

HISTORICAL AND BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS CHRIST

PURPOSE of this discussion is to investigate the historical and Biblical facts surrounding the person of Jesus Christ, and how our conclusion of Jesus can relate to us today. This will be done through the Bible. So, here is evidence this is the most trustworthy source.

Reasons to believe in the Bible. The Bible is **logically consistent**, here are some reasons why:

A. The Bible is scientifically accurate – here are just a few things it describes:

1. Radioactive decay (2Peter 3:10)
2. Hydrologic cycles (Ps.135:7, Ec.1:7, Job 36:27-29)
3. Atmospheric jet streams (Ecc. 1:6)
4. Clouds and condensation (Job 26:8, 37:11)
5. Earth's spherical shape (Isa. 40:22)
6. The expansion of the universe (Job 26:7)
7. The impossibility of numbering the stars (Jer. 33:22)
8. Earth's foundation – hung on nothing (Job 26:7)
9. That air has weight (Job 28:25)
10. Hydrothermic vents (Gen. 7:11, Job. 38:16)
11. That like begets like – a biological law (Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 25)
12. The chemical composition of “flesh” –the same compounds other matter consists of – described as dust (Gen. 2:7, 3:19)
13. That blood is vitally important for life (Lev. 17:11)
14. That one event could be seen across the world – an impossibility then – now possible through TV (Mt. 24:30, Rev. 11:9-11)

B. The Bible is prophetically accurate (here are a few examples – there are thousands more).

1. There are over 330 prophesies concerning the coming Messiah. Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled, to the letter, every one of these prophesies to this date – *(A prophesy was a direct message from God to the people concerning future events. These messages were given through prophets. All Biblical prophesies and prophets are from Jewish history. Capital punishment by stoning was the penalty for any prophet whose prophesies were not 100% true and fulfilled.)*

2. The following probabilities are taken from Peter Stoner in Science Speaks.

- a. By using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophesies, we find the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophesies is one chance in 100,000,000,000,000,000 or 10 to the 17th power.
- b. If one man fulfilled 48 prophesies, it would be one chance in 10 to the 157th power.

3. With 330 prophesies, it is one chance in 10 to the 1081st power.

4. Illustration by Stoner: “If we would take 10 to the 17th silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas they would cover the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and thoroughly mix the whole mess state-wide. Then blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wished, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that it is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and them all coming true in any one man, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.”

5. Some Examples:

	<u>Prophecy</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
1. Type of Birth	Isaiah 7:14	Matt. 1:18-23
2. Birthplace	Micah 5:2	Luke 2:4, 6-7
3. Purpose of His Death	Isaiah 53:4-6	1 Peter 2:24
4. Beat and Spit on	Isaiah 50:6	Matt. 26:67, 27:29-30
5. Pierced Through Hands and Feet	Psalms 22:16	John 20:27
6. Crucified with Thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Matt. 27:38
7. Resurrection	Psalms 16:9-10	Acts 2:31
8. Ascension	Psalms 68:18	Acts 1:9

**Others include: a specific lineage from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Judah to David, being betrayed by a friend to death for 30 pieces of silver, having no bones broken, having his clothes gambled for at death, having his side pierced on his death, the sun going dark at his death and raising Himself from the dead 3 days later.

C. The Bible is historically accurate, real people, places and events corroborated by archeology (here are just a couple of examples).

1. Hitites – critics condemned the Bible’s description of this group; archeological digs have since proven the existence of these people.
2. Caesar Augustus’ census around the time of Christ’s birth (Luke 2:1).

D. The Bible’s authors agree (over 40 authors of different backgrounds, times, social status, languages and ethnic groups).

E. Bible is textually accurate (here is a quick comparison with Homer’s Iliad – the next closest textually accurate manuscript).

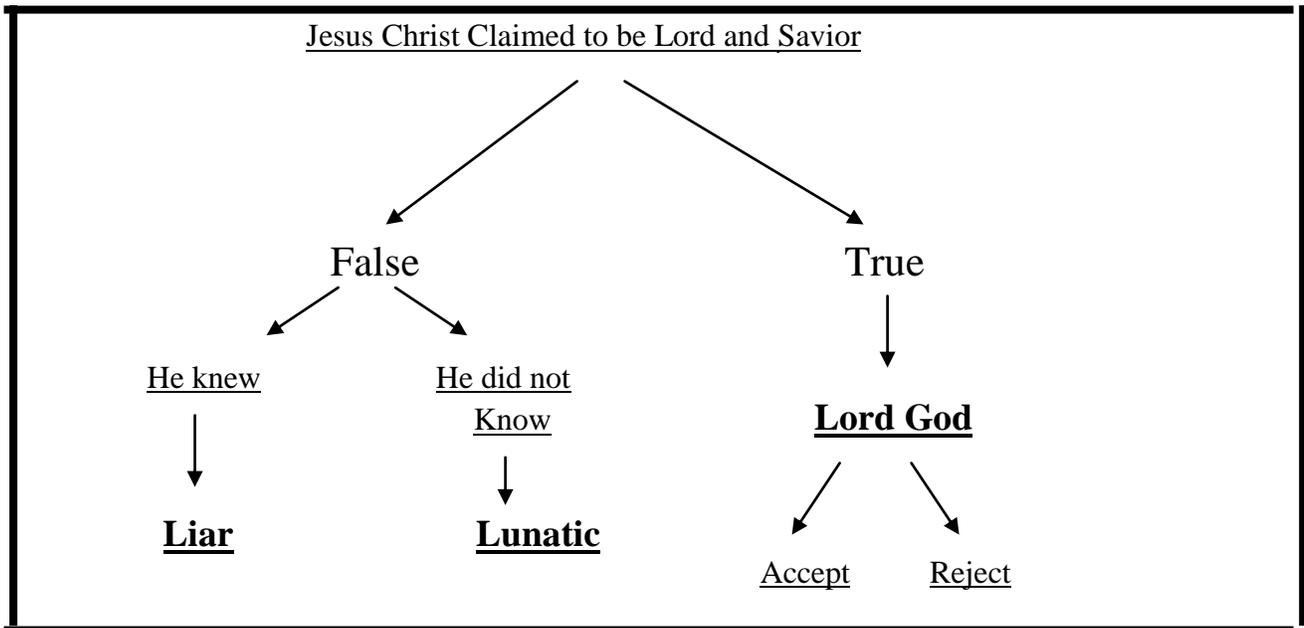
1. The NT has copies from AD 125 (~25-70 years after written), The Iliad’s earliest copy is from 400 BC (500 years after written).
2. NT has 24,000 early copies (~200 yrs) vs. Iliad’s 643.

You may choose at the end of your investigative processes of the New Testament to say, “I choose not to believe it.” But you may not reserve the right to say, “Because there is not enough evidence to believe it.”

– Simon Greely - Famed Law Professor, Harvard Law School.

What did Jesus claim?

1. John 10:28-33 He was God
2. John 14:6-9 He was the only way to God
3. Matt. 28:18-20 He claimed all authority
4. John 11:21-45 He has power over death (raised Lazarus)
5. John 8:57-59 Pharisee's wanting to stone Him because He claimed He was God.
6. John 13:12-14 Telling disciples they are right in calling Him Lord.
7. John 20:28, 9:38, Matt. 2:11, 14:33, 28:9, 17, Luke 24:52. He received worship and called God and didn't correct them.



1. If Jesus knew His claims were false, we would have to conclude that Jesus was a liar and an imposter.
2. If Jesus did not know that His claims were false and he was sincerely wrong, we would have to conclude that Jesus was crazy, a lunatic, or deluded.

C.S. Lewis – “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 a man who says he is a poached egg – or else 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.”

JESUS CHRIST – CHARACTER AND TEACHING

A. His Character:

1. Mark 1:40-42
 - a. Why was Jesus willing to cleanse or heal the lepers? (especially when everyone else avoided them.
2. John 2:13-16 – Jesus takes action to right wrong.
 - a. Jesus single-handedly removes approximately 40 merchants from inside the temple which was reserved only for God and His people.
 - b. What does this situation reveal about Jesus?
3. John 13:1-15 – cleaning the feet of the disciples
What quality does Jesus demonstrate by performing only a servant’s job of washing his disciples feet?
4. Luke 23:33-37 – Forgiving in death
Why would Jesus be forgiving after a mock trial, beaten, a crown of thorns, and crucified on the cross for doing nothing wrong

B. His Teaching

1. Matt. 22:32-46
 - a. Multitudes astonished (v.33)
 - b. Sadducces silenced (v.34)
 - c. Jesus answers all questions and silences all of the religious leaders (v.46)
2. Matt. 7:28-29 – Jesus taught with authority
3. Mark 2:5-12 – Jesus heals the lame man, power to forgive sins (Is.35:5-6 – prophesy)

JESUS CHRIST – TRIAL AND EXECUTION

I. Pre-trial claims:

- A. John 10:17-18 – Laying down His own life.
- B. John 2:19-22 – Predicting His resurrection.

II. The Trial – encounter with Pilate, the judge. (Explanation – Pilate was a seasoned Roman Governor or judge over the Jews. He was a pagan without bias for the Jewish religion or Jesus Christ. But, he was trained in legal matters – trained to find the truth of any case.)

- A. John 18:29-38 – Jesus’ defense
 1. vs. 31-32 fulfillment of prophesy – kind of death had to be crucifixion not stoning. This indicates that Jesus had to come to this point in history.
 2. Deut. 21:23 – “For he is accursed of God that hangs upon a tree.” The Jews applied these to anyone who had been crucified. If crucifixion was the most shameful and degrading death penalty even in the eyes of the pagan world, the Jews in the time of Jesus regarded a person so executed as being, over and above, accursed of God.
 3. “The history of crucifixion as a mode of punishment for crime must be studied as a part of the Roman system of jurisprudence. The Jews, for example, accepted it only after Roman compulsion; under their own system, before Palestine became Roman territory, they inflicted the death penalty by stoning.” (A.B. Bruce)

B. Pilate's first conclusion about Jesus:

1. No guilt
2. Why?

C. John 19:4 – Pilate's second explanation – No guilt

D. John 19:6-12 – Pilate's third explanation

- a. Why did Pilate talk a second time to Jesus?
- b. Why do you think Pilate began to fear and try to release Jesus?

E. John 19:19-22 – Pilate's final conclusion about Jesus

8. Who do you think Pilate thought Jesus was?
9. Why?

F. Farrar – **description of crucifixion**: “For indeed a death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of horrible and ghastly – dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, shame, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds – all intensified just up to the point, but stopping short of giving the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness.”

“The unnatural position made every movement painful, the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish, the wounds inflamed and exposed, gradually gangrened, the arteries – especially at the head and stomach – became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood, added to the increasing misery was the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst, and all of these physical complications made the prospect of death itself, the unknown enemy, at whose approach many usually shudder most – bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release.”

IV. Execution

A. John 19:23-24 – Prophecy of clothes fulfilled (Ps.22:18) written approximately 900 years before the event.

B. John 19:31-37 – No broken bones prophecy fulfilled (Ps.34:20)

C. Proof of death – did Jesus actually die

1. Spear thrust through His side – blood and water. Green, “We are told on eyewitness authority that blood and water came out of the pierced side of Jesus. The eyewitness clearly attached great importance to this. Had Jesus been alive when the spear pierced his side, strong spouts of blood would have emerged with every heart beat. Instead, the observer noticed semi-solid dark red clot seeping out, distinct and separate from the accompanying watery serum. This is evidence of massive clotting of the blood in the main arteries and is exceptionally strong medical proof of death. It is all the more impressive because the eyewitness could not have possibly realized its significance to a pathologist. The blood and water from the spear-thrust is proof positive that Jesus was already dead.”
2. The four Roman guards who took Him off of the cross were convinced.
3. The Jews, His enemies, made sure – they believed He was dead
4. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who took and prepared the body of Jesus certainly believed.

5. The disciples were so convinced of His death that they fled and hid fearing for their lives.
6. Conclusion – Jesus was completely dead.

****THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST** is an accurate picture of what the crucifixion was like.

JESUS CHRIST – HIS RESURRECTION

I. Pre-resurrection scene:

A. **Burial preparation** – John 19:39-42 – spices and other preparations were used to retard decomposition. For Jesus, the body was anointed with semi-liquid unguent such as nard which would hold the dry spices to the linen cloth as it was wrapped several layers around the body mummy style. Around the head, a linen napkin was wrapped without spices.

B. **Tomb** – Matt. 27:62-66

1. Why did the Jews believe that it was important to place a guard at the tomb?
2. The disciplin of the Roman guard: “During the night, the captain of the guard made his rounds. On his approach the guards had to rise and salute him in a particular manner. Any guard found asleep when on duty was beaten, or his garments were set on fire.” A. Edersheim.

C. **Stone** – Matt.27:60 – “The stone was used as a protection against both men and beast. Of the enormous size of such a stone – it usually required several men to remove it. It has been estimated that the stone weighed approximately two tons and took 12 men to move it.” Thorburn

D. **Seal** – Matt.27:66 – A.T. Robertson. “The method of sealing the stone at Jesus’ tomb was probably by a cord stretched across the stone and sealed at each end. the sealing was done in the presence of the Roman guards who were left in charge to protect this stamp of Roman authority and power. They did their best to prevent theft and the resurrection.”

E. **The retreat of the disciples**

1. Matt.26:56 – the disciples left Him and fled.
2. “They are Galileans, for the most part fisher-folk, all of them more or less strangers to cities and to the ways of city life. One by one, they had become adherents of the young Teacher from Nazareth and devoted to His way of life. They had followed Him gladly and reverently until the hour of crisis came. When He was arrested on the outskirts of the Garden of Gethsemane, they all fell back and away, awed by the torches and the clamor and the rattling sabers.
3. “*The disciples secreted themselves and nothing is heard of them until the startling news is brought to them by Mary Magdalene on the morning of the third day. The whole demeanor of the disciples is one of abject fright and self-preservation.*” A. Roper

II. Resurrection or the empty tomb

A. Matt. 28:1-11

B. Matt.28:11-15 – The story of the guards

C. Thomas Thorburn tells us that the guards which had kept watch were in dire straits. After the stone had been rolled away and the seal broken, they were as good as court-martialed. The soldiers could not have alleged they were asleep, for they well knew that the penalty of sleeping upon a watch was death always rigorously enforced.”

D. “It is not hard to imagine the sight which greeted the eyes of the disciples when they reached the tomb: the stone slab, the collapsed graveclothes, the shell of the head-cloth and the gap between the two. No wonder they saw and believed. A glance at these graveclothes proved the reality, and indicated the nature of the resurrection. They had been neither touched nor folded nor manipulated by any human being. They were like a discarded chrysalis from which the butterfly has emerged.” Scott

III. Post-Resurrection appearances – 15 times

A. John 20:19-20 – Jesus appeared to disciples

B. John 20:24-29 – Jesus appears – especially for Thomas

C. I Cor. 15:6 – Jesus appeared to 500 at once.

IV. Conclusion about the resurrection:

A. The enemies of Christ, the Jewish religious leaders, could not refute the resurrection – they were strangely silent.

B. The transformed lives of the disciples:

1. Acts 2:22-24, 36-37 – Peter publicly confronting the Jews with boldness, instead of fear.
2. Dr. Simon Greenleaf, a Harvard attorney, says of the disciples: “It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.”

C. Transformed lives of 1900 years of history.

V. False theories to explain away the resurrection

A. **Swoon Theory** – says that Jesus never actually died, but swooned or went unconscious, then revived in the tomb. Refutations or holes:

1. Blood and water from spear-thrust.
2. Four veteran Roman soldiers were wrong?
3. Jesus, after the rigors and pain of trial, mockery, flogging, and the crucifixion survived 36 hours in a tomb without warmth, food or medical care, then single-handedly rolled aside the two-ton stone, overcame the 16-man Roman guard, and made His escape. That is simply beyond belief.

B. **Theft Theory** – the disciples came by night and stole the body of Jesus, then proclaimed that since the tomb was empty, Jesus was resurrected. Refutations or holes:

1. The disciples were hiding for fear of their own lives.
2. How could the disciples overcome the elite 16-man Roman guard and get close enough to try to move the stone?
3. The guard's testimony was not questioned – Matt.28:11.
4. How could the guards have a testimony of what happened if they were all asleep, which they were not?

C. **Hallucination Theory** – says that all of Christ's post-resurrection appearances were really only supposed appearances. What really happened was that people had hallucinations. Refutations:

1. The changed lives of the disciples and the continual transformation of lives could not possibly rest on hallucinations.
2. Psychologically, only particular kinds of people can have hallucinations. They are described as "high-strung, highly imaginative, and very nervous".
3. How could 500 people of average soundness of mind and temperament, in various numbers, at all sorts of times, in different situations, all have the same subjective hallucinations?

D. **Wrong Tomb Theory** – the women and everybody else went to the wrong tomb. Refutation:

1. Did the Roman guard also guard the wrong tomb?
2. The Jews certainly knew the right tomb.
3. The Romans knew – the tomb was sealed.
4. If all else failed, certainly Joseph of Arimathea, the owner of the tomb, would have solved the problem.

ENCOUNTERS AND CONCLUSIONS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

I. Encounters

A. John 1:45-51 – **Nathaniel's encounter:**

1. How would you describe Nathaniel's initial response to Jesus when Philip told him? Vs.45
2. What was Nathaniel's second and final response to Jesus. Vs.48-49 Why?

B. John 4:5-26 – **The lady at the well encounter.**

1. How did Jesus get her attention?
2. What did she conclude about Jesus? Vs. 28-29

C. John 4:39-42 – **The people of the city encounter**

1. What was their conclusion about Jesus?
2. Why did they come unanimously to their conclusion?

II. Conclusions about Jesus:

- A. Jesus of Nazareth was born over 2000 years ago. For hundreds of years, the great prophets of Israel had foretold of His coming. The Old Testament, which was written by many individuals over a period of 1500 years, contains over 300 references to His coming. At the age of 30, He began His public ministry. Time will not allow for detail except to say that in the three years that followed, He gave many the formula for a full and abundant life and for a life to come. The life Jesus led, the miracles He performed, the words He spoke, His death on the cross, His resurrection, and His ascent into Heaven, all point to the fact that He was not just a mere man.
- B The New Testament declares that in Christ there is neither male nor female, slave nor free. Wherever the true message of Christ has gone, there is sacredness of marriage, women's rights and suffrage has been acknowledged, institutions of higher learning have been established, child labor laws instituted, abolition of slavery and multitude of other position changes has given mankind new hope for living.
- C. **Simon Greenleaf**, famous Harvard professor of law, says, "all that Christianity asks of men is that they would be consistent with themselves; that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things; and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses, as they deal with fellow men, when testifying to human affairs and actions, in human tribunals. Let the witnesses be compared with themselves, with each other, and with surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as if it were given in a court of justice, on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, if it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability and truth."
- D. **Wherever this message has gone, new life, new hope, and purpose for living have resulted. Either Jesus of Nazareth was who He claimed to be, the Son of God, the Savior of mankind, or He was the greatest imposter the world has ever known. If His claims were false, a lie has accomplished more good than the truth ever has!**

