

Week One - The Case for Christ: His Life

"Reasons We Can Believe in the Reality of Who Jesus Is"

The Question: The question of "Who is Jesus?" is not a new question. The Bible tells of a conversation Jesus had with His disciples when people were asking about His identity. **Matthew 16:13-14:** When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." As in the days of Jesus, people today still have different versions of Jesus.

Different Versions of Jesus

Version #1 - Jesus was a good man.

Version #2 - Jesus was a wise teacher.

Version #3 - Jesus was a religious leader.

The life of Jesus was amazing because ...

Fact #1 - His coming was amazing.

Luke 2:16-18: "So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger. When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. All who heard it were AMAZED at what the shepherds said."

Fact #2 - His words were amazing.

Matthew 7:28: When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were AMAZED at His teaching.

Fact #3 - His miracles were amazing.

Matthew 12:22-23: Then a demon-possessed man, who was blind and couldn't speak, was brought to Jesus. He healed the man so that he could both speak and see. The crowd was AMAZED and asked, "Could it be that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah?"

Fact #4 - His actions were amazing.

Luke 4:22: All the people started talking about Jesus and were AMAZED at the wonderful things He said. They kept on asking, "Isn't he Joseph's son?"

Fact #5 - His death was amazing.

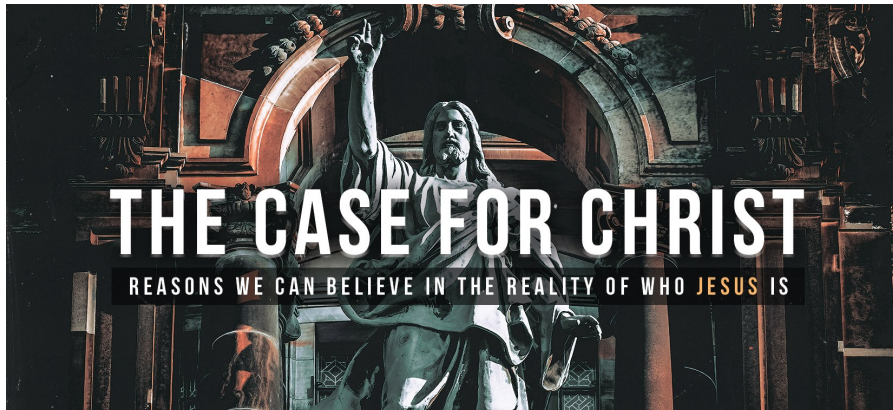
Mark 15:4-5: So again, Pilate asked Him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of." But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was AMAZED.

Fact #6 - His resurrection was amazing.

Luke 24:22-23: Some women from our group of His followers were at His tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said His body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive!

Fact #7 - The changed lives of His followers then and today are amazing.

Acts 4:13: The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men ... who had been with Jesus.



Week Two - The Case for Christ: His Death

"Reasons We Can Believe in the Reality of Who Jesus Is"

Introduction: To the world, the cross appears to be a contradiction. It seems to symbolize death rather than life, hate instead of love, violence instead of peace, judgment instead of forgiveness, and defeat instead of victory. However, for Christians, the cross is the central symbol of their faith because they understand "the rest of the story" of what it truly represents.

What the cross means to the Christian

1. The cross means love.

* **Romans 5:8:** "God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

2. The cross means forgiveness.

* **John 1:29:** "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

* **1 John 2:2:** "Christ Himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only, but also the sins of everyone."

* **Isaiah 53:6:** "All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on Him the sins of us all."

Gospel Math: 3 nails + 1 cross = 4 given.

3. The cross means life.

* **Romans 6:23:** "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

If the death of Jesus were factual ...

Truth #1 - It would imply a price has been paid.

* **Luke 23:46:** Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When He had said this, He breathed his last.

* **John 19:30:** Jesus said, "It is finished."

Truth #2 - It would imply there is now a way for man to have full access to God.

* **Luke 23:44-45:** It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

* **Hebrews 9:12:** "With His [Jesus] own blood - not the blood of goats and calves - He entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption [salvation] forever.

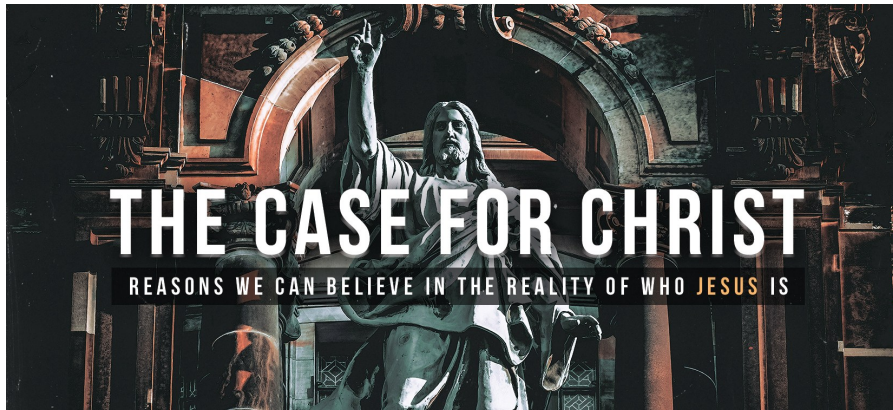
* **Hebrews 4:16:** "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Truth #3 - It would imply there is an offer from God to everyone that still stands today.

* **Luke 23:47:** The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."

* **Mark 15:39:** And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how He died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

* **Luke 23:41-43:** We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he [the thief] said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."



Week Three - The Case for Christ: His Resurrection

"Reasons We Can Believe in the Reality of Who Jesus Is"

What's at stake regarding the reality of the resurrection

Everything the Christian faith believes about Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world is based on the reality of the resurrection. If the resurrection didn't happen, everything Jesus said and did is subject to question. However, if the resurrection is real, it validates everything Jesus said and did, and believers are guaranteed the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.

* **1 Corinthians 15:17:** "If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still guilty of your sins."

* **1 Corinthians 15:20:** "But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead..."

* **Acts 1:3:** "After His suffering, He presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."

Evidence for the reality of the resurrection

Evidence #1 - The empty tomb and missing body.

Other possibilities suggested to refute the resurrection

Possibility #1 - Jesus didn't really die.

Possibility #2 - The disciples took the body.

Possibility #3 - The religious leaders took the body.

Possibility #4 - The Romans took the body.

Matthew 28:11-15: While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So, the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Evidence #2 - The multiple eyewitnesses who saw Jesus alive.

1 Corinthians 15:3-6: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living..."

➔ **Note this:** The early Christians did not believe Jesus had risen just because of the empty tomb. They believed Jesus had risen because they saw Him with their own eyes. When they talked to others about Jesus, they didn't say, "We found an empty tomb," they said, "We saw Jesus alive!" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" (John 20:18)

Evidence #3 - The countless changed lives of those who have trusted in Jesus, then and now.

➔ **Note this:** Not only did the resurrected Jesus change the lives of thousands of people in the first century, but His life-changing power has transformed the lives of countless people from every century through today.

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"