

We live in a country where you can say just about anything you want. You can spread almost any kind of belief, opinion, idea, philosophy, or religion without fear of arrest. There are some limits. You cannot threaten the President of the United States. You might be condemned by the media for what you say or write. And if you say or write lies about someone, and it damages their reputation, they could sue you. But beyond these examples, you have the freedom in America to say or write just about anything.

Now, some people in our modern world project that level of freedom upon those living in the first century. They believe that Jesus' disciples made up the idea of Jesus being the Son of God, made up the miracle of the virgin birth, made up all the miracles of Jesus. They believe the disciples of Jesus did all this so that they could start a new, phony religion, and make money off of its followers. In-other-words, some people say, the disciples of Jesus were con men. They were frauds. They were criminals.

But there is a major problem with this theory. The problem is that the disciples of Jesus died for what they taught. They faced tremendous opposition from the Jewish authorities. And later, once the Roman authorities realized that this new religion was not a sect of Judaism, and that it preached Jesus as Lord instead of Caesar, the Romans came after the apostles. The Romans were quick to pounce on anything that even hinted at revolt.

No conman, once arrested and threatened with death on a cross, would keep up the lie. If the disciples of Jesus were faking it all, they would have recanted their story once they were arrested by the Romans. Yet the facts show the opposite. All of them were eventually killed by the Romans for preaching Jesus.

So there is great evidence in favor of the fact that the disciples of Jesus fully believed all that they wrote about Jesus in the New Testament documents. They believed it with all their hearts. They were willing to die for what they wrote and preached. And they DID die at the hands of the Romans. The modern naysayers cannot take any of that away from them.

There is also evidence that what they wrote is what we have here (the New Testament). While we do not have any of the original manuscripts, we have many thousands of copies and fragments of copies. The general agreement of these many copies is evidence of how carefully the copies were made. Yes, there are some minor differences in copies or groups of copies. However, when it comes to the doctrines themselves, the key teachings of the Christian faith, there are no differences between copies. So we can be sure that we have what they wrote.

Over the centuries some individuals have attempted to disprove the reliability of the Bible writings, and all of them have come up short. Some of them have ended up as believers themselves.

Lee Strobel was an award-winning investigative reporter for the Chicago Tribune and other news papers for 14 years. As an avowed atheist, he was upset when his wife became a Christian in 1979. So he set out to use his investigative skills to investigate the

Biblical claims about Jesus. Based on the results of his investigation, Lee Strobel also became a Christian.

The men who wrote of Jesus believed Him to be the Son of God, the Savior of the world. They believed this to the point of laying down their lives for that belief. This is part of the evidence in favor of believing what the New Testament writings say about Jesus.

So what do they say about Jesus? Well let's read a summary of what they say about Jesus, from the Baptist Faith & Message. The Baptist Faith & Message is a general summary of what is commonly believed by most Southern Baptists.

1963 Baptist Faith & Message Article 2, God

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Almost everything we know about Jesus comes to us in the Biblical writings. Therefore to deny the Jesus of Christianity is to cast doubt on the scriptures. We have already dealt with the scriptures in part one of this series. You can find that sermon on our website under Resources.

In that sermon I only dealt with some of the evidence for the reliability of the Biblical writings. This series is just an overview. However, if you are not fully convinced that the New Testament writings are from God Himself, you should investigate more of the evidence.

Everything we believe as Christians depends on the Bible being the revelation of God to us. Everything we teach is based on these writings. They serve as the foundation for everything we believe and teach. **Christians edit their beliefs about the world to fit the Bible.**

The reason people come up with alternate theories about Jesus is that what the Bible teaches does not fit with other things they believe. **Unbelievers edit the Bible to fit their beliefs about the world.** They end up distorting the teachings of the Christian faith. This is what many people have done ever since the days of Jesus. We have seen this throughout the history of the church. Let me give you an example.

In the first century, many non-Jews believed what Greek philosophy taught about human life. The Greeks believed that the spirit of a person might be good, but that the flesh, the body, was evil. This was a bedrock belief for them. This was a foundational truth to them. That means everything else they believed had to agree with this idea.

Therefore, when they heard that Jesus was fully God and fully man, they could not believe it. If the flesh was evil, they could not accept that God would come in the flesh. They could not accept the incarnation of God. So they dismissed part of what the disciples of Jesus taught. They changed the message of the Christian faith. They believed that God the Son, as a spirit, only inhabited a human body for a brief time, but was not identified with that body. They taught that Jesus was spirit and not flesh, God but not man. And when that body, whoever he was, was about to be crucified and die on the cross, that Jesus, as spirit left that human body.

The implications of this for us are HUGE. If true, this means that Jesus did not really die for us. And if Jesus did not really die for us, we are still in our sins. We have not been forgiven, nor can we be. IF Jesus was not fully God and fully man, then we are lost forever. Jesus can't save us from our sins.

You see, when man tries to fit the Bible into his own world view, he has to change the Christian message, the gospel. It changes the gospel into something that no longer saves us. If you believe that human flesh is evil, then you have to explain away many things the Bible teaches. If you believe that God cannot die, then you have to conclude that Jesus was God, but not man. Or you may conclude that Jesus was man and not God.

There are many such examples. If you believe that there is no such thing as a resurrection from the dead, then you must conclude that Jesus was not raised. Paul deals with that very issue in 1 Corinthians 15.

If you believe that the Spirit of God cannot conceive a human within a woman then you will reject the virgin birth of Jesus.

Over the centuries, there have been many people who have argued against one or more of the truths stated about Jesus in the Bible. Christianity has been attacked from every angle for 2000 years. They have claimed that Jesus himself is fiction and not a historical figure. They have claimed Jesus was the first of God's creation. This is what the Jehovah's Witnesses group claims.

Other unbelievers claim that Jesus was just a prophet from God, or just a teacher of good ethics. Some even teach that Jesus himself was a conman, a fraud, a phony. Others say he was a delusional crazy person who knew some magic tricks. There are a few common objections to the resurrection of Jesus, such as the idea that He did not really die on the cross. The ideas go on and on against the teachings of the Bible. Many choose to modify the Bible so it can fit into their view of the world.

If you deny the Bible as the true Word of God, you have to explain away so much of what it says. But if you are fully convinced that these (the Bible) are the very words of God, then all it says about Jesus, no matter how far-fetched, unbelievable, or out-of-the-ordinary MUST be true. This morning, let us review just a small part of what they say about Jesus.

Jesus is God. (John 1:1, 18; John 20:28; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20).

Titus 2:11-13 (NIV) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Jesus is God. That is quite a statement for Paul to make. This is what all the apostles said. These were Jewish-Christians whose scriptures began with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The disciples of Jesus believed Jesus to be God. That was a huge leap of faith for them. It could only have come about because God Himself convinced them it was true.

"When the Bible says that Christ is God, it does not ask us to forget a single thing that it has said about the stupendous majesty of God. No, it asks us to remember every one of those things in order that we may apply them all to Jesus Christ."

--Gresham Machen, The Christian Faith in the Modern World, 1936.

As God, Jesus has all the attributes of God.

(1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2)

John 1:3 (NIV) Through him (Jesus, the Word) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Jesus is God made flesh.

Matthew 4:2; Mark 11:12; Mark 14:34; Luke 2:21;
Luke 24:39; John 4:6; John 19:28; John 11:35;
John 19:34; Gal 4:4; Hebrews 2:14, 18; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 5:7-8;

John 1:14 (NIV) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus experienced a human birth. He was circumcised on the eighth day of his life. He experienced hunger, thirst, and fatigue, just like any human. He lived and died.

Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead.

Matthew 28:1-7; Luke 24:46; John 20:1-20; Acts 2:22-24; Acts 9:4-5, 20;
Romans 1:3-4; Romans 5:6-21; Romans 8:1-3,34; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 24-28;
1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Hebrews 9:12-15, 24-28; 1 Peter 2:21-25;

Romans 4:25 (NIV) He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

The Christian faith rests on this truth. He died for our sins and because His death was an acceptable substitute, God raised Him from the dead. He was an acceptable substitute because as fully God, fully man, He was the perfect mediator. He was an acceptable substitute because He was without sin Himself.

As hard as it is to understand, the disciples of Jesus report to us their belief that Jesus is both God and man. I cannot answer all your questions about that. I cannot answer all of my own questions. But I accept it by faith as fact that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. And based on that fact, I have put my faith in Him as my Savior and Lord.

This morning I encourage you to do the same. If Jesus is only a man, and not God, there is no hope for us sinners. If Jesus is only God and not man, there is still no hope for us sinners. If Jesus did not live a perfect life, die on the cross, and was raised from the dead by God, there is no hope for us sinners.

But if Jesus is God and man, lived a perfect life on earth, died on the cross, and was raised from the dead by God, the Father, then there is absolute hope for us who are sinners. That hope is to receive Jesus as your Savior and turn your life over to Him as your Lord.