

Reasons for Believing In Jesus



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Kenneth Scott Latourette said, "It is not his teachings which make Jesus so remarkable, although these would be enough to give him distinction. It is a combination of the teachings with the man himself. The two cannot be separated..." Latourette is right. The Church does not exist because Jesus taught some neat, new stuff. It exists because Jesus is more than a great teacher and more than a religious leader. Jesus taught truth, because he is truth...but, it's more than that, too...Jesus really is who the Bible says he is...

Yet there are still millions upon millions who are skeptical about the Bible's claims concerning Jesus Christ. Entire books have attempted to discredit the historical reliability of Jesus. Popular magazines attack the historical claims concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. Even some Christian organizations have ceased to believe what the Bible teaches about Jesus. This is more than unfortunate. It is tragic. It's tragic for one simple reason. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Should someone fail to accept him on his terms...heaven will be left empty of that person's presence.

So, we're faced with a dilemma: we must preach Christ, but some reject the very idea of Jesus Christ. Some reject the idea that he even existed; others reject the idea that he is the One and Only Son of God and the only means of salvation. They reject him because they have been told there is no reasonable evidence for his claims. This dilemma forces us to ask a particular question...

Question: How can we know Jesus Christ is all that the Bible teaches about him: the perfect man; Almighty God in the flesh; the promised Savior; the resurrected Lord?

Two groups of people need the question answered...seekers and believers...

Need: (1) Seekers need this question answered because the Bible teaches that “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). If this is true, then not only an individual’s earthly life is dependent upon his or her decision concerning Jesus, but also his or her eternity. (2) Also, believers need this question answered so they may be prepared to give a reason for the hope that lies within them (1 Peter 3:15).

Answer: We have only four alternatives when it comes to the identity of Jesus Christ. He was either a liar, a lunatic, a legend, or he was and is the Lord. Looking carefully at each alternative leads us to only one conclusion – the Jesus of history is the Lord of eternity.

A. Was Jesus a Liar?

1. If so, he was also a hypocrite
2. If so, he was also a demon
3. If so, he was also a fool

Mark 14:53-64

B. Was Jesus a Lunatic?

1. If so, how do we explain the discrepancy between his life and that of an insane life?
2. If so, how do we explain the contradiction between his balanced worldview and that of an imbalanced worldview?

C. Was Jesus a Legend?

1. If so, we must explain away the Bible (see Reasons For Believing In The Bible)

2. If so, we must explain away fulfilled prophecy

a. What chance is there that one person could fulfill just eight of the 300 Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus Christ?

1×10^{17} (100,000,000,000,000,000) ← 17 zeros

b. What chance is there that one person could fulfill 48 of the 300 Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus Christ?

1×10^{157} 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000...aw, forget it) ← 157 zeros

Now, perhaps, you might be thinking, "See, it was just random chance." However, it's not quite that easy. Consider the following illustrations that demonstrate not only the improbability of these numbers, but also, for all practical purposes, the impossibilities. One chance in 10^{17} is one painted-pink silver dollar in a stack of silver dollars two feet deep covering the entire state of Texas. How likely would it be for a blindfolded person to roam the state of Texas and, with only one try, reach down and grab the pink dollar? As for one chance in 10^{157} consider the same idea...except in this case we'll use electrons rather than silver dollars and the space is the universe rather than Texas. Now paint one of those little buggers pink, launch a blindfolded astronaut...well you get the picture (Science Speaks by Peter W. Stone and Robert C. Newman. Moody Press: Chicago; 1976, ch. 3).

3. If so, we must explain away the resurrection (see Reasons For Believing In The Resurrection)

4. If so, we must explain away the non-biblical references to Jesus from history

- a. Flavius Josephus (Jewish historian, early second century: wrote favorably about Jesus Christ)
- b. Cornelius Tacitus (Roman historian, 112 A.D.: wrote about the death of Christ)
- c. Lucian of Samosota (a satirist of the 2nd century: wrote with hostility about Christ)
- d. Suetonius (Roman historian, 120 A.D.: in “The Life of Claudius,” mentioned Christ while writing about Rome’s expulsion of the Jews from Rome)

D. Was Jesus and is Jesus the Lord?

1. If so, we can reject him
2. If so, we can accept him

C. S. Lewis said, “You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

(Outline borrowed from Josh McDowell’s Evidence That Demands A Verdict:. Here’s Life Publishers: San Bernadino, CA)