

Imagine that you are traveling to someone's house for the first time without a digital device to assist you. When you ask for directions, they tell you to go down a certain street, turn right at the red barn, go two miles and turn left after the blue house, and one mile later, you will arrive at the house with the pink roof. As you travel, you turn at the red barn, but you realize there could be other red barns, so you are a little uncertain. Then you see the blue house, but while less common, there are still some blue houses, so you are not fully assured. Finally, when you see the house with the pink roof, you know you are in the right place.

If your friend had only given you subtle clues, you might not have been able to find the house, but as the clues became increasingly unique and you found each one, you gained confidence. The more clues you found, the more confident you became that you were going the right way. Similarly, God has given us signs to reveal His coming. You see, the Bible long ago predicted that God would come to earth in the form of a human. In order to prove that it was Him, He gave us many signs beforehand to help us identify Him when He came. These signs were all recorded in the Bible to help us identify His coming.

Among the many people who have claimed to be God, the most prominent Person to ever make this claim was Jesus Christ. While some may choose not to believe Jesus is God, you cannot deny that Jesus was a real person unless you simply refuse to look at the facts. Any honest historian will tell you that Jesus was a real person who lived on earth about two thousand years ago. There were many witnesses and historians who have left written accounts of the life of Jesus from within and outside the Bible, including the writings of Lucian, the Greek satirist, Thallus, Pliny the Younger, and more. Even the Jewish Talmud mentions the death of Christ! We have too many historical records of His existence to deny that He was real. The only question is, was He God?

In *Antiquities of the Jews*, written around 94 A.D., historian, Josephus wrote of "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ." In 115 A.D., Tacitus said of Christians, "Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius," and around 110 A.D., Pliny the Younger wrote that Christians "sing hymns to Christ as to a god." These and other references from people who had no allegiance to Jesus show us that He was at the very least a notable historical figure who lived two thousand years ago. The only question left is, was He God, like He claimed?

When Jesus was on earth, and the religious leaders asked Him if He was the Christ who was prophesied of so long ago, He replied, "I am." (Mark 14:62). He later affirmed this, saying, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). As a result of His claim, some eventually tried to stone Him, claiming, "You, being a Man, make Yourself God" (John 10:33). But why did Jesus make this claim? Think about it. Jesus allowed Himself to be killed when He could have saved Himself by simply admitting that He was not really God, but He never took back His claim even in the face of death. Why not? The answer is simple. He either really believed that He was God, or He was crazy. That's the question each of us must answer.

Apparently, His followers didn't think He was crazy. They believed He was God on the basis of all the evidence. They had seen Jesus perform miracles, and then they witnessed Him alive after He had been put to death, claiming, "He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them" (Acts 1:3). His followers claimed to see Christ after His death. As a result, His followers were killed violently. Like Christ, many of them could have saved their own lives by simply denying the resurrection and denying that He was the Christ, but they would not do it. Why? People are not willing to die for a willful lie. These people had nothing to gain and everything to lose by saying Jesus had risen from the dead, but they said it anyway.

While many remain unconvinced by the biblical testimonies, what do you do about the millions who have died for Jesus since He went back to heaven? History is riddled with people who have rotted away in dungeons, been sent to the flames, were buried alive, and tortured in the most violent ways because of their faith in Christ. For those with a strong stomach, the classic book *Foxes Book of Martyrs* not only tells how the apostles of Christ eventually died, but it also gives the account of millions of martyrs throughout the Middle Ages who refused to deny the existence of Christ in the face of persecution and death. Were all these people crazy?

Beyond this, what about the millions of people around the world who say they have seen Jesus in dreams or visions, heard His voice talking to them, or have had some kind of supernatural experience with Him? While it is true that some of the supernatural stories may not be authentic, some of them must be true. There are too many instances to deny the validity of all these experiences. Christians all around the world claim to have an ongoing relationship with Jesus still today. Just because you did not see Him for yourself doesn't mean Jesus is not real, nor does it mean the experience of these people is not real. It simply means that Jesus has not revealed Himself to you yet, perhaps because of your refusal to believe.

Still, for those who are willing to honestly look at the evidence, the prophecies of the Bible give us plenty of evidence that Jesus is who He said He was. The Bible scrolls said God would come to earth as a man, His coming would be accompanied by a special star (Num. 24:17), and He would be born from a virgin (Isa. 7:14), in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). We were told that His family would move to Egypt (Hos. 11:1), He would minister in the land of Galilee (Isa. 9:1), He would come from the family line of King David (Isa. 9:7), He would be rejected by His people (Isa. 53:3), pierced at His death (Zech. 12:10), buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9), and come back to life (Ps. 49:15).

What is more amazing is that a prophecy in the book of Daniel predicted His seven-year covenant with Israel, the exact year Jesus would begin His ministry, the year He would die on the cross, and His final rejection of the Jewish nation. While those who read the prophecy looking for reasons not to believe can always find reasons to doubt, those who have studied the prophecy of Daniel 9 with an open mind have been amazed at how perfectly the timeline matches the ministry and death of Jesus. Still, outside of the evidence we find through the prophecies of the birth, life, ministry, and death of Jesus, there are also prophecies that Jesus told of future things to come which have been, and continue to be, fulfilled.

While the teachings of Christ give us profound insights about life, the prophecies He left with us continue to be fulfilled as evidence of His divinity. He not only foretold His own death and resurrection, but He warned of the persecution that would come to the church, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the many signs that would precede His return and the end of the world, which are fulfilling all around us. In light of these prophecies, Jesus said, "I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe" (John 14:29). Sadly, many still refuse to believe in spite of the abundance of evidence.

Some claim that if God came to earth, they would believe in Him, but He already came (fulfilling the prophecies), performed miracles, and even rose from the dead, yet they refuse to believe. Of course, this should be no surprise since Christ Himself said, "neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Today, Christ still performs miracles, talks to people, and answers the prayers of millions, while masses still refuse to believe. For the closed-minded, no evidence will be enough, but for those who are really searching with an open mind, there is more than sufficient evidence that Jesus Christ was and is God.

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