# Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Fiction? – A Clear Christian Perspective

*Rusty Wright presents a compelling case for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. Looking a four outcomes of the resurrection, he presents a brief case supporting a Christian worldview understanding that Jesus acutallly died and was resurrected from the tomb.*

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 five hundred…at the same time, most of whom are still living." 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 ten out of the eleven 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 one-and-a-half to two-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 graveclothes 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 few 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 the 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 the 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 that attempts to explain away the evidences run into a brick wall of facts that point to one conclusion: Christ is risen.

The above does not constitute an 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.

A 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 (or her)."

Worth considering?

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# Authority of the Bible – A Strong Argument for Christianity

*Dr. Pat Zukeran examines some of the compelling evidence for the reliability and the authority of the Bible. The uniqueness and astounding accuracy of this ancient text is an important apologetic for Christianity.*

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

There are many books today that claim to be the Word of God. The Koran, the *Bhagavad Gita*, The Book of Mormon, and other religious works all claim to be divinely inspired. The Bible claims to be the only book that is divinely inspired and that all other claims of inspiration from other works should be ruled out. Does the Bible confirm its exclusive claim to be the Word of God? The totality of evidences presents a strong case for the divine inspiration of the Bible.



The strongest argument for the divine inspiration of the Bible is the testimony of Jesus. Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God and confirmed His claims through His sinless, miraculous life and resurrection. The events of His life have been recorded in the four Gospels, which have proven to be historically accurate and written by first century eyewitnesses.{1} Since Jesus is God incarnate, whatever He taught is true, and anything opposed to His teaching is false.

Jesus directly affirmed the authority of the Old Testament and indirectly affirmed the New Testament. In Luke 11:51, Jesus identified the prophets and the canon of the Old Testament. He

names Abel as the first prophet from Genesis, and Zechariah the last prophet mentioned in 2 Chronicles, the last book in the Jewish Old Testament (which contains the same books we have today although placed in a different order). In Mark 7:8-9, Jesus refers to the Old Testament as the commands of God. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus states that the Law and the Prophets referring to the Old Testament is authoritative and imperishable. Throughout His ministry, Jesus made clear His teachings, corrections, and actions were consistent with the Old Testament. He also judged others teachings and traditions by the Old Testament. He thus demonstrated His affirmation of the Old Testament to be the Word of God.

Jesus even specifically affirmed as historical several disputed stories of the Old Testament. He affirms as true the accounts of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-5), Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:39), Jonah and the whale (Matthew 12:40), Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15), and more.

Jesus confirmed the Old Testament and promised that the Holy Spirit would inspire the apostles in the continuation of His teaching and in the writing of what would become the New Testament (John 14:25-26 and John 16:12-13). The apostles demonstrated that they came with the authority of God through the miracles they performed as Jesus and the Prophets did before them. The book of Acts, which records the miracles of the apostles, has also proven to be a historically accurate record written by a first century eyewitness.

## Prophecy

Many religious books claim to be divinely inspired, but only the Bible has evidence of supernatural confirmation. We have seen that Jesus, being God incarnate, affirms the inspiration of the Bible. Another evidence of supernatural confirmation is the testimony of prophecy. The biblical authors made hundreds of specific prophecies of future events that have come to pass in the manner they were predicted. No book in history can

compare to the Bible when it comes to the fulfillment of prophecy.

Here are some examples. Ezekiel 26, which was written in 587 B.C., predicted the destruction of Tyre, a city made up of two parts: a mainland port city, and an island city half a mile off shore. Ezekiel prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city, many nations would fight against her, the debris of the city would be thrown into the ocean, the city would never be found again, and fishermen would come there to lay their nets.

In 573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre. Many of the refugees of the city sailed to the island, and the island city of Tyre remained a powerful city. In 333 B.C., however, Alexander the Great laid siege to Tyre. Using the rubble of mainland Tyre, he built a causeway to the island city of Tyre. He then captured and completely destroyed the city.

Today, Tyre is a small fishing town where fishing boats come to rest and fisherman spread their nets. The great ancient city of Tyre to this day lies buried in ruins exactly as prophesied. If we were to calculate the odds of this event happening by chance, the figures would be astronomical. No, it was not by coincidence.{2}

Here's another example. There are nearly one hundred prophecies made about Jesus in the Old Testament, prophecies such as His place of birth, how he would die, His rejection by the nation of Israel, and so on. All these prophecies were made hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to earth. Because of the accuracy of the prophecies, many skeptics have believed that they must have been written after A.D. 70—after the birth and death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem. They have thereby tried to deny that they are even prophecies.

However, in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. These

scrolls contained the book of Isaiah and other prophetic books. When dated, they were found to be written from 120 to 100 B.C.,{3} well before Jesus was born. It would have been an incredible accomplishment for Jesus to have fulfilled the numerous prophecies. Some say these prophecies were fulfilled by chance, but the odds against this would be exceptionally large. It would take more a greater leap of faith to believe in that chance happening than in the fact that Jesus is God and these prophecies are divinely inspired.

The record of prophecy is thus evidence for the unique and supernatural origin of the Bible.

## Unity

The Bible is the only book with supernatural confirmation to support its claim of divine inspiration. The testimony of Christ and the legacy of prophecy are two proofs for inspiration. A third line of evidence is the unity of the Bible.

The Bible covers hundreds of topics, yet it does not contradict itself. It remains united in its theme. Well, what's so amazing about that? you may ask. Consider these facts. First, the Bible was written over a span of fifteen hundred years. Second, it was written by more than forty men from every walk of life. For example, Moses was educated in Egypt, Peter was a fisherman, Solomon was a king, Luke was a doctor, Amos was a shepherd, and Matthew was a tax collector. All the writers were of vastly different occupations and backgrounds.

Third, it was written in many different places. The Bible was written on three different continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. Moses wrote in the desert of Sinai, Paul wrote in a prison in Rome, Daniel wrote in exile in Babylon, and Ezra wrote in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

Fourth, it was written under many different circumstances. David wrote during a time of war, Jeremiah wrote at the sorrowful time of Israel's downfall, Peter wrote while Israel was under Roman domination, and Joshua wrote while invading the land of Canaan.

Fifth, the writers had different purposes for writing. Isaiah wrote to warn Israel of God's coming judgment on their sin; Matthew wrote to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah; Zechariah wrote to encourage a disheartened Israel who had returned from Babylonian exile; and Paul wrote addressing problems in different Asian and European churches.

If we put all these factors together—the Bible was written over fifteen hundred years by forty different authors at different places, under various circumstances, and addressing a multitude of issues—how amazing that with such diversity, the Bible proclaims a unified message! That unity is organized around one theme: God's redemption of man and all of creation. The writers address numerous controversial subjects yet contradictions never appear. The Bible is an incredible document.

Let me offer you a good illustration. Suppose ten medical students graduating in the same year from medical school wrote position papers on four controversial subjects. Would they all agree on each point? No, we would have disagreements from one author to another. Now look at the authorship of the Bible. All these authors, from a span of fifteen hundred years, wrote on many controversial subjects, yet they do not contradict one another.

It seems one author guided these writers through the whole process: the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 states, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The unity of the Bible is just one more amazing proof of the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible.

## Archaeology

We've studied the testimony of Jesus, prophecy, and the unity of the Bible as providing supernatural confirmation of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Another line of evidence is archaeology. Archaeology does not directly prove the Bibles inspiration, but it does prove its historical reliability.

Middle Eastern archaeological investigations have proven the Bible to be true and unerringly accurate in its historical descriptions. Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist, states, No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.{4} Dr. William Albright, who was probably the foremost authority in Middle East archaeology in his time, said this about the Bible: There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament.{5} At this time, the number of archaeological discoveries that relate to the Bible number in the hundreds of thousands.{6}

Archaeology has verified numerous ancient sites, civilizations, and biblical characters whose existence was questioned by the academic world and often dismissed as myths. Biblical archaeology has silenced many critics as new discoveries supported the facts of the Bible.

Here are a few examples of the historical accuracy of the Bible. The Bible records that the Hittites were a powerful force in the Middle East from 1750 B.C. until 1200 B.C. (Genesis 15:20, 2 Samuel 11, and 1 Kings 10:29). Prior to the late nineteenth century, nothing was known of the Hittites outside the Bible, and many critics alleged that they were an invention of the biblical authors.

However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archaeologists in Turkey discovered a city which proved to be the capital of the Hittite empire. In the city they discovered a massive library of thousands of tablets. These tablets

showed that the Hittite language was an early relative of the Indo-European languages.

Another example is the story of Jericho recorded in the book of Joshua. For years, skeptics thought the story of the falling walls of Jericho was a myth. However, recent archaeological discoveries have led several prominent scholars to conclude that the biblical description of the fall of Jericho is consistent with the discoveries they have made. One of the leading archaeologists on Jericho presently is Dr. Bryant Wood. His research has shown that the archaeological evidence matches perfectly with the biblical record.{7}

Archaeology has also demonstrated the accuracy of the New Testament. One of the most well attested to New Testament authors is Luke. Scholars have found him to be a very accurate historian, even in many of his details. In the Gospel of Luke and Acts, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands without error.{8} A. N. Sherwin-White states, For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.{9}

There is no other ancient book that has so much archaeological evidence to support its accounts. Since God is a God of truth, we should expect His revelation to present what is historically true. Archaeology presents tangible proof of the historical accuracy of the Bible.

## The Bible Alone Is God's Word

We have given several proofs for the divine inspiration of the Bible. These include the testimony of Jesus the divine Son of God, prophecy, unity, and archaeology. Accepting the divine inspiration of the Bible leads to the conclusion that all other works cannot be divinely inspired. This does not mean other works do not contain truth. All people are created in the image of God and can articulate principles that are true.

However, only the Bible proves to be divinely inspired by God and therefore, other claims of divine inspiration should be ruled out for several reasons.

The Bible is the only book that gives supernatural confirmation to support its claim of divine inspiration. Other scriptures which contradict it cannot, therefore, be true.

The law of non-contradiction states that two contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time. If one proposition is known to be true, its opposite must be false. If it is true that I am presently alive, it cannot also be true to say that I am presently not alive. This is a universal law which is practiced daily in every part of the world. Even if you claim, the law of non-contradiction is false, you are asserting this statement is true and its opposite is false. In other words you end up appealing to the law you are trying to deny thus making a self-defeating argument.

Since we have good reason to believe the Bible is the inspired word of God, any teaching that contradicts the Bible must be false. The Bible makes exclusive claims regarding God, truth and salvation that would exclude other scriptures. The Bible teaches that any deity other than the God of the Bible is a false deity (Exodus 20). Jesus declared that he is the divine Son of God, the source of truth, and the only way to eternal life (John 1 & 14:6).

A look at a few works from other religions illustrates this point. The Hindu scriptures include the Vedas and the Upanishads. These books present views of God that are contrary to the Bible. The Vedas are polytheistic, and the Upanishads present a pantheistic worldview of an impersonal divine essence called Brahma, not a personal God.

The Koran, the holy book of Islam, denies the deity of Christ, the triune nature of God, and the atoning work of Christ on the cross (Sura 4:116, 168). These are foundational truths

taught in the Bible. The Pali Canon, the holy scriptures of Southern Buddhism, teach a naturalistic worldview (or pantheistic, as some schools interpret it). It also teaches salvation by works and the doctrine of reincarnation. The worldview of the Pali Canon and its view of salvation contradict biblical teachings. Since these works contradict biblical teaching, we reject their claim to divine inspiration.

The Bible alone proves to be divinely inspired and its exclusive claims rule out the claims of other books.

**Notes**

1. For more information refer to the articles "The Historical Reliability of the Gospels" (probe.org/historical-reliability-of-the-gospels/) and "The Uniqueness of Jesus" (www.probe.org/uniqueness-of-jesus).
2. Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 869.
3. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible,* (Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 1986), 364-367.
4. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1959), 31.
5. William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1953), 176.
6. Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 25.
7. Ibid., 152-53.
8. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), s.v., Archaeology, New Testament.
9. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers,1999), 66.

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# The Case for Christ – Reasons to Believe in the Reality of Christ

*Dr. Ray Bohlin summarizes the evidence found by Lee Strobel when researching the question: Is Jesus Christ really who the Bible says He is? He shows that we have strong evidence on every front that backs up our belief in Jesus as the Son of God. This important apologetic argument helps us understand the enduring value of Christianity.*

## Sometimes the Evidence Doesn't Stack Up

Skeptics around the world claim that Jesus either never said He was God or He never exemplified the activities and mindset of God. Either way they rather triumphantly proclaim that Jesus was just a man. Some will go so far as to suggest that He was a very moral and special man, but a man nonetheless. Well, Lee Strobel was just such a skeptic. For Strobel, there was far too much evidence against the idea of God, let alone the possibility that God became a man. God was just mythology, superstition, or wishful thinking.

As a graduate of Yale Law School, an investigative reporter, and eventual legal affairs editor for the *Chicago Tribune*, Strobel was familiar with the weighing of evidence. He was familiar with plenty of university professors who knew Jesus as an iconoclastic Jew, a revolutionary, or a sage, but not God. He had read just enough philosophy and history to support his skepticism.

As Strobel himself says,

> As far as I was concerned, the case was closed. There was enough proof for me to rest easy with the conclusion that the divinity of Jesus was nothing more than the fanciful invention of superstitious people. Or so I thought.{1}

That last hesitation came as a result of his wife's conversion. After the predictable rolling of the eyes and fears of his wife being the victim of a bait and switch scam, he noticed some very positive changes he found attractive and intriguing. The reporter in him eventually wanted to get to the bottom of this and he launched his own personal investigation. Setting aside as best he could his own personal interest and prejudices, he began reading and studying, interviewing experts, examining archaeology and the Bible.

Over time the evidence began to point to the previously unthinkable. Strobel's book *The Case for Christ* is a revisiting of his earlier quest. He interviews a host of experts along three lines of evidence. In the first section Strobel investigates what he calls the record. What did the eyewitnesses say they saw and heard? Can they be trusted? Can the gospel accounts be trusted? What about evidence from outside the Bible? Does archaeology help or hurt the case for Christ? Strobel puts tough questions to his experts and their answers will both surprise and exhilarate.

In the third section of the book, Strobel investigates the resurrection. He examines the medical evidence, explores the implications of the empty tomb, the reliability of the appearances after the resurrection, and the wide-ranging circumstantial evidence.

However, here we'll focus on the middle section of the book, the analysis of Jesus Himself. Did Jesus really think He was God? Was He crazy? Did He act like He was God? And did He truly match the picture painted in the Old Testament of the Messiah?

# Was Jesus Really Convinced that He Was the Son of God?

The psychological profiler is a new weapon in the arsenal of criminal investigators. They understand that behavior reflects personality. These highly trained professionals examine the actions and words of criminals and from these clues construct a psychological and sometimes historical profile of the likely perpetrator.

These same skills can be applied to our question of whether Jesus actually thought He was God. We can learn a great deal about what Jesus thought of Himself, not just from what He said, but what He did and how He did it.

Ben Witherington was educated at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M. Div.) and the University of Durham in England (Th. D.). He has taught at several universities and seminaries and authored numerous books and articles about the person of Jesus.

Strobel began his interview by stating that Jesus wasn't very forthcoming about His identity in public, even mysterious. He didn't come right out and say He was the Son of God or the Messiah. Couldn't it be that Jesus simply didn't see Himself that way?

Witherington points out that Jesus needed to operate in the context of His day. To boldly state that He was God would have at first confused and then maddened the Jews of His day. Blasphemy was not treated lightly. Therefore He was very careful, especially at first, of what He said publicly.

There are other clues to Jesus' self-identity as God. He chose twelve disciples, as God chose the twelve nations of Israel. He called John the Baptist the greatest man on earth; yet He went on to do even greater things in His miracles. He told the Pharisees, in contradiction to much of the Old Testament law,

that what defiled a man was what came out of his mouth, not what he put in it. “We have to ask, what kind of person thinks he has the authority to set aside the divinely inspired Jewish Scriptures and supplant them with his own teaching.”{2} Even the Romans labeled Him King of the Jews. Either Jesus actually said that or someone thought He did.

Since Jesus’ followers called Him Rabboni or Rabbi, it seems they just thought of Him as a teacher and nothing more. But Witherington reminds us that Jesus actually taught in a radical new way. In Judaism, the authority of two or more witnesses was required for the proclamation of truth. But Jesus frequently said, “Amen I say to you,” or in modern English, “I swear in advance to the truthfulness of what I am about to say.” Jesus attested to the truth of what He was saying on His own authority. This was truly revolutionary.

The evidence that Jesus believed that He stood in the very place of God is absolutely convincing. Maybe He was just crazy. We’ll explore that question next.

## Was Jesus Crazy When He Claimed to be the Son of God?

There’s considerable doubt in the general public about the usefulness of psychological testimony in the courtroom. It seems that you can find some psychologist to testify to just about anything concerning someone’s state of mind at the time a crime was committed. But while abuses can occur, most people recognize that a trained and experienced psychologist can offer helpful insights into a person’s state of mind while examining his words and actions.

In our investigation of Jesus, if He really believed He was God, can we determine if He was crazy or insane? You can visit just about any mental health facility and be introduced to people who think they are Julius Caesar or Napoleon or even Jesus Christ. Could Jesus have been deluded?

Not so, according to Gary Collins, a psychologist with a doctorate in clinical psychology from Purdue and the author of numerous books and articles in popular magazines and professional journals. Disturbed individuals often show signs of depression or anxiety or explosive anger. But Jesus never displays inappropriate emotions.

He does get angry, but this is clearly appropriate—in the temple, for instance, when He saw the misuse of the temple courtyard and that the moneychangers were taking advantage of the poor. He didn't just get ticked off because someone was annoying Him. In fact, Jesus seems at His most composed when being challenged. In a beautiful passage, Collins describes Jesus as he would an old friend:

> He was loving but didn't let his compassion immobilize him; he didn't have a bloated ego, even though he was often surrounded by adoring crowds; he maintained balance despite an often demanding lifestyle; he always knew what he was doing and where he was going; he cared deeply about people, including women and children, who weren't seen as being important back then; he was able to accept people while not merely winking at their sin; he responded to individuals based on where they were at and what they uniquely needed. All in all I just don't see signs that Jesus was suffering from any known mental illness.{3}

OK, so maybe Jesus wasn't mentally disturbed, but maybe He used psychological tricks to perform His miracles. Many illnesses are psychosomatic, so maybe His healings were just by the power of suggestion. Collins readily admits that maybe some of Jesus' miracles were of this very type, but they were still healed. And some of His miracles just can't fit this description. Jesus healed leprosy and people blind since birth, both of which would be difficult to pull off as a psychological trick. His miracles over nature also can't be explained psychologically, and raising Lazarus from the dead after being in the tomb for a few days is not the stuff of

trickery. No, Jesus wasn't crazy.

## Did Jesus Fulfill the Attributes of God?

Modern forensics utilizes artists who are able to sketch the appearance of a criminal based on the recollections of the victims. This is an important tool to be able to alert the public as to the appearance of a usually violent offender. In Lee Strobel's investigation of the evidence for Jesus, he uses the Old Testament as a sketch of what God is supposed to be like. If Jesus claims to be God, then what we see of Him in the Gospels should mirror the picture of God in the Old Testament.

For this purpose, Strobel interviewed Dr. D. A. Carson, research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Carson can read a dozen languages and has authored or edited over forty books about Jesus and the New Testament.

At the start of the interview, Strobel asks Carson, "What did Jesus say or do that convinces you that Jesus is God?" The answer was a little surprising. Jesus forgave sins.

We all see ourselves as having the power and authority to forgive someone who has wronged us. Jesus forgave people for things they did that didn't involve Jesus at all. This was startling for that time and even today. Only God can truly forgive sins, and Jesus specifically does so on a number of occasions.{4}

In addition, Jesus considered himself to be without sin. Historically, we consider people to be holy who are fully conscious of their own failures and are fighting them honestly in the power of the Holy Spirit. But Jesus gave no such impression. In that wonderful chapter, John 8, Jesus asks if anyone can convict Him of sin (John 8:46). The question itself is startling, but no one answers. Sinlessness is another

attribute of deity.

This chapter is a wonderful interview with Carson, covering other questions, such as: how could Jesus be God and actually be born; or say that the Father was greater than He; or not speak out strongly against the slavery of the Jewish and Roman culture; or believe in and send people to Hell? I'll leave you to explore those fascinating questions on your own in the book.

Strobel concludes that the Bible declares several attributes for God and applies them to Jesus. John 16:30 records one of the disciples saying, "Now we can see that you know all things." Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, "Surely I am with you even unto the end of the age." And in Matthew 18:20 He says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them." All authority was given Him (Matthew 28:18) and Hebrews tells us that He is the same yesterday and today. So Jesus is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and immutable. In John 14:7, Jesus says, "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well."

## Did Jesus—and Jesus Alone—Match the Identity of the Messiah?

So far in Strobel's interviews with scholars we have affirmed that Jesus did claim to be God, He wasn't insane or emotionally disturbed, and He did things that only God would do. Now we want to review Strobel's interview with Louis Lapides, a Jewish believer as to whether Jesus actually fit the Old Testament picture of what the Messiah would be like.

One of the important pieces of evidence that convinced Lapides that Jesus was the long-looked-for Messiah was the fulfillment of prophecy. There are over forty prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled every one. Some say this is just coincidence. But, the odds of just one person fulfilling even five of these prophesies is less than one

chance in one hundred million billion—a number millions of times greater than the number of all people who have ever lived on earth.{5}

But maybe this isn't all it seems. Objections to the correlation of Jesus' life to the prophecies of the Messiah fall into four categories. The first is the coincidence argument, which we just dispelled. Perhaps the most frequently heard argument is that the gospel writers fabricated the details to make it appear that Jesus was the Messiah. But the gospels were written close enough in time to the actual events that, if false, critics could have exposed the details. Certainly this is true of those in the Jewish community who had every reason to squash this new religion before it got started.

Third, there is the suggestion that Jesus intentionally fulfilled these many prophecies so as to make Himself appear as the Messiah. That's conceivable for some of the prophecies, such as Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, but for others it's impossible. How could Jesus arrange for his ancestry, or place of birth, or the method of execution, or that soldiers would gamble for his clothing? The list goes on.

Fourth, perhaps Christians have just ripped these so-called prophecies out of context and have misinterpreted them. When asked, Lapides sighed and replied:

> You know, I go through books that people write to try to tear down what we believe. That's not fun to do, but I spend the time to look at each objection individually and then to research the context and the wording in the original language. And every single time, the prophecies have stood up and shown themselves to be true.{6}

What I found most intriguing about the interviews was the combination of academic integrity on the part of these scholars alongside a very evident love for the One of whom

they were speaking. For these scholars, finding the historical Jesus was not just an academic exercise, but also a life-changing personal encounter with Jesus. Perhaps it can be for you too.

**Notes**

1. Lee Strobel, 1998, *The Case for Christ*, Grand Rapids Michigan/Zondervan Publishing House, p. 13.
2. Ben Witherington, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 135.
3. Gary Collins, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 147.
4. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 157-158.
5. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 183.
6. Louis Lapides, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 185.

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# "Can You Recommend Apologetics Resources on Different Levels?"

**As a Christian, I find it to be of invaluable importance to remain current and educated in fields of history, science, logic and philosophy, etc. At age 20, I'm confronting more and more difficulty sharing Christ with a generation in a secularized society that will less and less have Him. Any books you might recommend? Thank you!**

There are many good books and websites which address the concerns you have in one way or another. However, let me recommend two books and three websites that have personally been very helpful to me over the years.

1. An excellent popular-level book on apologetics and evangelism is *I'm Glad You Asked* by Ken Boa and Larry Moody – available here.

2. A superb intermediate-level apologetics book is *Reasonable Faith* (3rd edition) by William Lane Craig – available here.

3. An excellent popular-level website on apologetics is the Probe Ministries website here: Probe.org.

4. An excellent scholarly-level site (with some popular-level material) is the Reasonable Faith site here: www.reasonablefaith.org.

5. Finally, a really great site for biblical and theological issues is bible.org.

I hope these resources prove helpful as you continue to prepare yourself to give an account to all who ask about the hope that you have in Christ!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn
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# Tactics for an Ambassador: Defending the Christian Faith

*Most Christians equate evangelism with conflict: an all-out assault on the beliefs and values of others. In our relativistic, live-and-let-live culture, even the most*

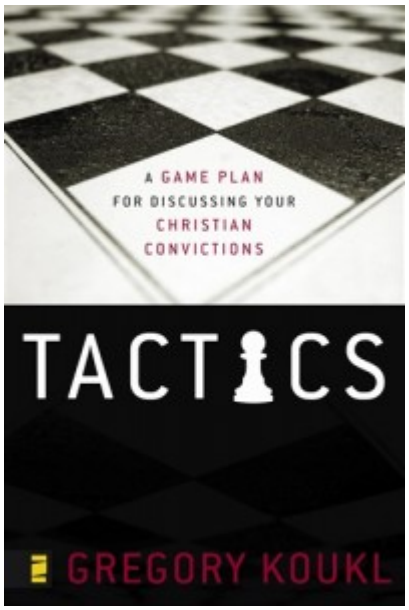
*motivated believer feels like he's committing a crime by entering into a spiritual discussion. Are there ways to take the anxiety out of evangelism?*

The idea of doing Christian apologetics, a fancy word for defending the Christian faith, has lost some luster among church goers. The word conjures up images of conflict, anxiety, and even anger. But most of all, it generates thoughts of inadequacy and lack of confidence among those called to "give an answer" (1 Pet. 3:15) for the hope we have in Christ. Most people are trying to avoid conflict and the emotional fatigue that comes with defending a controversial set of beliefs that are often ridiculed in our culture.



We live in an era that values diversity and tolerance above all other virtues. Anyone claiming to have true knowledge about important things like the nature of God, good and evil, or the purpose of human existence will be accused of intolerance and a mean spirited attempt to impose their beliefs on their neighbors. You are allowed to believe almost anything today, as long as you don't claim that it is true in any universal sense.

Part of the reason that Christians in American churches do so little evangelism is that they are convinced that it constitutes a spiritual invasion, an attack on the beliefs of a friend or neighbor who will resist this apologetic assault with everything he or she has to offer. They also believe that they will have failed miserably unless every encounter ends with someone trusting in Christ. It's either total victory or utter defeat, and there are no innocent bystanders.




Gregory Koukl's book *Tactics* helps to give Christians the right perspective on evangelism and apologetics.{1} He argues that the D-day invasion model for evangelism is counterproductive, and that seeing oneself as an ambassador for Christ makes more sense. We need fewer frontal assaults and more embassy meetings. The skills necessary to be a successful ambassador are quite different from those of an infantryman. Persuasion rather than conquest motivate the ambassador, and one's style of communication can be as important as the content being conveyed.

According to Koukl, an effective ambassador for Christ must master three skill-sets. First, a Christian ambassador should possess a clear understanding of the message being offered by his sovereign King. Second, he needs to exhibit a personal character that reinforces the message he's been charged with, not distract from it. Finally, an ambassador needs sufficient wisdom to know how to communicate his message in a manner that draws people into dialogue and then to keep the conversation going. This kind of wisdom translates into specific tactics for communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ to a culture that has been preconditioned against the message.

## Why Do We Need Tactics?

In his second letter to the church in Corinth, Paul says that we are Christ's ambassadors and that God has entrusted us with a message of reconciliation to a lost world (2 Cor. 5:20). But, although we have good news to share, Christians often don't feel capable or confident to share it.

Being tactical has to do with the way one arranges his or her resources. The effective tactician knows when to be aggressive

and when to hold back and gather information. Commanders on a battlefield don't unleash every weapon available at the beginning of a conflict, nor do ambassadors immediately unveil all of their arguments.

Apologists know that one of their most important tactics is the well placed question. Picking up important personal information about someone's background and worldview provides critical insight into the best way to steer the conversation. The ability to ask good questions, combined with good listening skills, helps to avoid stereotyping people in ways that can cause the conversation to end suddenly. It also shows that you care about someone as an individual, not just as, for example, a Mormon or a Muslim. Even when someone labels oneself, let's say as a Hindu, it's important to discover what that term means to them. Hinduism contains a wide variety of possible beliefs and it would be counterproductive to argue against something that this person doesn't adhere to. As you can imagine, being a good listener and shaping your comments to fit the individual will most likely have a greater impact on them than just memorizing a tract and delivering it regardless of the setting.

Employing wise tactics implies a thoughtful rather than emotional approach to conversations. Emotions can quickly get the best of us, especially if we are unprepared to respond to the questions and challenges that we may encounter. Good planning helps us to accomplish our goal of guiding people to the truth about Jesus. It can also help us to avoid provoking someone to anger. Once people get angry they rarely hear our defense of the gospel. It's even worse if *we* get angry.

Some might respond to this call for wise tactics in sharing Christ by saying that you cannot argue someone into heaven. I would respond that you cannot love someone into heaven either. Neither arguments, or love, or a simple telling of the gospel alone will win someone to heaven. Only the Holy Spirit can change someone's heart, but it doesn't follow that God doesn't

use these methods to build His kingdom.

## Becoming Sherlock Holmes

Sometimes we Christians are tempted to dump our entire theological systems on anyone willing stay put long enough to listen. This doctrinal dump might be a light load for some but a train load for others. The problem is that we are often trying to answer questions that people haven't even thought up yet and we can add confusion and distractions to the gospel message without even being aware of it. How can we avoid making this mistake?

When we sense that a conversation is headed toward spiritual territory, perhaps our first inclination should be to ask good questions so that we better understand the person we desire to share Christ with. Good questions protect us from jumping to conclusions and to deal with the actual beliefs a person holds rather than some straw man position that we might prefer to attack. They also have the tendency to naturally promote further dialogue and shape the discussion.

Once a person makes a statement regarding what they believe to be true, good questions can be particularly helpful. If someone tells you that it is irrational to believe in God because there is no proof that He exists, you now have an opportunity to ask key questions that will make your eventual responses far more effective. The first category of questions seeks further information and clarification. For instance, you might ask "What do you mean by God?" or "What evidence would you count as proof towards His existence?" You might ask if he knows anyone who believes in God and whether or not they might have good reasons for doing so. Asking someone how they arrived at a conclusion or how they know something to be the case helps to differentiate between simple assertions of belief and reasons for holding that belief. People often make statements of belief without much forethought, and when

challenged they find that they have little more than an emotional attachment to their view.

Don’t panic if you run into someone who is prepared to defend his or her views. Even if they have an extensive argument supporting their position, good questions can get you out of the hot seat and provide time to build a stronger case for your next encounter. You might ask them to slow down and present their case in detail so that you can understand it better. You can also tell them that you want time to consider their position and will get back to them with a response. Giving someone the podium to clearly present their beliefs is usually well received. Listen carefully to what is said and then do your homework.

## Suicidal Arguments

One of the more interesting parts of *Tactics* are Koukl’s chapters on ideas that commit suicide. These are commonly called self-refuting ideas or ideas that defeat themselves. A fancier description is that they are self-referentially incoherent. It doesn’t take long to encounter one of these arguments when talking to people about religion.

A simple example of a suicidal view is expressed by the comment, “There is no truth,” or the more humble version, “It is impossible to know something that is true for everyone, everywhere.” This statement fails its own criteria for validity by denying universal truth claims and then making a truth claim implied to be universal. If what the statement professes is true, then it is false. It commits suicide because it violates the law of non-contradiction which prohibits something from being both true and false at the same time.

Christians who are highly influenced by a postmodern view of truth often make self-defeating arguments as well. Koukl gives

the example of a teacher in a Christian college classroom asking her students if they are God. When no hands went up she proclaimed that since they are not God they only have access to truth with a small t; only God knows Truth with a capital T. The implication is that small t truth is personal and limited. A student might ask the teacher if what she just offered is truth with a small t; if so, why should the students accept the teacher's limited personal view of reality over the student's perceptions?

Another argument that's quite popular and self-defeating is, "People should never impose their values on someone else." A quick response might be, "Does that express your values?" Of course it does. Then ask the person why he is imposing his values on you. His statement violates the criteria of validity that it tries to establish.

Even comments that seem to make sense at first suffer from suicidal tendencies. For instance, some have argued that since men wrote the Bible, and given that people are imperfect, the Bible is flawed and not inspired by God. The problem is that although people are imperfect it does not follow that everything they say or write is flawed. In fact, if everything a human says or writes is flawed, then this comment about the Bible is flawed. Just because people are capable of error, it doesn't mean that they will always commit error.

Helping people to see that their truth claims might be contradictory must be done gently. The point is not to merely defeat their position, but to help them to become open to other ways of thinking about an issue. It is in this context of gentle persuasion that the Holy Spirit can change a heart.

## Sharpening Your Skills

The list of self-defeating truth claims can get rather long. For instance, it is common to hear people say something like

“science is the only source for truth.” The problem with this statement is that it is not scientific. There are no scientific experiments that one can perform which establish that science is the only source of truth. It is a self-defeating statement.

It is also quite popular to assume that all religions are basically the same and equally true. If this is the case, then Christianity is true. However, a basic teaching of Christianity is that the core teachings of other religions are false and that Jesus is the only source of salvation. Again, the statement defeats itself.

Ideas that commit practical suicide include the notion that it’s wrong to ever condemn someone, and that God doesn’t take sides. The first comment is a condemnation of all who condemn others. The second assumes that God is on their side, even though God doesn’t take sides. If you think through these ideas you can be ready to gently point out their self-contradictory nature and move on to subjects more profitable.

When dealing with difficult ethical issues like abortion or homosexuality, it is always helpful to have a preplanned set of tactics. Koukl gives the example of a Christian who is asked his views about homosexuality by a lesbian boss. He begins his response by asking if the boss is tolerant of diverse points of view. Does she respect convictions different from her own? Of course, true tolerance means putting up with someone you disagree with. Since very few people want to label themselves as intolerant, they will usually affirm their support of the practice, protecting you from being attacked for giving your viewpoint.

Gregory Koukl’s book contains many more great ideas about responding to attacks on Christian belief. At the end of the book he leaves us with what he calls the ambassador’s creed. An ambassador should be ready to represent Christ. He should be patient with those who disagree. He should be reasonable in

his defense. And, finally, he should be tactical, adapting his approach to each unique person that God brings into his path. Our wise use of tactics should improve the "acoustics" in a conversation so that people can hear the gospel well.

**Note**

1. Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

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# The New Testament: Can I Trust It?

*Rusty Wright and Linda Raney Wright examine how the New Testament documents measure up when subjected to standard tests for historical reliability.*

 This article is also available in Spanish.

"How can any well-educated person believe the New Testament? It was written so long after the events it records that we can't possibly trust it as historically reliable." This is a common question on the university campus and deserves an honest answer.

How does one determine the authenticity of an ancient book? C. Sanders, a military historian, outlines three basic tests used by historians and literary critics.{1} These are the internal, external and bibliographic tests. Let's consider briefly how the New Testament stands up to each one.

## 1. The Internal Test

Here our question concerns the trustworthiness of the writers as revealed by the text itself. One of the chief issues is whether or not we have eyewitness testimony. The New Testament accounts of the life of Christ were written by eyewitnesses or by people relating the accounts of the eyewitnesses of the actual events. John wrote, "what we have seen and heard [concerning Christ], we proclaim to you also."{2} Peter stated that he and his associates were "eyewitnesses of His majesty."{3} Luke claimed that his gospel was based on accounts compiled from eyewitnesses.{4} In a court of law, eyewitness testimony is the most reliable kind.

Another issue in the internal test is the consistency of the reports. If two writers present testimony that is contradictory, doubt is cast on the integrity of one or both records.

Many have charged that the New Testament contains contradictions. To deal with such charges, it is important to understand that "contrary" is defined by Webster as "a proposition so related to another that, though both may be false, they cannot both be true." Thus, the statement, "Joe and Bill are in this room" contradicts the statement, "Only Joe is in this room." It does not, however, contradict the statement, "Joe is in this room." *Omission does not necessarily constitute contradiction.*

With this in mind, consider several alleged New Testament contradictions. Some observe that Luke writes of two angels at the tomb of Jesus after the resurrection{5} while Matthew mentions "an angel."{6} The observation of the statements is accurate, but the interpretation of them as contraries is not. If Matthew explicitly stated that only one angel was present at that time, the two accounts would be dissonant. As it is, they are harmonious.

Others note an apparent discrepancy in the accounts of the birth of Jesus. Hans Conzelmann, a German theologian, writing of Matthew's and Luke's accounts of the nativity, states that "in every detail they disagree."{7} He focuses on apparent geographical inconsistencies.

Simple observation shows that the two accounts do differ. Luke tells of Joseph and Mary starting in Nazareth and traveling to Bethlehem (for the census and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem). He then records the family's return to Nazareth.{8} Matthew's account begins with the couple in Bethlehem (and Jesus' birth there) and records their flight into Egypt to escape King Herod's wrath, and relates their travel to Nazareth after Herod's death.{9}

## Contradictory vs. Complementary

Conzelmann regards these details as contradictory, but are they? The Gospels never claim to be exhaustive records of the life of Christ. Any biographer must of necessity be selective. Could not Matthew have chosen to omit the census journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and Luke the flight into Egypt? As such, the accounts are complementary, rather than contradictory.{10}

Often such critics seem unable to carefully discern the content of biblical texts because of their own negative presuppositions and lofty speculations. One is inclined to agree with C. S. Lewis' criticism of these skeptics when he writes, "These men ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence (that they cannot) is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worth discussing) the lines themselves."{11} Consider a final (and more difficult) example of alleged inconsistency. Many have noted a difference between the synoptic accounts (those in Matthew, Mark and Luke) and John's account of the dating of the death of Jesus. Specifically, the issue concerns the chronological relationship of the crucifixion to the celebration of the Passover meal by the Jews. Mark refers to

some Jews observing the Passover the evening before the crucifixion.{12} John seems to indicate a Passover celebration *after* the crucifixion.{13} In a recent definitive article, Dr. Harold Hoehner of Dallas Theological Seminary solves the puzzle.{14} Citing evidence from the *Mishnah* and the scholars Strock-Billerbock, Hoehner shows that the Pharisees and Sadducees (two contemporary religious parties) disagreed about the day of the week on which the Passover should fall. The result was that the Pharisees celebrated the Passover one day before the Sadducees did. This makes it entirely plausible that the synoptics use the reckoning of the Pharisees, while John presents that of the Sadducees, thus accounting for the difference.

## 2. External Test

This test asks whether other historical and archaeological materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves. Several authors of antiquity wrote of Jesus as a person of history. Among them were Tacitus, Josephus, Seutonius, and Pliny the Younger.{15} Sir William Ramsey, an eminent archaeologist, once held that Luke's writings were not historically sound. His own subsequent investigation of near-eastern archaeology forced him to reverse his position and conclude that "Luke is a historian of the first rank."{16}

Nelson Glueck, former president of Jewish Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, one of the greatest archaeologists, and a Jew, wrote: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."{17}

## Archaeological Evidence

Consider a few examples of archaeological confirmation of the New Testament. In I Corinthians, Paul refers to the meat market in Corinth.{18} An inscription from ancient Corinth has been discovered which refers to the "meat market."{19} Luke

refers to the temple of Artemis in Ephesus and speaks of a riot that occurred in a theater in the same city.{20} The temple was excavated in 1803 and measured 100 by 340 feet.{21} Twentieth-century Austrian archaeologists unearthed the theater and found it could hold nearly 25,000 people.{22}

Mark writes of Jesus healing a blind man as He left Jericho.{23} Luke, apparently writing of the same event, says it happened while Jesus was *approaching* Jericho.{24}

Excavations in 1907-09 by Ernest Sellin, of the German Oriental Society, showed that there were "twin cities" of Jericho in Jesus' time—an old Jewish city and a Roman city separated by about a mile.{25} Apparently Mark referred to one and Luke referred to the other, and the incident occurred as Jesus traveled between the two.

William F. Albright, one of the world's leading biblical archaeologists, adds a helpful comment: "We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80, two full generations before the date of between A.D. 130 and 150 given by the more radical New Testament critics of today."{26} This statement is crucial because it means that some of Christ's opponents, who were living when He was on earth, were undoubtedly still around when the New Testament books were penned. Their presence would have prompted the New Testament writers to give careful attention to the veracity of the statements. And we can be certain that if any errors were made in their accounts the opponents of Christ (of which there were many) would have been quick to expose them.

## 3. Bibliographic Test

This final test is necessary because we do not possess the original manuscripts of most ancient documents. The question that must be asked, then, is: "How many early copies do we have and how close in time are they to the original?" A. T.

Robertson, author of one of the most comprehensive grammars of New Testament Greek, wrote, "…we have 13,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament."{27} Many of these copies are dated only a short time (80-400 years) after the original.

When the New Testament documents are compared with other writings of antiquity for the numbers of early copies and the chronological proximity of the copies to the original, the New Testament is far superior. (For instance, we have only 10 good copies of *Gallic Wars* and they are 1,000 years after the original; seven copies of Plato's Tetrologies, 1,200 years after the original. Similar results hold for the writings of Thucydides, Herodotus and a host of others.){28}

The late Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, was one of the leading authorities on the reliability of ancient manuscripts. He drew this conclusion:

> *"The interval then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."{29}*

If one concludes that the New Testament documents are historically reliable, it stands to reason that he should seriously consider the message they present. In the Old Testament and the New, the message of the Bible is the message of Jesus Christ. And He offers an abundant and eternal life to anyone who will consider and respond to His claims: "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life…and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."{30}

**Notes**

1. Sanders, C. *Introduction to Research in English Literary History* (New York: MacMillan, 1952), pp. 143ff; quoted in Montgomery, John. “History and Christianity,” *His Magazine* reprint, Chicago, December 1964-March 1965, pp. 6-9.

2. I John 1:3.

3. 11 Peter 1:16.

4. Luke 1:1-3.

5. Luke 24:1-4.

6. Matthew 28:1-8.

7. Conzelmann, Hans. *Jesus.* The classic article from the RGG expanded and updated (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), pp. 26-27.

8. Luke 1:26, 2:40.

9. Matthew 2:1-23.

10. Cheney, Johnston. *The Life of Christ in Stereo.* (Portland, OR: Western Seminary Press, 1971), pp. 6-14, 243.

11. Hooper, Walter (ed.). *Christian Reflections* (William B. Eerdmans) quoted in McDowell, Josh. *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1975), p. 342.

12. Mark 14:12ff.

13. John 18:28.

14. Hoehner, Harold W. “Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, Part IV” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, July, 1974), pp. 241-264.

15. Bruce, F. F. *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp.19-41.

16. Ramsay, W.M. The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament. (1915), p. 222; quoted in Bruce, F. F. *The New Testament Documents – Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 91.

17. Glueck, Nelson. *Rivers in the Desert History of Negev.* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society of America, 1969); quoted in McDowell, Josh. *Evidence That Demands A Verdict.* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1972), p. 68.

18. 1 Corinthians 10:25.

19. Bruce, *Christian Origins.* p 200.

20. Acts 19:27-29.

21. Free, Joseph P. *Archaeology and Bible History.* (Wheaton: Scripture Press,1951), p.324.

22. Ibid.

23. Mark 10:46-52.

24. Luke 18:35 43.

25. Free, op cit, p. 295; the old Jewish Jericho may have been a "ghost town" or merely a mound in Jesus' day.

26. Albright, William. *Recent Discoveries in Biblical Lands.* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1955), p. 136; quoted in McDowell, op. cit., p. 65.

27. Robertson, A T., *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament.* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1925), p. 70; quoted in Montgomery, op. cit., p. 6.

28. McDowell, op. cit., pp. 46-56: Montgomery, op. cit., p. 6: Bruce, op. cit., pp. 10-20.

29. Kenyon, F. G. *The Bible and Archaeology.* (New York and

London: Harper, 1940), pp. 288, 89; quoted in Montgomery, op. cit., p. 6.

30. John 8:12, 32.

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# Who's Got the Body?

*Rusty Wright and Linda Raney Wright provide a short documented examination of evidences for Jesus' resurrection.*

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

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 Christians have lived and died for a hoax.

If, however, He did rise, then He is still alive and can act now to straighten out our chaotic world. Facts always speak louder than opinions. Let's take a look at some of the historical evidence for the resurrection and see where the facts lead.

One preliminary consideration: countless scholars—among them, the apostle Paul, St. Augustine, Sir Isaac Newton and C. S. Lewis—believed in the resurrection. We need not fear committing intellectual suicide by accepting it also.

Paul wrote that "Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He was raised on the third day. He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now. {1}

Consider also these four pieces of evidence:

## 1. The Explosive Growth of the Christian Church

Within a few weeks after the crucifixion a movement arose which, by the later admission of its enemies, "upset the world." {2} Something happened to ignite this movement a very short time after its leader had been executed. What was it?

## 2. The Changed Lives of the Disciples

After Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, most of the disciples were frightened. Peter, for instance, denied Christ three times (twice to two servant girls!) Yet 10 out of the 11 disciples were martyred for their faith. Peter was crucified upside down; Thomas was skewered; John was boiled in oil but survived. Something had happened to revolutionize these men's lives. Each believed he had seen the risen Christ.

## 3. The Empty Tomb

Jesus' dead body was removed from the cross, wrapped in graveclothes like a mummy, covered with 100 pounds of aromatic spices and placed in a tomb.{3} The tomb had been hewn out of rock{4} and apparently contained only one cavern.{5} An extremely large stone{6} was rolled into a slightly depressed groove at the tomb's entrance.{7} Some have conservatively estimated the weight of the stone at one-and-a-half to two tons.

A crack "Green Beret" unit of Roman soldiers was placed out front to guard the grave.{8} The military discipline of the Romans was so strict that severe corporal and often capital punishment awaited the soldier who left his post or failed in his duty.{9} Sunday morning, the stone was found rolled away, the body was gone, but the graveclothes were still in place.{10} What happened?

Some say that Christ's friends stole the body. This means that either one of the women sweet-talked the guards while the other two moved the stone and tip-toed off with the body, or else guys like Peter (remember how brave he was) and Thomas (how easily convinced he was) overpowered the guards, stole the body, and fabricated a myth.

These theories hardly seem plausible. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy, and the disciples, not yet experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit were too spinelesss to attempt such a feat.

Others say that Christ's enemies stole the body. Yet if the Romans or Jews had the body, they would have exposed it publicly and Christianity would have died out. They didn't and it didn't.

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

In other words, if Jesus was put to death, who's got the body? All that we do have is an empty tomb.

## 4. The Appearances of the Risen Christ

For 40 days after His death, Christ was reported to be seen alive on earth. Some say these were hallucinations, but do the accounts show that?

Only certain high-strung and imaginative types of people usually have such psychic experiences. Yet a woman, a stubborn

tax collector, several fisherman and more than 500 people at one time claimed they saw Him. Hallucinations are very individualistic—contrasting with the fact that over 500 people saw the same thing at the same time and place.

Two other facts undermine the hallucination idea. Such imaginations are usually of expected events, yet the disciples had lost hope after the crucifixion. Also, psychic phenomena usually occur in cycles, but the appearances came in no set patttern.{11}

Attempts to explain away the appearances run into a brick wall of facts. The facts point to one conclusion: Christ is risen.

The above does not constitute an exhaustive proof, but rather a reasoned examination of the evidence. We must each consider and evaluate the evidence ourselves to determine the truth of the resurrection claim. (Of course, the truth or falsity of the resurrection is a matter of historical fact and is not dependent on any individual's belief.)

If the facts support the claim, then we can conclude that He arose. In any case, a mere intellectual assent to the facts does nothing for one's life.

A major evidence comes experientially, in personally receiving Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him."{12}

Care to give Him a try?

**Notes**

1. 1 Corinthians 15:3-6.

2. Acts 17:6.

3. John 19:38-40.

4. Eusebius of Caesarea. Theophania; quoted in Latham, Henry. The Risen Master. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1904). pp. 87,88; quoted in McDowell, Josh. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA.: Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1972), p. 209.

5. Ibid.

6. Mark 16:4.

7. Holloman, Henry W. "An Exposition of the Post Resurrection Appearances of Our Lord" (Unpublished Th.M. Thesis: Dallas Theological Seminary, May, 1967). p. 38, quoted in McDowell, op. cit. p. 216.

8. Matthew 27: 65,66.

9. McDowell, op. cit. pp. 218-224.

10. Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:1-6; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1-11.

11. Anderson, J. N. D. The Evidence for the Resurrection. (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968). pp. 20-23.

12. Revelation 3:20.

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**A Short Story**

There was once a rich man, who dressed in purple and the finest linen, and feasted in great magnificence every day. At his gate, covered with sores, lay a poor man named Lazarus, who would have been glad to satisfy his hunger with the scraps from the rich man's table. Even the dogs used to come and lick his sores.

One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, where he was in torment; he looked up, and there, far away, was Abraham with Lazarus close beside him.

"Abraham, my father," he called out, "take pity on me! Send

Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am in agony in this fire." But Abraham said, "Remember, my child, that all the good things fell to you while you were alive, and all the bad to Lazarus; now he has his consolation here and it is you who are in agony. But that is not all: there is a great chasm fixed between us; no one from our side who wants to reach you can cross it, and none may pass from your side to us."

"Then, father," he replied, "will you send him to my father's house, where I have five brothers, to warn them, so that they too may not come to this place of torment?" But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham," he replied, "but if someone from the dead visits them, they will repent." Abraham answered, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets they will pay no heed even if someone should rise from the dead." (Luke 16:19-31, New English Bible)

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# Jesus: The Divine Xerox – Reasons to Believe

*Probe's founder Jimmy Williams provides a compelling set of reasons to believe that Jesus is in fact the Son of God. By asking questions one would expect of God on this earth, we see that Jesus is the only one who fulfills them all. Jesus' characteristics are His own apologetic.*

You know, today when you walk across the campus and begin to

talk about the New Testament, the claims of Christ, and how He is relevant to high school or college life, often you get this expression of amazement, as if you have committed intellectual suicide, because you actually believe His claims. Some tell us that becoming a Christian involves a blind leap with little or no evidence to support it. In fact, the blinder the leap and the more lacking the evidence, the more noble the faith. It is certainly true that any philosophy or belief cannot be proved; I would not try and insult anyone's intellect by saying I could *prove* to him that Jesus Christ is God. However, I think when we look into the history of this unique person, we see some things that have to grasp the mind of any thinking man and impress upon him the strong consideration that Jesus may be who He claimed to be…namely, God incarnate in human flesh.

Now whatever we may say about Jesus Christ, most everyone would agree that in the person of Christ we view one of the most unique personalities of all the centuries—whether He is God or not. The unbeliever, atheist, Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist alike all generally agree on this one central fact, that Jesus Christ is indeed a unique personality.

> "Here was a man born of a peasant woman in an obscure village. He grew up in another obscure military camp town where He worked as a carpenter's son. He never wrote a book; He possessed neither wealth nor influence. He never ran for political office; He never went more than 200 miles from His home town; He never even entered a big city. In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature and hushed the sea to sleep. During the last three years of His life He became an itinerant preacher, roaming the land of His birth, healing the sick and comforting the poor. At the end of this three years of ministry the tide of public opinion began to turn against Him. He was betrayed by one of His closest friends and arrested for disturbing the status quo. All of His followers deserted Him; one denied Him three times. He went

through six trials, each of which was a mockery of jurisprudence. Prior to one of the trials He was beaten to the point of death with leather strips imbedded with studs of iron. A crown of thorns was then rammed down upon His head, tearing the flesh so that blood poured down the side of His face. The Roman procurator officiating at His trial was nervous. The uniqueness of this man made Pilate want to wash his hands of the whole affair. But the crowds cried for His death.

“As the Roman procurator brought this insignificant, now mutilated and beaten carpenter’s son before the crowds, he hurled a challenge to them which has resounded across twenty centuries: he said, “Behold the man.” Pilate was impressed. He had never before seen such quiet dignity, intrepid courage, noble majesty. Never had any other who had stood before his bar carried himself as this One. The Roman was deeply impressed, and avowed his captor’s uniqueness. But the mob shouted, ‘Crucify Him.’ So He was taken outside the gates of the city and nailed to a cross to die the death of a common criminal.

“Yet the story doesn’t end here. For something happened after that strange, dark day that has changed the entire course of human history. He came forth from the tomb in resurrection power. His greatness has never been paralleled. He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, and yet He has furnished the theme for more songs that all the songwriters combined. He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students. Every seventh day the wheels of commerce cease their turning and multitudes wind their way to worshiping assemblies to pay homage and respect to Him. The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone. The names of the past scientists, philosophers, and theologians have come and gone, but the

> name of this man abounds more and more. Though over 1900 years lie between the people of this generation and the time of His crucifixion, He still lives. Herod could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. He stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory.
>
> "Never had any other who had stood before his bar carried himself as this One. The Roman was deeply impressed, and avowed his captor's uniqueness. But the mob shouted, 'Crucify Him.' So He was taken outside the gates of the city and nailed to a cross to die the death of a common criminal. Still today He is the cornerstone of history, the center of human progress. I would be well within the mark when I say that all the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all of the kings that have ever reigned, put together, have not influenced the course of man's life on this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life, Jesus of Nazareth. History has been called His story. He split time: B.C., before Christ; A.D., *Anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord.{1}

When, some 20 centuries ago, Pontius Pilate said, "Behold the man," I doubt that he had any idea of who it was that stood before him. He certainly wouldn't have dreamed that this humble peasant would launch a movement (indeed, already had) that would change the course of Western civilization. In view of the claims that He made and the impact He had upon history, it behooves us to "Behold the man." Who was He? Those who knew Him best were convinced that He was God. What do you say? I am convinced that the only reasonable conclusion that can be drawn from a fair examination of the evidence is that He was and is, indeed, God, the Saviour of the world. Let's consider some of these evidences together.

I would like to consider several lines of historical evidence that suggest that Jesus Christ is God. The first line of evidence is:

## Because the Hypothesis Fits the Facts.

Now what I would like to do in terms of presenting the first line of evidence for His claim that He is God is to ask the question, "What would God be like, if God became a man?" If the facts about Jesus Christ fit the answers to the above question—pre-eminently so, uniquely so, we will have offered evidence, that He may be who He claimed to be. So I would like to suggest four things that I think we would all agree would characterize God if God became a man.

**If God were a man, we would expect His words to be the greatest words ever spoken.**

What is great literature or great oratory? The masterpieces of one generation often appear stilted and artificial to another. The words which endure are the words which have something to say about that which is universal in human experience, that which doesn't change with time.

Statistically speaking, the Gospels are the greatest literature ever written. They are read by more people, quoted by more authors, translated into more tongues, represented in more art, set to more music, than any other book or books written by any man in any century in any land. But the words of Christ are not great on the grounds that they have such a statistical edge over anybody else's words. They are read more, quoted more, loved more, believed more, and translated more because they are the greatest words ever spoken. And where is their greatness? Their greatness lies in the pure, lucid spirituality in dealing clearly, definitively, and authoritatively with the greatest problems that throb in the human breast; namely, Who is God? Does history have meaning? Does He love me? Does He care for me? What should I do to please Him? How does He look at my sin? How can I be forgiven? Where will I go when I die? How must I treat others?

This amazing purity of the words of Christ became more real to

me in a forceful way while I was studying the Greek language in graduate school. The New Testament is written in Greek. I was taking a course called Rapid Greek Reading in which we did nothing but read the Greek New Testament and recite in class. We read about eight pages of Greek a week or about the equivalent timewise of 600 pages of English. We struggled night and day while reading the Gospels in order to be able to read them out loud in class directly from the Greek text to our professor. It was sometimes humorous to hear one another struggle with the text of Matthew or Luke. The interesting thing was that when reading one of the Gospels aloud, we would stumble and toil with the sections where Matthew was simply recounting narrative, but as soon as Matthew began to quote the words of Christ the struggle ceased. His words were the easiest to translate. They were so simple and yet profound. To labor with the narrative portions and then come to the words of Christ was like moving from the intensity of the hurricane to the calm serenity of the eye of the storm. It was the difference between sailing on rough tempestuous seas and on a glassy lake at eventide.

Certainly, no mere man could impregnate such simple words with such sublime thoughts. Consider the volumes of truth stored up in the phrase, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”{2}, and “Whosoever would find his life, must lose it”{3}. Libraries could be filled with works which simply develop those concepts.

No other man’s words have the appeal of Jesus’ words. They are the kind of words we would expect God to utter if God were a man.

The second line of evidence is:

**If God were a man, we would expect Him to exert a profound power over human personality.**

One of the greatest impacts among human beings is the impact

of personality upon personality. Most human beings are rather ordinary in their impact upon other human beings. I can't think of anyone in my life whose personality has made an impact upon me; strong influence, yes, but impact, no. Periodically in history a Churchill, Hitler, or a Caesar comes along and impact is made. Certainly, if God were a man, His personality would be so dynamic it would have unprecedented impact on His contemporaries. Is this the case with Jesus of Nazareth? We find most emphatically that it is. Whether Jesus be man or God, whether the Gospels be mainly fiction or fancy, certainly a historic person named Jesus made such an impact on a small band of men as to be unequaled by far in the entire annals of the human race. Consider for a moment the historic nucleus from which Christianity sprang: Peter, a weak-willed fisherman; John, a gentle dreamer; Thomas, who had a question mark for a brain; Matthew, a tax collector; a few peasants and a small cluster of emotional women. Now I don't want to minimize the character of these men, but seriously, does this rather heterogeneous group of simple folk look like the driving force that could turn the Roman Empire upside down, so that by 312 A.D., Christianity was the official religion of the Empire? Frankly they do not. The impact of the personality of Christ upon these people turned them into flaming revolutionaries who launched a movement that has changed the history of Western Civilization.

The amazing thing is that these men were the very ones who ate with Him, slept with Him, and lived with Him for over three years and still concluded that He was God. How could a person live with someone for that period of time and come to that conclusion unless it were a valid conclusion? You could spend less than an hour with the greatest saint mankind has ever produced and be thoroughly convinced that he was not God. How could you spend three years with a mere man and become absolutely convinced that He was God, in fact, be so convinced that you would be willing to die a martyr's death to punctuate your belief? Listen for a moment to the traditional deaths of

the apostles: Matthew, martyred by the sword in Ethiopia; Mark, dragged through the streets of Alexandria until dead; Luke, hanged on an olive tree in Greece; John, put in a caldron of boiling oil but escaped death and died in exile on the island of Patmos; Peter, crucified upside down (he said he wasn't worthy to be crucified in the same manner as His Lord); James, beheaded in Jerusalem; Philip, hanged against a pillar in Phrygia; James the Less, thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and beaten to death down below; Bartholomew, flayed alive; Andrew, bound to a cross where he preached to his persecutors till he died; Thomas, run through by a spear in India; Jude, shot to death with arrows; Barnabas, stoned to death by Jews in Salonica; and Paul, beheaded at Rome by Nero. Even more incredible is the fact that James and Jude, our Lord's own brothers, believed that He was God. You may for a time, be able to pull the wool over the eyes of those outside your own family, but certainly your own brothers would not swallow such an unbelievable claim unless there were unimpeachable reasons to do so.

Christ's personality had a tremendous impact upon these men. And after nearly two thousand years the impact is not at all spent. Daily there are people who have tremendous revolutionary experiences which they attribute to personal encounters with Jesus Christ.

The personality of Jesus, then, is without parallel. It is unique and incomparable. Wherever He is, He is the Master. When surrounded by hungry multitudes or by hating Pharisees, when questioned by clever theologians or besought by stricken sinners, whether examined by stupid disciples or by a Roman governor, He is the Master.

If God were robed in human flesh, then He would possess a personality that would have revolutionary impact, indeed, unique impact, upon His contemporaries. Like no other man in history, Jesus made that kind of unique and revolutionary impact.

**If God were a man, we would expect supernatural acts.**

If God were a man, not only would we expect His words to be the greatest ever spoken, and the impact of His personality to be unique, but we would also expect that His life would be characterized by wonderful deeds. We would expect Him to do the things that only God could do. Now obviously the very act of God becoming a man involves something supernatural. But if God became a man, it makes sense that He was going to convince men that He was indeed who He claimed to be, that men deserved to see Him do things that only God could do—namely miracles, suspensions of natural law. Everything about the life of Jesus Christ confronts us with the miraculous. At the outset of His ministry He appeared at a wedding feast and turned water into wine. He demonstrated His power over disease by healing the nobleman's son and the lame man at the pool of Bethsaida and many more. He fed 5000 people and said, "I am the bread of life." He walked on the water. He claimed to be the light of the world; then He healed a man who had been blind since birth. Once of His most startling claims was made to the despondent sister of Lazarus (Lazarus had been dead for four days) when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Then He said, "Lazarus, come forth," and the dead man came out of the tomb. Someone has noted it was a good thing Jesus called Lazarus by name or all the dead since the dawn of time would have come forth. When Christ made these astounding claims, more than ordinary means were necessary to impress men with their truthfulness.

Now there's a funny kind of thinking going on today concerning miracles. It all started with a fellow by the name of Hume. Paradoxically, this may surprise you, Hume was an orthodox Christian. But, Hume said some things about miracles that have been used as an attack on miracles. Hume argued that miracles are the most improbable of all events. Ever since Hume's essay, it has been believed that historical statements about miracles are the most intrinsically improbable of all

historical statements. Now, what then is the basis of probability? What makes a miracle a more probable or a less probable event? Hume says, and so do other secular critics today, that *probability rests upon what may be called the majority vote of our past experiences.* The more often a thing is known to happen, the more probable it is that it should happen again; and the less often, the less probable. He goes on to say, the majority vote of our past experience is firmly against miracles. There is in fact, "uniform experience" against miracles. A miracle is, therefore, the most improbable of all events. It is always more probable that the witnesses were lying or mistaken than that a miracle occurred.

Now here is the foolishness in Hume's whole argument. We must agree with Hume that if there is absolutely "uniform experience" against miracles, if they have *never* occurred, then there is no such thing as a miracle. But, that is exactly the point in question. Is there absolute uniform experience against miracles? We only know that the majority vote of past experience is against miracles if we know that all reports of miracles are false. And, we can know all the reports to be false *only* if we know already that miracles have never occurred. This is a circular argument. Let me repeat it again. The critic of miracles today says with Hume, "We know that all historical reports of miracles are false because miracles never happen, and we know that miracles never happen because all historical reports of them are false." Get that? We know that miracles have never happened, because all reported instances of them are false, and we know that all reported instances of them are false (such as the Bible) because we know that miracles never happen.

Very frequently today we hear or get the impression that brilliant scholars, after examining all the evidence, have scientifically proven that miracles never happen. This is totally untrue. The rejection of the miraculous is not their conclusion; it is their starting point, their presupposition.

It’s interesting to note that as you study the literature of the first and second century, even some of the literature of the critics of Christianity grant the miracles. In fact, it was not until the 19th century that the major attacks against the miracles began when the omniscient modern critics got on the scene and began to look back 2,000 years and say miracles never happened. But, the attackers of the first century generally grant them. In *Jesus and His Story* by Ethelbert Stauffer, a professor of New Testament at the University of Erlangen—and not an evangelical scholar—cites the following: “In 95 A.D. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus of Lydda speaks of Jesus’ magic arts.”{4} “In 100 A.D.—Jewish ritual denunciation—’Jesus practiced magic and led Israel astray.”‘{5}

In the second century (according to F. F. Bruce) Celsus, a philosophic critic of Christianity, acknowledged his miracles but attributed them to sorcery.{6}

Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, also acknowledges the fact that Jesus performed miracles in his *Antiquities of the Jews.* A basic principle of evaluation of evidence states that when enemies agree on a common point, it may be regarded as certain that the point is commonly accepted. Stauffer states this with clarity in *Jesus and His Story*:

> The sharper the clash, the wider the gulf, the more vital does this alteration of testimony and counter-testimony become to the historical investigator. For if a confrontation of witnesses yields statements that agree on some points, then these points must represent facts accepted by both sides.{7}

In addition to the testimony of the secular historians, we have in the four gospel documents themselves, the personal testimony of hundreds of eyewitnesses that the miracles of Christ are true events. All of the evidence we have indicates that He is indeed God manifest in the flesh.

**If God were a man, we would expect Him to be sinless and incomparably holy and divine.**

Here lies, perhaps, one of the most convincing evidences for the deity of Christ. No man has ever lived such a noble, pure, and sinless life. Those who knew Him for three years, said "He was without sin."{8} The Roman centurion commented as Christ hung on the cross, "Surely, this was the Son of God."{9} Paul, the brilliant intellect of the first century, perceived, "He knew no sin."{10} Pilate called Him, "that just man," and said, "I find no fault in Him."{11} He Himself claimed to be sinless and challenged the religious leaders of His day to find fault in Him.{12}

There is no comparison between the person of Christ and the most saintly of the saints of the human race. To them confession of sin and painfully laborious efforts toward saintliness were daily fare. In fact, the closer they came to God, the more vivid became their consciousness of their sinfulness.

But Jesus never appears to us as One who struggled to obtain saintliness. He never felt the need to confess a sin, and yet He pointed out the sin in others and urged them to confess. Christ never admitted a need of repentance. We can't even imagine Him dying the death of saintly Augustine of daily confession and repentance. Jesus possessed perfect sinlessness and purity, not by struggle, privation, asceticism, or pilgrimage. It was by His birth and nature.

The greatest saints of other religions are not even in the same category as Christ. Mohammed, for instance, was apparently a neurotic. Gandhi, whom many have acclaimed as the most saintly man of the century, does not even compare with Jesus Christ. Gandhi himself claimed that he didn't even know God and that the reason for it was his own sinfulness. He said, "It is a constant source of sorrow to me that I am so far separated from the one whom I know to be my very life and

being; and it is my own wretchedness and sin that separates me from him."{13} How different this is from the words of Jesus, "I and the Father are one,"{14} or "He who has seen me has seen the Father,"{15} or even more direct, "All men should honour me, even as they honour the Father. He that does not honour me does not honour the Father which sent me."{16} Can you even imagine Calvin, Luther, Paul, or any other great saint making a claim such as this? Frankly, I cannot.

Jesus Christ is not a great man among great men. He is uniquely the greatest man of all history. His divine quality of life can be verified from the mouth of the atheist, infidel, and unbeliever, not to mention the enormous testimony from the Christian Church. Thinking men the world over who have examined the evidence will all agree that Jesus of Nazareth is the greatest personality of the centuries. He is the greatest teacher, leader, and influence for good in the history of the human race.

Rousseau, the French Deist said of him,

> If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. Shall we say the Gospel history is mere invention. My friend, it is not such that men invent. And the facts concerning Socrates, of which no one entertains any doubt, are less attested than those concerning Jesus Christ.{17}

He goes on to say a little later that "the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth are so striking, so amazing, so utterly inimitable, that the invention of them would be more astonishing than the hero."{18}

Byron, the profligate poet, whose philosophy of life was eat, drink, and be merry said, "If ever a man were God, or God were man, Jesus was both."{19}

Renan, the skeptic, Who wrote a classic life of Christ in which he tried to prove the myth of the Gospels, nevertheless

concluded with this last line: “Whatever surprises the future may bring, one thing is certain, Jesus will never be surpassed.”{20}

When exiled on the lonely isle of St. Helena, the emperor Napoleon was once discussing Christ with General Bertrand, a faithful officer who had followed him into banishment and who did not believe in the deity of Jesus. Napoleon said,

> I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions, the distance of infinity. Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and His will confounds me. Between Him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by Himself.{21}

If God were a man, we would expect Him to be sinless and incomparably Holy and Divine. We see that the hypothesis fits the facts of the life of Jesus Christ. Should we now conclude something other than Jesus is God? The Apostle John said, “No man has ever seen God, but the only begotten Son, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known.”{22} Jesus is the Divine Xerox of the invisible God. The Original is invisible, but His earthly Reproduction is visible for all to behold in the unprecedented life of Jesus of Nazareth.

**Notes**

1. Author unknown, although a portion of this essay is attributed to Dr. James Allan Francis.
2. Matt. 7:12.
3. Luke 9:24.
4. Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 1959), p. 9.
5. Ibid., p. 10.

6. F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents; Are They Reliable?* (5th ed. rev.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 68.
7. Stauffer, p.x.
8. 1 Pet. 2:22.
9. Matt. 27:54.
10. 2 Cor. 5:21.
11. Luke 23:14.
12. John 8:45-47; 10:37-39.
13. Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?* (Glendale, California: G.L. Publications, 1967).
14. John 10:30.
15. John 14:9.
16. John 5:23.
17. John Ballard, *The Miracles of Unbelief* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), p. 251.
18. Ibid.
19. Lord Byron.
20. Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (New York: Carolton Publishers, 1863).
21. Frank Mead, *Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations* (Westwood: Fleming H. Revelle, 1965), p. 56.
22. John 1:18.

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