

- a. Mary, mother of Jesus
- b. Mary's sister—the wife of Cleopas
- c. Mary Magdalene

**96. What was the second thing Jesus said from the cross and to whom was it addressed (John 19:27)?**

To Mary: "Woman, behold, your son"; to John, "Behold your mother!"

**97. At what hour was Jesus actually crucified?**

The third hour—nine a.m. (Mark 15:25).

**98. At what hour did darkness enshroud the earth?**

The sixth hour (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44).

**99. How long did the darkness last?**

Three hours (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44).

**100. Around the ninth hour, what did Jesus cry out?**

"My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken me?" (Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani).

**101. What was Jesus' next-to-last utterance from the cross and to what did it refer?**

"It is finished." It referred to the penalty He paid on the cross (John 19:30).

**102. At the death of Jesus, what physical phenomena occurred?**

- a. The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 21:45).
- b. There was an earthquake (Matt. 27:51).
- c. Rocks were split apart (Matt. 27:51).
- d. Tombs were opened (Matt. 27:52).
- e. There were many resuscitations of the dead. They entered into the city, appeared to many, and stayed alive until after Jesus' resurrection (Matt. 27:52-53).

**103. The fear occasioned by these awesome phenomena moved the**

**centurion at the foot of the cross to make what profession?**

That Jesus was a righteous man and truly the Son of God (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47).

**104. How did the multitudes respond to these awesome displays?**

They returned to the city beating their breasts (Luke 23:48).

**105. What reason did the Jews give to have Pilate break the legs of those crucified?**

So as not to defile the sabbath-day Passover (John 19:31).

**106. Instead of breaking Jesus' legs, they did something else to Him, since He was already dead. What?**

They pierced His side (John 19:33-34).

**107. What resulted from the piercing, signifying that death had occurred?**

Blood and water flowed out (John 19:34).

**108. What two prophecies relate to Jesus' legs not being broken?**

a. No bone shall be broken (Exod. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Ps. 34:20).

b. They will look on me, the one they have pierced (Zach. 12:10).

**109. Who asked Pilate for the body of Jesus for burial?**

Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50; John 19:38).

**110. How did Pilate confirm that Jesus had in fact died?**

He called in the centurion in charge of the crucifixion (Mark 15:44-45).

**111. Who helped Joseph prepare the body for burial?**

Nicodemus (John 19:39).

**112. What two spices were used in the burial preparation?**

Myrrh and aloes (John 19:39).

**113. How much was used?**

One hundred pounds (John 19:39).

**114. Who were the two women who watched where Joseph and Nicodemus buried Jesus?**

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus (Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47).

**115. What reason did the chief priests and Pharisees give for sealing and guarding the sepulchre?**

They secured the tomb for three days because they feared Jesus' disciples would steal the body and tell the people He had risen (Matt. 27:62-66).

**116. What supernatural event accompanied the great earthquake early on Sunday morning?**

An angel of the Lord rolled back the tombstone and sat on it (Matt. 28:2-4).

**117. What is curious about the angel and this appearance?**

The angel came and went. Some saw the angel and some didn't (John 28:2-10).

**118. Who was the first person at the tomb early on Sunday morning?**

Mary Magdalene (John 20:1).

**119. Basically, what message did the angel give the women at the tomb?**

"He is not here; He has risen just as He had said He would" (Matt. 28:5-7; Mark 16:26-7; Luke 24:5-7).

**120. Who were the first two apostles to go to the empty tomb?**

John and Peter (John 20:2).

**121. What was curious about the burial wrappings?**

They were in the tomb, neatly folded (John 20:5-7).

**122. What excuse did the soldiers (who were paid by the chief priests and the elders) give for the disappearance of Jesus'**

**body?**

“His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept” (Matt. 28:11-13).

**123. What is so ludicrous about this excuse?**

The guards who fell asleep, plus all of those in the unit, would have been executed.

**124. Name some of the people to whom Jesus appeared after He arose.**

Mary Magdalene, Cleopas and a friend, the eleven disciples, Thomas (Mark 16:9, 14; Luke 24:17; John 20:26).

**125. How long did He appear to the disciples before He finally ascended?**

Forty days (Acts 1:1-2).

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# How to Be Successful and Satisfied

*How belief in Jesus Christ can help you realize your potential and help you find real satisfaction.*

This article is also available in [Spanish](#). 

Success is:\_\_\_\_\_. How would you fill in the blank?

“That’s easy,” you might say. “Success is ... for an athlete, winning the Super Bowl, the World Series, or a gold medal; for an entertainer, winning an Oscar, a Grammy, or an Emmy; for a businessperson, being a top executive with one of the Fortune

500 companies: for a university student, being elected to Phi Beta Kappa or student government.” But is it always so easy to define?

Several years ago Ranier, a German friend, spent three months with me in the U. S. Once, while he was watching his first baseball game on TV, the batter hit the ball out of the park for a home run. The fans went wild! Ranier turned to me with a puzzled look and asked, “Why are they cheering? They’ve lost the ball?” To the hometown fans the batter was a great success. To someone from another culture, the home run was a mystery.

The meaning of success also varies with individuals. One dictionary defines success as “the satisfactory accomplishment of a goal sought for.” To be successful, you must achieve the goal and be satisfied with the outcome. With this definition one wonders if “success” that does not include personal satisfaction—a sense of well-being—is really true success at all.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

Several factors contribute to success. Consider a few:

**1. Positive Self-Concept.** Imagine that you wake up one morning and your roommate is waiting to tell you something. He or she says, “I’ve been wanting to tell you what an outstanding roommate you are. You’re so kind, so thoughtful; you always keep the room so neat. Just being around you motivates me to be the most positive person I can be.”

After you recover from your cardiac arrest, you head off toward your first class of the day. Whom should you run into but your date of the previous evening, who says, “Am I ever glad I ran into you! I’d been hoping I’d get a chance to tell you again what a terrific time I had yesterday. My friends are so jealous of me. They think that I’m the luckiest person in

the world to go out with someone like you, and I agree! You're so friendly, so intelligent. You have a great sense of humor and good looks to boot! Why, when I'm with you, I feel like I'm in a dream!"

Then you float into your first class. Your professor is about to return the midterm exams you took last week, but before he distributes them he says, "I have an announcement I'd like to make. I want everyone to know what an outstanding job this student has done on this test." He points to you in the front row and says, "You are a breath of fresh air to me as a professor. You always do your assignments on time. You often do even more than is expected of you. Why, if every student were like you, teaching would be a joy. I was even considering leaving teaching before you came along!"

Wouldn't that help you have a great attitude about yourself? And wouldn't it motivate you to be a better roommate, a better date, a better student? You'd say to yourself, "Why, I'm one sharp person. After all, my roommate, my date and my prof all think so ... and they're no dummies!" You wouldn't argue with them for a minute! {1}

Of course, some people think so highly of themselves that their egos become problems. Nevertheless, many psychologists agree with Dr. Joyce Brothers when she says, " . . . a strong, positive self- image is the best possible preparation for success in life." {2}

**2. Clearly Defined Goals.** Aim at nothing and you'll surely hit it. Aim at a specific goal and, even if you don't hit it, chances are you'll be a lot farther along than if you'd never aimed at all.

The U. S. Space Program has produced many successes and, sadly, a few tragic failures. The successes of NASA help illustrate the importance of goal setting. Perhaps you've heard of the three electricians who were working on the Apollo



spacecraft. A reporter asked each what he was doing. The first said, "I'm inserting transistors into circuits." The second answered, "I'm soldering these wires together." The third explained, "I'm helping to put a man on the moon."

Which one was more motivated and satisfied? Probably the one who saw how his activities fit into the overall goal.

Without a clear life's goal, daily duties can become drudgery. Knowing your life's goal can increase your motivation and satisfaction as you see how daily activities help accomplish that goal.

In the early 1960's, President John F. Kennedy set a goal of putting an American on the moon by the end of the decade. In 1969, Neil Armstrong took his "one small step." A specific goal helped NASA achieve a major milestone in history. Someone who desires success will set specific goals.

**3. Hard Work.** Any successful athlete knows that there would be no glory on the athletic field without hard work on the practice field. A true test of character is not just how well you perform in front of a crowd, but how hard you work when no one notices—in the office, in the library, in practice. President Calvin Coolidge believed "nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not ... Genius will not ... Education will not ... Persistence, determination, and hard work make the difference." [\[3\]](#)

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"What is success?" asks British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. "I think it is a mixture of having a flair for the thing that you are doing ... hard work and a certain sense of

purpose... I think I had a flair for ... (my work), but natural feelings are never enough. You have got to marry those natural feelings with really hard work." {4}

The heavyweight-boxing champion of another era, James J. Corbett, often said, "You become the champion by fighting one more round. When things are tough, you fight one more round." {5}

Success requires hard work. Of course you can overdo it and become a workaholic. One workaholic businessman had a sign in his office that read, "Thank God It's Monday!" We all need to balance work and recreation, but hard work is essential to success.

**4. A Willingness to Take Risks.** Theodore Roosevelt expressed the value of this asset in one of his most famous statements: "Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much because they live in the great twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat, " {6}

Ingemar Stenmark, the great Olympic skier, says, "In order to win, you have to risk losing." Consider this question: "What would you do if you knew you could not fail?" That question can expand your vision and enlarge your dreams. Maybe your desire is to be a great political leader, an entertainer, a top businessperson or academician, a star athlete. What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?

Now ask, "Am I willing to risk a few possible failures in order to achieve that goal?" Success often involves risks.

## **AN OBSTACLE TO SUCCESS AND SATISFACTION**

A positive self-concept, clear goals, hard work, and a willingness to take risks ... all contribute to success. But there is a major obstacle to experiencing success and

satisfaction in life.

In 1923 a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were seven of the world's most successful financiers-people who had found the secret of making money.

Consider what had happened to these men 25 years later. The president of the largest independent steel company, Charles Schwab, died in bankruptcy and lived on borrowed money for five years before his death. The president of the greatest utility company, Samuel Insull, died a fugitive from justice and broke in a foreign land. The president of the New York Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney, spent time in Sing Sing Penitentiary. A member of the President's cabinet, Albert Fall, was pardoned so he could die at home. The greatest "bear" on Wall Street, Jesse Livermore, died a suicide. The head of the greatest monopoly, Ivan Krueger, died a suicide. The president of the Bank of International Settlements, Leon Fraser, died a suicide. All these had learned well, the art of success in making a living, but apparently they all struggled with learning how to live successfully. [\[7\]](#)

Pollster and social commentator Daniel Yankelovich quotes a \$100,000/ year full partner in a public relations firm: "I have achieved success by the definition of others but am not fulfilled. I appear successful ... I have published, lectured, exceeded my income goals, achieved ownership and a lot of people depend on me. So, I've adequately achieved the external goals but they are empty." [\[8\]](#)

Dustin Hoffman is an extremely successful movie actor. His film career seems almost dazzling and includes an Oscar for his performance in "Kramer vs. Kramer." Yet consider what he says about happiness and satisfaction: "I don't know what happiness is ... life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? I'd strike out happiness ... Walk down the street and look at the faces. When you demand happiness, aren't you asking for

something unrealistic?"[\[9\]](#)

Success in one area does not guarantee satisfaction in life. You can reach all your goals and still not be at peace with yourself. How can you both achieve your goals and be satisfied? And even if you feel a degree of satisfaction, could there be something more?

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**"You can reach all your goals,  
and still not be at peace with yourself."**

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## **SUCCESSFUL AND SATISFIED**

More and more psychologists and psychiatrists are seeing the need to develop the total person physically, psychologically, and spiritually—to produce real satisfaction. Often in our struggle for success, we focus on physical and psychological development at the expense of the spiritual.

Not long ago a group of counselors spent quite a bit of time in New York City interviewing some of the nation's most successful executives. They interacted with editors of newspapers and magazines, executives with advertising agencies, banks, the TV networks, seeking to understand these leaders' ideas about success.

One question these counselors asked involved the spiritual area: "What place do faith and spiritual values have in your life?" In response, 75% conveyed that spiritual values were "important" or "very important" to both personal and professional development. Remarked one, "If they could be strengthened, a lot of these other things would fall into place." Yet, surprisingly few of these leaders had clearly defined convictions in the spiritual area. As one radio broadcaster noted with a smile, "I am inspirable, but I can't

find anyone to inspire me!" [{10}](#)

Then these executives were told about someone who could inspire them, one of history's most influential personalities, a person who stressed the importance of spiritual development as well as the physical and psychological. The life and teachings of this influential and very successful leader have made quite a positive impact on my own life, as well. Perhaps a bit of background will put my discovery in perspective.

In high school I looked for success through athletics, academics and student government. And I found it. I lettered in basketball and track ... our track team was undefeated. I ranked in the top of my class academically, was involved in student government, and was attending one of the nation's leading prep schools. John F. Kennedy and Adlai Stevenson were graduates as were playwright Edward Albee and actor Michael Douglas.

I mention these details not to boast but to draw a contrast. Success in these areas had not brought the personal satisfaction I'd wanted. I was still an introvert, sometimes afraid to introduce myself to a stranger or ask a young woman for a date. My attitudes were often inconsistent with my behavior. Outwardly I could appear very positive and loving, while inwardly I might be negative and resentful of someone I didn't like. Guilt, anxiety and a poor self-image often hindered me from taking risks or from being vulnerable in relationships.

Later, in college, I was still wrestling with these areas. Then I ran into a group of students who had something special about them, a love, joy, and enthusiasm I found very attractive. I especially appreciated the fact that they accepted me just the way I was. I didn't have to try to impress them with a list of accomplishments, though they were sharp, attractive, and successful. Even in dating I didn't feel the normal pressure to display a macho image. They seemed

to like themselves and they accepted me, too.

These were Christian students and I knew that I wanted what they had. They told me they had found a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I couldn't accept all that right away, yet I kept going back to their meetings because I was curious and because it was a good place to get a date. Especially because it was a good place to get a date!

## **AN OPEN DOOR**

The more I spent time around them, the more I saw how their faith affected their lives and relationships. They told me that God loved me unconditionally, but that I was separated from Him by a condition of alienation called sin. They said that He had sent His unique Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins and rise from the grave to offer new life. When I placed my faith in Him, they explained, He would enter my life, forgive me of my sin, and begin to produce the fulfillment I'd been looking for.

Finally, through a simple, silent attitude of my heart, I said, "Jesus Christ, I need you. Thanks for dying and rising again for me. I want to accept your free gift of forgiveness. I open the door of my heart and invite you in. Give me the fulfilling life you promised." There was no thunder and lightning. Angels didn't rise in the background singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" and I didn't become perfect. But gradually, I began to see change. I had a new inner peace that didn't fluctuate with circumstances. I found a freedom from guilt and a new purpose for living. I saw my self-image improve and felt freer to take risks, to love others less conditionally.

There are many examples of Christians who are both successful and satisfied: Roger Staubach, former quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys; Julius Erving, star professional basketball player; J. C. Penney, founder of the department store chain;

Dr. Charles Malik, past president of the UN General Assembly; Mark Hatfield, U. S. Senator from Oregon; Janet Lynn, a figure skater; Jerome Hines, Amy Grant, Pat Boone and Debby Boone as entertainers: and many more. Being a Christian doesn't guarantee supreme success. Christians have their failures, too. But a relationship with God can enhance your self-concept, help clarify your goals, strengthen your determination and help you improve whatever you do. The personal satisfaction Christ provides can make a positive difference, too.

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**"What a tragedy to ... climb the ladder  
of success, only to reach the top  
and find the ladder leaning against the wrong wall."**

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Here's how: Remember the earlier illustration about your roommate, date and professor showering praise on you? Unfortunately, that doesn't happen every day. But God thinks you are very special, so special that He sent His only Son to die in your place. When you come to know Christ personally and realize the magnitude of His love for you, you can find strength to accept yourself and greater freedom to take prudent risks. You can face rejection with the security that even if everyone else turns on you, God still loves you. Knowing He wants the best for you can increase your determination to work hard for worthwhile goals.

What about you? Does your definition of success include personal satisfaction? Have you found success? Will your success be enough to sustain you through any rough times that may lie ahead? Have you found personal satisfaction?

What a tragedy it would be to spend an entire lifetime climbing the ladder of success only to reach the top and find the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall. Are you willing

to consider how Jesus Christ can make a difference in your life?

## Notes

1. Illustration adapted from Zig Ziglar, *See You at the Top* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co., 1979), p. 46.

2. Ibid., p. 49.

3. Ibid, p. 319.

4. Prince Michael of Greece, "I Am Fantastically Lucky," *Parade Magazine*, July 13, 1986, p. 4.

5. Ziglar, op. cit.

6. Hugh Sidey, "To Dare Mighty Things," *Time*, June 9, 1980, p. 15.

7. Adapted from Bill Bright, *"The Uniqueness of Jesus"* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1968) pp. 14-15.

8. Daniel Yankelovich, *New, Rules*, p-69.

9. Gerald Clarke. "A Father Finds His Son," *"Time,"* December 3, 1979, p. 79.

10. Patty Burgin, "A View From the Top," *Collegiate Challenge*, 1980, p. ii.

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