



## The Christian's Answer to Life's Big Questions 2

### Who was Jesus & Did He Really Rise from the Dead?

Christianity HINGES on who Jesus IS and what He really DID.

Without a Resurrection, Christianity is reduced to a religion of GOOD WORKS rather than GOOD NEWS, just like all the others.

→ How do people out there perceive Jesus? What arguments / viewpoints have you heard? How did you view Him before you became a Christian?

→ Why is the resurrection so crucial to the message, claims and power of Christianity.

#### Q<sup>1</sup>: WAS JESUS A REAL HISTORICAL FIGURE?

→ Have you noticed an increase in attempts to discredit the historical Jesus? Have you seen or read *The Da Vinci Code* (which created quite a stir in Christian circles a decade ago) or the *Lost Tomb of Jesus*. What's the agenda and why is it in play?

a) Evidence OUTSIDE the New Testament

- \* Both ROMAN (Tacitus, Suetonius) and JEWISH (Josephus) who referred to the CRUCIFIXION and alleged RESURRECTION.

b) Evidence INSIDE the New Testament

- \* In the field of study called 'TEXTUAL CRITICISM' biblical material holds up FAR BETTER than other texts from the same era.
- \* The CLOSER to the original DATE and the MORE identical accounts, the more you can trust a historical SOURCE.
- \* Caesar's Gallic War = Written 58-50 BC earliest copy AD 900, number of copies 9-10.
- \* New Testament = Written AD 40-100, earliest copy AD 130, full manuscripts AD 350, number of copies 5,000+ Greek, 10,000 Latin.

→ Do you find these arguments convincing? What are the supernatural elements on top of that?

#### Q<sup>2</sup>: WHO WAS JESUS? Great MORAL TEACHER, notable PROPHET, really GOOD MAN or the SON of GOD?

TRILEMMA: Was He LUNATIC, LIAR OR LORD OF ALL?

'Rabbi' John Duncan: "Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or He was Himself deluded + self-deceived, or He was Divine. There is no getting out of this trilemma. It is inexorable." Discuss!

#### DID JESUS HIMSELF THINK HE WAS GOD?

- He gave Himself divine NAMES and descriptions (John 8:12, 11:25, 14:6).
- In the picture He painted, He was the KING (John 14:9, Luke 22:30).
- He DID things that showed He regarded Himself as divine (Matt 9:5-6).
- He didn't object when people CALLED HIM God (John 20:26-29).

Jesus SPOKE as, ACTED like and CALLED Himself God.

The DISCIPLES came to that conclusion, too (Matt 16:13-20)

The JEWISH authorities were convinced that Jesus was convinced and they KILLED HIM for it (John 10:33).

→ Read John 20:26-29. How telling is Jesus' reaction to Thomas' words?

→ Why were Jesus' 'I am' statements so significant to scripture-literate Jews?

#### WAS JESUS RIGHT? WHAT EVIDENCE?

- His TEACHING
- His LIFESTYLE
- His CHARACTER
- His FULFILMENT of PROPHECY

→ How did these four characteristics demonstrate Jesus' identity and divinity? Give examples.

#### Q<sup>3</sup>: DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD? What's the evidence?

A. His ABSENCE from the TOMB

Many theories have been offered ... none of them are terribly convincing

- Jesus didn't actually DIE ... Instead He FAINTED or took some DRUG and RECOVERED in some way in the cool of the Tomb ('Swoon Hypothesis') ... John 19:33
- The Disciples STOLE the body then began a RUMOUR.
- The AUTHORITIES took the body
- ROBBERS stole the body

→ What are the weaknesses in each of those theories?

→ Who rolled the stone away? Who definitely didn't roll the stone away?

B. Resurrection APPEARANCES

- \* Bible records Jesus being seen by at least 515 people
- \* Accounts are too consistent and specific to be HALLUCINATIONS

C. The IMMEDIATE IMPACT

- \* The TIMID disciples witnessed something that completely CHANGED them, such that they went around proclaiming 'Jesus is ALIVE!'
- \* Why would they have been prepared to be MARTYRED for something they knew to be UNTRUE.

→ If you had been one of the first disciples, what would it have been like in the days around the resurrection? How do you think you would have reacted? How would it have shaped your next decade? Do you think you could have been fooled into risking life and limb for the gospel? How convinced would you have had to have been?

D. Christian EXPERIENCE through the ages

→ Which argument for the resurrection do you find most convincing?

→ Have you read any of the books written by authors / journalists / lawyers who set out to disprove the resurrection but ended up in Christian ministry? Tell us about them.