

WHY I BELIEVE

1. THE _____ OF CHRIST

Perhaps the most striking feature of the teaching of Jesus is that he spoke so often about _____.

Not only did he speak of himself often but also in the loftiest of terms.

John 6.35: I am the Bread of Life; he who comes to me shall not hunger.

John 8.12: I am the Light of the World; he who follows me will not walk in darkness.

John 11.25: I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

John 14.6: I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by me.

Matthew 11.28: Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest.

In addition he claimed that

- (1) he was without sin (Jn 8.45-46),
- (2) he had authority to forgive sins (Mk 2.1-12),
- (3) he would _____ the world (Jn 5.22-29 and Mt 25.31-46), and
- (4) to see him was to see the Father (Jn 14.8-9).

John R. W. Stott: This self-centeredness of the teachings of Jesus immediately sets him apart from the other great religious teachers of the world. They were self-effacing. They pointed away from themselves, saying, "That is the truth, so far as I perceive it; follow that." Jesus said: "I am the Truth; follow me."

In his most daring statement, he claimed the _____ of God as his own.

John 8.56-59: Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at him ...

God to Moses, Exodus 3.14: I AM WHO I AM. Say to the Israelites: **I AM** has sent me to you.

"I AM WHO I AM" – in Hebrew: Yahweh

C. S. Lewis: A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic 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' "BREATH-TAKING EGOCENTRICITY" LEAVES US WITH ONLY THREE OPTIONS:

- 1. Jesus was a _____: his claims were false and he knew it.**
- 2. Jesus was a lunatic: his claims were false but he didn't know it.**
- 3. Jesus is Lord: his claims were true.**

THE ONE OPTION NOT OPEN REGARDING JESUS: HE WAS A _____.

C. S. Lewis: 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.

2. THE _____ OF CHRIST

When the original disciples first met Jesus, the last thing they would have thought is that he might be God.

But that is what the disciples came to believe.

Why? Because the character of Christ _____ the claims of Christ.

1 Peter 2.21-23: Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps, **who committed no sin**, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, he did not revile in return ...

1 John 3.5: Jesus appeared so that he might take away our sins. And **in him was no sin**.

Jewish theology held that every person was _____ by nature.

Disciples might revere their rabbi as a great man but never as a sinless man.

The followers of Jesus came to believe not merely that he was better than the rest of us.

They concluded he was _____ than the rest of us: we are sinners; he was not.

3. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

Acts 2.22-32: Men of Israel, ... Jesus ... was accredited to you by God by miracles and wonders and signs. ... You, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact

WHY BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION

A. The Tomb was _____.

The message about Jesus being raised from the dead was highly _____ to the authorities.

Together the Romans and the Jewish leaders did all they could to _____ the disciples.

The easiest way to shut down the early Christian movement: go to the tomb, get the _____, and put it on display. Problem solved.

B. The Eyewitnesses were _____.

1. They knew Jesus _____.
2. They experienced no personal _____ by claiming that Jesus had risen from the dead.

In fact, history tells us that because of their claims, the disciples received not riches and fame but poverty and persecution.

AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY: THE _____ THEORY

The tomb was empty because the disciples stole the body.

This theory requires you to believe that the disciples all died for what they knew to be a lie.

3. They were _____.

Chuck Colson: I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me.

How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world – and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible. Take it from one who was involved in conspiracy, who saw the frailty of man firsthand. There is no way the 11 apostles, who were with Jesus at the time of the resurrection, could ever have gone around for 40 years proclaiming Jesus' resurrection unless it were true.

4. They had been _____.

Some say the early witnesses so wanted and so believed that Jesus would come back from the dead that they deluded themselves into thinking that he had.

That just doesn't square with the evidence.

Mark 16.1: When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body.

Luke 24.9-11: (They) returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ... But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.

John 20.25: Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won't believe.

AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY: THE _____ THEORY

This theory claims that Jesus did not die on the cross.

He appeared to die but later he _____ and the disciples mistakenly believed him to be resurrected.

This theory requires we believe that after receiving thirty-nine lashes and being nailed to a cross, somehow Jesus gets out of the tomb, trudges up the steps to an upper room and appears to his demoralized disciples, his body covered with the markings of his scourging and his crucifixion.

When they see him, they think not that somehow he has escaped the Romans, but that he has _____ death.

4. ONGOING _____ WITH CHRIST

Those who would discredit the resurrection need to explain the change in a man named Saul: a Pharisee who devoted his life to persecuting and executing Christians.

Acts 22.6-8: About noon a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice, “Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” I asked. “I am Jesus of Nazareth, who you are persecuting,” he said.

Louis Zamperini: In that moment I felt the Holy Spirit enter my heart. When I was still on my knees, I forgave all my guards, and I knew I was through smoking, drinking and chasing women.

Laura Hillenbrand: In a single, silent moment his rage, his fear, his humiliation and helplessness had fallen away. He was not the worthless, broken, forsaken man that Watanabe had striven to make him. That morning, he believed, he was a new creation.

Honduras Mission Trip: November 3-6

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