

**Why Should I Believe Jesus Is
God And That He Rose From
The Dead?**

Question #8: Why Should I Believe Jesus Is God And That He Rose From The Dead?

Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God... He says He has always existed... Among Pantheists... anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the being outside the world who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips.

-C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pgs. 54-55

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. 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 with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

-C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pgs. 54-55(1979 ed.)

A. Who was/is He?

Four options:

Liar: He was not who He said He was and He knew so.

Lunatic: He was not who He thought He was and He did not know it.

Legend: He was not who others later imagined Him to be.

Lord: He was who He said He was and the resurrection proves it to be so.

B. Who did Jesus say He was? (His self-claims)

John 8:58 "Before Abraham was I AM"
(He claimed to be the God of Exodus 3:14.)

John 14:9 "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

John 10:30 "I and My Father are one."

Seven Great "I AM's" of John's Gospel:

1. I am the Bread of Life (6:35, 41, 48, 51).
2. I am the Light of the World (8:12).
3. I am the Door of the Sheep (10:7, 9).
4. I am the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14).
5. I am the Resurrection and the Life (11:25).
6. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6).
7. I am the True Vine (15:1, 5).

The point is this: put these words in the mouth of any other person and they sound absurd and insane. Put them in the mouth of Jesus and they make perfect sense.

C. Who did others of His day say He was?

Four Great Christological Texts

John 1:1-18, He is the eternal Word who became flesh and showed us the Father.

Philippians 2:6-11, He is the very essence of God who humbled Himself to die on the cross and is now exalted to the highest place.

Colossians 1:15-20, He is the one who makes visible the invisible God who created all things.

Hebrews 1:1-3, He is God's superior revelation and is greater than the prophets or the angels (or any other thing!).

D. What has the church believed about Jesus throughout its history?

The Nicene Creed of A.D. 325

We believe in one God, the Father all-sovereign, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all the ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and comes again with glory to judge the living and dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end.

The Chalcedon Creed of A.D. 451

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and the only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul <meaning human soul> and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we ourselves as far as his humanness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these "last days," for us and behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer in respect of his humanness.

[We also teach] that we apprehend this one and only Christ – Son, Lord, only-begotten – in two natures; without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the "properties" of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one "person" [prosopon] and in one reality [hypostasis]. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us; thus the symbol of the fathers has handed down to us.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

(A Historical and Theological Analysis)

Our Options

1. A great hoax (The resurrection is false)
 2. A nice mythology (The resurrection is fiction)
 3. The supreme event in history (The resurrection is fact)
- A. Naturalistic Theories of the 19th century Liberals (and others)
1. Swoon (He did not actually die).
 2. Spirit (His spirit returned but not his body).
 3. Vision (The Disciples hallucinated).
 4. Legend/Myth (Quite popular today: Just a nice story with a teaching point. A real Jesus is not necessary, but useful and certainly probable).
 5. Stolen Body by: a) Jews b) Romans c) Disciples Matt. 28:11-15 d) Joseph of Arimathea John 19:38 ff.
 6. Wrong-Tomb.
 7. Deliberate lie-for Profit.
 8. Mistaken Identity (They confused Jesus for someone who looked like Him).
 9. Twin theory (He had an identical brother).
 10. Muslim theory (Someone replaced Jesus on the cross).

B. Contemporary Models for the Resurrection

1. The facticity of the resurrection is seriously questioned or dismissed. The nature of the original eyewitnesses' experience cannot be ascertained (Ex. Bultmann, Marxsen, Koester, Kung, Van Buren).
2. A literal resurrection may be true but it cannot be historically verified. The important element is the nature of the disciples experience, and the truth that the resurrection can only be accepted by faith (Ex. K. Barth, Brunner, Bonhoeffer, Bornkamm, Rahner, M. Barth and Torrance).
3. A resurrection is probable and an abstract reconstruction of the historical nature of the appearances is possible. The empty tomb is viewed as the best explanation of the available data. However, it is still argued that the resurrection is an eschatological event and is not demonstrable by historical methodology, although it may possibly be verified in the future (Ex. Grass – Christ appeared in a spiritual form; Moltmann – the disciples witnessed visionary appearances of the risen Lord). Jesus' appearances, then, were more along the lines of private revelations (also included here are R. Fuller, Jeremias, O'Collins). Again, such appearances cannot be known expect in faith.
4. A literal resurrection of Jesus and an empty tomb is the most probable solution based upon the available data. (Ex. Pannenberg). Yet Pannenberg rejects a corporeal resurrection body in favor of a spiritual body which appeared from heaven, was recognized as Jesus, spoke, and in Paul's case, was accompanied by a phenomenon of light (Also A.M. Hunter, R. Brown, J.D.G. Dunn, L. Gopplet and A.M. Ramsey).
5. A literal bodily resurrection of Jesus and an empty tomb is the best solution of the Easter event based upon the evidence. This position differs from number four in its affirmation of a "resurrected body." This is the classic orthodox position, and the one affirmed by evangelicals (significant contributions come from Ladd, Craig, Osborne, D. Fuller, Gundry and Geisler; it is also my position).

SPECIFIC EVIDENCES

1. Naturalistic theories fail to explain away the event and have been disproved or rejected (even by liberal scholarship).
2. It does work and meet genuine needs (subjective evidence).
3. The birth and continuance of Christianity with the central message of the resurrection from the beginning.
4. The change in the day of Worship from the Sabbath to Sunday by Jews.
5. Testified to have been seen by women first, in spite of the invalid nature of their witness in major cases in the first century.
6. Radical change in the disciples.
 - A. New power
 - B. New courage
 - C. Faithful to death

* Men will die for a lie. They will not die for what they know is a lie.

7. Empty tomb/no body.
8. Numerous and various resurrection appearances.
9. Unlikely nature of mass hallucination.

10. Reported appearances which lasted 40 days then completely stopped for all.
11. The 50 day interval between the resurrection and the proclamation at Pentecost (Acts 2) in Jerusalem itself.
12. Multitude of fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (Gen.3:15; 12:1-3; 49:9-10; Num.24:17; Deut.18:15; 2 Sam.7:12-16; Psalms 2, 16, 22, 45, 110; Isa.7:14; 9:6-7; 53; Zech.9:9; 12:10; Mic.5:2) .
13. The Jewish leaders could not disprove the message.
14. Conversion of two skeptics: James and Paul.
15. Accepted character and claims of Jesus.
He claimed to be God (John 8:58; 10:30; 14:9)
He claimed He would rise (Matt. 16:24)
C.S. Lewis said, “He is either Lord, Liar or Lunatic. He left us no other options.”
16. Articles left in the empty tomb (John 20:5 ff.).
17. Unexpected nature of the resurrection.
18. Reliable eyewitness documents recording the facts.

* The New Testament is the most well authenticated document from the ancient world. There are more manuscripts of the New Testament (5700) of an earlier date and more reliable nature than any other book from antiquity.

Histories	Oldest MSS	Number Surviving
Livy 59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 th Century	20
Tacitus A.D. 56-120	9 th & 10 th Centuries	3
Thucydides 460-400 B.C.	10 th Century	8 + a few papyrus Fragments
Herodotus 484-425 B.C.	10 th Century	very few
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New Testament	c. 100-150	c. 5,700 (counting only Greek manuscripts) Plus there are more than 10,000 in Latin, and more than 1 million quotations from the church fathers (<i>Reinventing Jesus: What The Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don't Tell You</i> , p. 71)

ADDITIONAL SOURCES FOR ADDITIOINAL STUDY:

- Akin, Daniel. *Discovering The Biblical Jesus*. LifeWay, 2003.
 Driscoll, Mark. *Vintage Jesus*. Crossway, 2008.
 Strobel, Lee. *The Case For Christ*. Zondervan, 1998.
 Stott, John. *The Cross of Christ*. Downers Grove, 1986.