

Lesson Six: Is Jesus the Christ?

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him."

Colossians 1:15, 19

What's So Special About Jesus?

Jesus of Nazareth has caused quite a stir in our world. He is undoubtedly the most influential person to ever live (you even set your calendar by His birth!) What makes Him so special? Simply put, His claim and proof of Divinity. Many others have claimed Divinity, but no others have proven it. Jesus proved it by fulfilling all the predictions we were told to look for, and by giving us the most telling sign of ~~all-the~~ resurrection from the dead.

It is no surprise that this is the most documented subject in the world of antiquity, as we studied previously. Clearly God is sending us a message. But what were we to look for? How are we to know that He is the Christ?

John the Baptist knew precisely what to look for. Consider the answer Christ gave him, when he questioned Jesus about a prediction from the Old Testament:

"When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

Matthew 11:2-6

Jesus was validating the confirmation that John was looking for in accordance with the scriptures in Isaiah 35:5 and 61:1, which predicted the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

As for ourselves, we've acknowledged our need for hope in this world, and we've validated that the Bible is a reliable document. So clearly, the claims of Jesus are clearly worth looking into.

But Be Careful!

If all mankind is born with a seeking nature to seek for God, then making up a 'religion' is the ultimate con game - just watch some of the television preachers, or consider some of the other nonsensical religions and you'll see this con in action. But Christianity is different! It benefits no person (it is free!), it has God reaching to us instead of us trying to appease Him, many of the early adherents were killed because of it, it makes claims that are outrageous (such as the resurrection) yet it is more documented than any manuscript of antiquity. Finally, it has influenced more people than any other - it changes lives! So when a person claims they alone have received a special revelation from God...just ask them to prove it! Beware the person who either claims to be a messiah, or knows the way but just says 'trust me!'

The Prophecies Fulfilled

There are 456 identifiable prophecies about the coming Christ found in the Old Testament. All are fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth. The odds of this occurring naturally have been calculated at 1 chance out of 10^{157} . The following are an example of just a few:

Prophecy	Old Testament Prediction	New Testament Fulfillment
<p>Virgin Birth God announced nearly 700 years before Jesus was born that His Chosen One would be born of a virgin. What a tremendous sign that would be indeed!</p>	<p>Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel (God With Us) Isaiah 7:14</p>	<p>This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child, through the Holy spirit. Matthew 1:18</p>
<p>Born in Bethlehem This prediction was written approximately 750 years before the birth of Jesus.</p>	<p>But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel - Micah 5:2a</p>	<p>So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem... While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. Luke 2:4a, 6-7a</p>
<p>Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver An example of an easily disputable prediction fulfillment. If this had not actually happened, one could expect that the authorities would have contested it - there is no record of any kind of disagreement of this assertion.</p>	<p>The flock detested me... and I said 'I will not be your shepherd. Let the dying die, and the perishing perish... If you think it not best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.' So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. Zechariah 11:9a, 12</p>	<p>What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. Matthew 26:15</p>
<p>Crucified with Thieves An amazing prophecy, that the redeemer of all mankind would die a thieves death, in order to redeem the transgressors!</p>	<p>...because He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53:12b</p>	<p>When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified Him along with the criminals - one on His right, the other on His left. Luke 23:33</p>
<p>Resurrection Truly the most miraculous sign possible to mortal man. Clearly a life transforming event to witness, strong enough to drive its witnesses to accept martyrdom for the truth.</p>	<p>...you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. Psalm 16:10</p>	<p>"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, He is risen!" Luke 24:5b - 6a</p>

Proofs for the Ultimate Event

The Empty Tomb - One amazing fact that has never been disputed, is that the grave of Jesus was found empty. This means that all that would have to occur to dispute this is for someone to produce the body, or to prove that He was buried elsewhere. Clearly, affirmative evidence (the historical record of the empty tomb) and the absence of negative evidence (no credible claims to the contrary) gives us sufficient reason to believe that the tomb Jesus was buried in was found empty on that first Easter morning.

Witnesses To The Empty Tomb - A most unique claim, in fact so unique that it must be true, is the claim that the tomb was discovered and reported empty by women! In Palestine in these ancient days, women were not allowed as witnesses in a trial. If the empty tomb claim was a legend concocted by the early disciples, they surely would not propose a claim based upon the witness of women, unless it was true!

Many Appearances of the Risen Jesus - Jesus made numerous appearances to people after His resurrection. Some of them are listed below:

Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-8), Cleopas and another disciple (Matthew 28:9-10), eleven disciples and others (Luke 24:33-49), ten apostles and others (John 20:19-23), Thomas and the other apostles (John 20:26-30), with the apostles at the Mount of Olives before His ascension (Luke 24:50-52), Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5-6).

Perhaps the most notable appearance is made in a reference by the Apostle Paul: "After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep." 1 Corinthians 15:6. These people who were still alive at the time could have easily discredited Paul's statement.

The Committed Followers - What was it that turned these cowardly men into strong, fearless crusaders of the Church of Jesus the Christ? In short, the answer is seen in one verse, spoken by Peter in a speech to a crowd of people who were amused at the activities of the Lord within these men: "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact." Acts 2:32

The Early Christian Creed - The decision to change from the creed and religion of one's youth is no small event - especially in first century Palestine. Yet the Apostles and thousands of others were convinced enough to change their commitment to their traditions and religious upbringing, to the point of death, and with absolutely no earthly gain because of it. Paul describes this early creed to us: "Now brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve." 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

Gary Habermas, perhaps the most respected resurrection scholar, sums up the evidence this way: "Jesus' resurrection appearances are the most likely explanation for the historical facts." Habermas; The Risen Jesus and Future Hope; pg 33.

Some Say He Never Claimed to be the Christ?

Incredibly, some modern and liberal scholars assert that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah - that it is all a fabrication from later times. Clearly, however, they must ignore Scripture.

Consider just the following passages:

Jesus Proclaimed: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

Jesus Claimed Authority: (After some people brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus to heal him, Jesus said to him:) "Your sins are forgiven." (The crowd was incensed by this apparent blasphemy, because only God has the authority to forgive sins - so Jesus said to them:) "Which is easier: to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Luke 5:20b, 22b-25

Jesus Proclaimed to the Samaritan Woman: The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am He." John 4:25-26

What Does All This Mean?

IN SUMMARY, consider the statement of Theologian Michael Green:

"The appearances of Jesus are as well authenticated as anything in antiquity...there can be no rational doubt that they occurred, and that the main reason why Christians became sure of the resurrection in the earliest days was just this. They could say with assurance, 'We have seen the Lord.' They knew it was he!" Michael Green; The Empty Cross of Jesus; pg 97

What does the fact of the resurrection mean to us? The clear answer is eloquently stated by J.N.D. Anderson, the former director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies at the University of London. He concludes this about the resurrection of Jesus:

"If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."
1 Corinthians 15:14

"[It is] either the supreme fact in history or it is a gigantic hoax...to fail to adjust one's life to its implications means irreparable loss." J.N.D. Anderson; The Evidence for the Resurrection; pg 3f

"He will be the judge of humankind, He forgives sins, His presence is God's presence, one's attitude toward him decides one's destiny. His actions are God's actions, He teaches with divine authority, he receives worship, His is the model human being, and He applies to Himself Old Testament texts that describe God." Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World; Essay by Clark Pinnock

Thinking Points

Two Minute Drill: Why do we believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

What is Christ's 'Key Message'?

How does the message of Christ fit with the message of the Old Testament?

Is belief in Christ's death and resurrection valid? Why?

How is Jesus different from others who claim to be the Messiah?

Lesson Summary

There is documentation of the world looking for a 'Messiah' for over a thousand years. The criteria for recognizing this Messiah are clear.

Jesus fits the Messiah criteria perfectly.

The resurrection is the most profound event in history. Conclusion:

Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.

Next Lesson: Christian Doctrine Overview

Resources:

[The Case For Christ](#); Lee Strobel; Zondervan Publishing House; 1998 [Jesus](#)

[Under Fire](#); Michael Wilkins, J.P. Moreland; Zondervan Publishing House; 1995 [The](#)

[Historical Jesus](#); Gary Habermas; College Press Publishing; 1996 [The Signature](#)

[of Jesus](#); Brennan Manning; Multnomah Books; 1996

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