

The Reality of Jesus



Session 6



He said to them,
“But who do you say that I am?”

-Jesus

Introduction



Many people have a lot of respect and even **admiration** for Jesus. But Christians go further to follow him and trust him with their lives.

Christians do not just believe Jesus was good; we believe he is **God**.

Messianic Prophecies



The authors of the Old Testament frequently prophesied about the coming of the Messiah.

The authors of the Gospels frequently pointed to the details of Jesus' life as **fulfillment** of these prophecies.

The Timeline of Fulfillment



Most scholars believe the Old Testament was completed by 600 BC, but the oldest complete manuscript of the Old Testament was made around 200 BC.

Most scholars believe the New Testament was completed between AD 40-100, meaning that Jesus' fulfillment of any prophecy spans **centuries**.

Given the time span, and the number and specificity of the prophecies Jesus fulfilled, **conspiring** to fulfill the prophecies would have been impossible.

The Probability of Fulfillment



In his book *Science Speaks*, Peter Stoner describes a project in which he gathered estimates from over 600 college students assessing the probability that one man could have fulfilled **eight** messianic

Fulfilling any one of these would not be very impressive, but we must remember that Jesus fulfilled all eight. The odds of that are 1 in 2.8×10^{28} .

By the way, there are no fewer than **127** messianic prophecies in the Old Testament fulfilled by Jesus.

Nonbiblical Witnesses



Nonbiblical Witnesses



There are **nine** nonbiblical sources that may be considered “**hostile**” witnesses, which confirm details about Jesus’ life that we see in the New Testament.

It is important to note that even the most scathing critique of Jesus and his followers is **early** confirmation of the most crucial aspects of New Testament Christianity.

Worshipping Jesus as God is not an **invention** of later Christians; it has always been the essence of Christianity

The Facts of the Resurrection



The Facts of the Resurrection



The resurrection of Jesus is confirmation of Jesus' authority, demonstration of Jesus' deity, and essential to the gospel. (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17)

In an essay titled "On Miracles," agnostic philosopher David Hume taught that we are not justified in believing that a miracle happened unless disbelieving requires a "**greater miracle.**"

The Facts of the Resurrection



Christian philosopher Gary Habermas developed the “Minimal Facts Method” by which he demonstrated the reality of Jesus’ resurrection based on historical facts that not even the most skeptical doubt.

The Facts of the Resurrection



The Minimal Facts Method may be outlined in this way:

Premise 1: There are certain **historical** facts related to Jesus' death with which no serious scholar disagrees, regardless of their beliefs about Jesus.

Premise 2: **Naturalistic** (non-miraculous) explanations fail to account for all the facts in a realistic way.

Conclusion: The only **adequate** explanation for the facts is that Jesus actually rose from the dead.

The Facts of the Resurrection



In Hume's words, "the **falsehood** of [Jesus' resurrection] would be more miraculous."

Fact #1: Established Death



The Scholar John Dominic Crossan believes that Jesus was a great moral teacher but was not God. Yet he states, “Jesus’ death by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate is as sure as anything historical can ever be.”

Fact #1: Established Death



Some have offered a naturalistic explanation called the “**swoon** theory,” claiming that Jesus merely lost consciousness, appeared to be dead, and came-to days later.

But there are several problems with this claim:

- Roman **soldiers** wouldn't allow it.
- Modern **doctors** wouldn't believe it.
- Jesus' **disciples** wouldn't worship it.

Fact #2: Empty Tomb



Nonreligious Jewish scholar Géza Vermes stated, “when every argument has been considered and weighed, the only conclusion acceptable to the historian must be that...the women who set out to pay their last respects to Jesus found to their consternation, not a body, but an empty tomb.”

Fact #2: Empty Tomb



The only competing story was that Jesus' body was **stolen** by his followers, which also assumes an empty tomb.

But there are several problems with this claim:

- The disciples did not have the courage, resources, or gall to steal Jesus' body.
- This means that the disciples would have died a martyr's death for something they knew was a **hoax**.

Fact #3: Eyewitness Accounts



Jewish scholar Paula Fredriksen stated, “I know in their own terms what they saw was the raised Jesus. That’s what they say and then all the historic evidence we have afterwards attest to their conviction that that’s what they saw. I’m not saying that they really did see the raised Jesus. I wasn’t there. I don’t know what they saw. But I do know as a historian that they must have seen something.”

Fact #3: Eyewitness Accounts



The most prevalent naturalistic explanation is **hallucination**, or as agnostic scholar Bart Ehrman describes, “visionary experiences led them to conclude that Jesus was still alive.”

Fact #3: Eyewitness Accounts



But there are several problems with this claim:

- Hallucinations would not have been **shared**.
- Hallucinations would not have been **interpreted** as resurrection.
- Hallucinations would not have happened to Jesus' **enemy**—a Pharisee named Saul.

A Reasonable Conclusion



Naturalistic explanations fail to explain any one of these facts. Moreover, explaining all three while denying the resurrection of Jesus requires a “**greater miracle.**”

By the way, while we address three facts, Dr. Habermas’ original work addresses **twelve** undeniable facts that can only be adequately explained in light of the resurrection of Jesus.

The evidence is overwhelmingly in support of Jesus’ resurrection.

Conclusion



Conclusion



Many people have admiration for Jesus for his personal character and moral teaching.

However, this admiration can be a diversion from actually making a choice to **trust** Jesus with our lives.

The need for this choice to be made can be demonstrated by a **trilemma** regarding the reality of Jesus.



“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.”

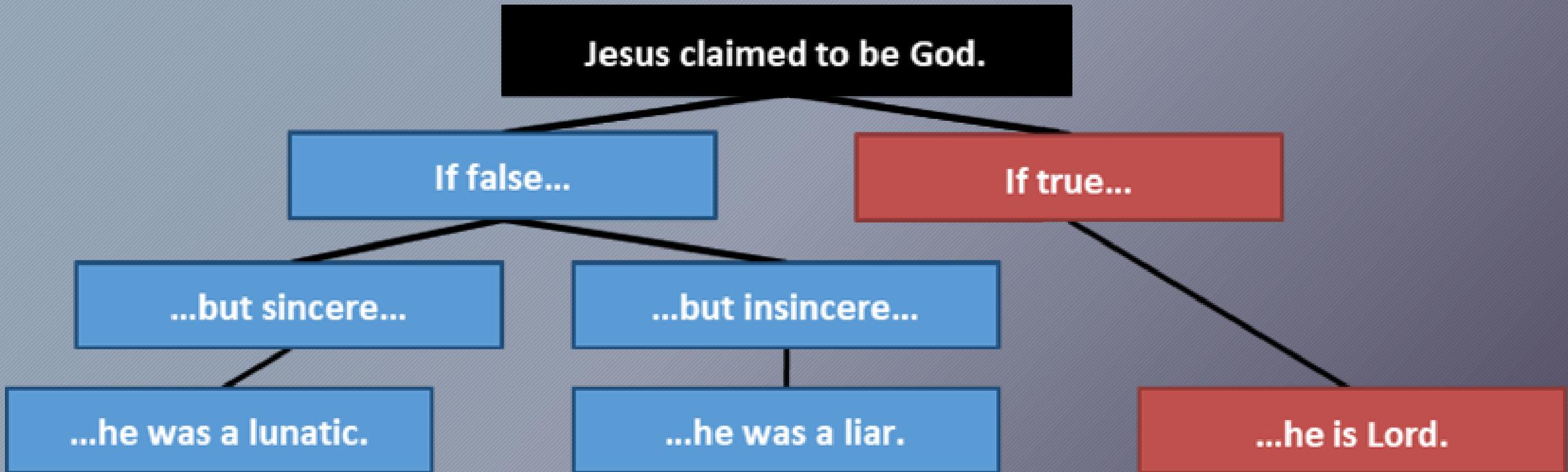
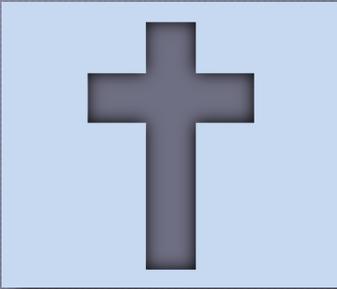
- C.S. Lewis

“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



The argument could be visualized this way:



Conclusion



Christianity is not merely believing that Jesus existed; it is believing Jesus when he says, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” It makes all the difference in how we answer his question, “Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

Next Week:

Difficulties in the Bible

