

# CHAPTER 6: Revealing the Truth about Jesus

## Discovering that Jesus' Miracles and Resurrection Substantiate His Claim to be God

Reference: *Surprised by Faith*, pages 62-81 (fourth edition); pages 65-79 (third edition)

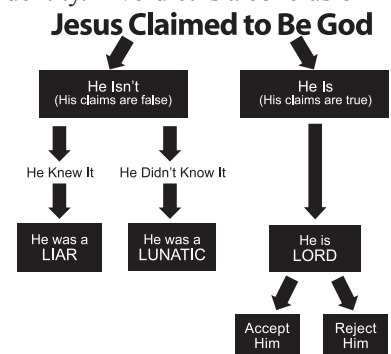
### Getting Focused

- How could Jesus be sane while claiming to be God?
- Were Jesus' miracles real or just magic?
- Was the resurrection of Jesus fact or fiction?

Chapter 5 discussed the evidence that Jesus truly did claim to be God, and that those who heard Him—both friends and enemies—understood that to be His meaning. Given these claims, what is the most reasonable option concerning Jesus' true identity? Is He only a legend? No. We have discovered that the New Testament Gospels are first century eyewitness accounts, *not* legendary fabrications written down after generations of oral tradition embellished in the telling. Is He a liar or a lunatic? Or, is He the Lord He claimed to be? On what basis can we decide between these options? Those who were with Him accurately recorded the historical evidence from His life which enables us to answer these questions with certainty.

### Making the Discovery

- Jesus is named “\_\_\_\_\_” in the New Testament. This is from the Greek word “Kurios” which means “supreme one” and is equivalent to God. What did Jesus do to convince people that indeed He was Lord?
  - Jesus demonstrated His authority to \_\_\_\_\_ and heal sickness (Luke 5:17-26). Removal of the man's paralysis proved to the Jews' understanding that Jesus had also removed the sin that caused it. Only God can forgive offenses against Himself.
  - Jesus demonstrated His authority over \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 7:11-16). Jesus broke the power death had over humankind because of their sin. Only God could have the power to conquer death and give eternal life in its place.
  - Jesus demonstrated His authority over \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 8:22-25). Scientists refer to the “laws” of nature, but Jesus had control over them because as God, He is the “law-maker.”
  - Jesus demonstrated His authority over \_\_\_\_\_ spirits (Luke 4:33-36). People asked, “What is this message?” This means, “What does this tell us about who He is?” Only God or the head of the demons could do this. Jesus told them how foolish it was to think His power was other than that of God (Matthew 12:24-29).
- The evidence of Jesus' claims and miracles is the basis for a conclusion about His identity. A verdict is a conclusion based on legal evidence, beyond a reasonable doubt. What options do we have?
  - Jesus could be a \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus cannot be a great moral teacher and also the greatest liar who ever lived (based on the billions of people who allegedly would have been deceived). This option is false because His character supports a person of the highest virtue and integrity. Furthermore it is inconceivable that Jesus could sustain a committed following for several years without being detected if He were a fraud. Finally, His truthfulness is authenticated by His resurrection from the dead.
  - Jesus could be a \_\_\_\_\_. If Jesus really thought He was God, but wasn't, He'd have to have been severely mentally deluded. This option is false because Jesus manifested no symptoms of psychiatric disorders. Rather, He demonstrated excellent mental health. This option also is false because He was authenticated by His resurrection from the dead.
  - Jesus could be \_\_\_\_\_. This option is most consistent with the evidence already considered. It is also true because there can be no greater credential to authenticate Jesus' claim to be God than the objective evidence of His physical resurrection.



## DISCOVERY #6

**“Ah-ha!”** The compelling evidence of Jesus' miracles and resurrection from the dead confirmed His claim to be God!

3. Evidence for Jesus' \_\_\_\_\_ from the grave is compelling.
- The tomb of Jesus was empty on the third day after His death.
  - Jesus appeared physically to many people after His resurrection.
  - The lives of the disciples were transformed from fearful to bold, even to the point of being martyrs.

## Application and Reflection

1. **The Bible says** that the miracles of Jesus were evidence to support His claim to be God.

*“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father”*  
(John 10:37-38).

In this chapter you were presented with evidence of Jesus' actions which backed up His claim to be God. What were the reactions of the people of Jesus' day to His miracles? (See Luke 7:16; 8:25; 8:33-37; John 4:54; 6:14-15; 9:32-33; 11:43-45; 12:37, 42-43; 20:30-31.)

In the Bible references above, do the people ever connect Jesus' ability to do miracles with the truth that He must be God? Write down an example.

2. **The Bible says** that the miracles of Jesus should lead to faith and eternal life in Him.

*Therefore many other signs [miracles] therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name* (John 20:30-31).

You may recall that some of the prophets in the Old Testament performed miracles, too (e.g., Elijah in 1 Kings 17-18). Should we conclude that Elijah is also God? What would you say to someone who raised this question? (See the discussion below for help with your answer.)

Clarence Benson in his *Biblical Beliefs* (Wheaton: ETTA, 1962, vol. 2, p. 11) says that the phrase, *“Thus saith the Lord”* occurs about 1,900 times in the Old Testament. Other expressions such as, *“the Lord said,” “the Lord spoke,”* and *“the Word of the Lord came,”* are found 3,808 times. The Old Testament prophets were extremely careful and insistent that they spoke only what God told them, and that they were only the instruments through which God manifested His power to do miracles.

No Old Testament prophet ever claimed to be God. In contrast, Jesus did claim to be God, and often spoke as God: *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6); *“I am the resurrection and the life”* (John 11:25); *“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:35); and *“I am the door of the sheep”* (John 10:7). Jesus' claims and actions are in the first person as if God Himself were speaking. They do not allow Him to be identified as only a prophet through whom God worked.

That is the authority which the Jews recognized in Jesus as recorded in Matthew 7:28-29: *“...the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.”* If Jesus were only a prophet, then His divine claims and actions could be seen as justification for the Jewish leadership to call Him a blasphemer and demand His death according to the Law.

On the other hand, they should have recognized that Jesus' miraculous actions vindicated His claims to be God. That is, He walked the talk! (See *Surprised by Faith*, pp. 69-71 [fourth edition]; pp. 70-71 [third edition].)

3. **The Bible says** that Jesus the Lord was resurrected from the dead and lives forevermore.

*The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead...” (Matthew 28:5-7).*

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. ...I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore...” (Revelation 1:8, 17-18).*

Some people deny the truthfulness of the physical resurrection of Jesus. What would you say in its defense? (The discussion below will give you some ideas.)

There have been many theories attempting to explain away the facts of Jesus’ empty tomb: a) The Swoon theory—Jesus didn’t actually die on the cross and He resuscitated in the cool tomb. His disciples then deceptively proclaimed His resurrection; b) The Conspiracy theory—the disciples stole the body and deceptively proclaimed his resurrection; c) The Jewish authorities removed the body unknown to the disciples, who mistakenly thought He had resurrected; d) The Wrong Tomb theory—the women and the disciples went to the wrong tomb and mistakenly thought He was resurrected; e) The Legend Theory—the disciples left Jerusalem for a long time and much later returned to propagate an imaginary myth of resurrection; f) The Hallucination Theory—the disciples had hallucinations in which they imagined seeing the resurrected Jesus. They then proclaimed His resurrection.

There are several problems that destroy most of these arguments. For example, these theories accept some aspects of the historical record and arbitrarily and inconsistently reject other parts. All but the legend and hallucination theories have been abandoned by most contemporary historians and theologians.

Some, like Muslims, deny that it was Jesus Himself who was crucified. They maintain that it was someone who looked like Him or it was Simon the Cyrenian (Luke 23:26) or otherwise. Others maintain that Jesus had a twin who pretended to be the resurrected Jesus after the crucifixion. Still others simply reject the resurrection by maintaining that Jesus’ body was dumped outside the city walls and eaten by wild dogs.

All these views fail when we remember that the Gospel records are eyewitness accounts and their teaching about Jesus was accepted by many Jews in Jerusalem who were in the best position to know whether or not they were telling the truth—and had a great deal to lose if they chose to believe it and follow Jesus. The fact that they did so in spite of the risk is powerful testimony that it must have been undeniably true. Consider the disciples. Why would they be willing to die for their faith (most became martyrs) if they knew the resurrection to be a hoax? If Jesus’ enemies stole His body, all they would have had to do to discredit Him and His followers would be to produce it.

Suppose you had been with Jesus, heard Him teach and saw the miracles He did. Then He turned to you and asked, “Who do you say that I am?” What do you think you would have said?

## Looking Ahead

The implication of the truth we have considered in this chapter is that each of us is faced with the decision to accept or reject Jesus as Lord of our life. Of course, this choice leads us to the question of “faith.” How do you get faith? Can faith be reasonable? Is faith just wishful thinking or can it be a certainty? What makes faith valid? These are the important questions we will explore in the next chapter.

**Answers to “Fill in the Blanks”:** 1. Lord, forgive sin, death, nature, demonic; 2. liar, lunatic, Lord; 3. resurrection