

“WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?”: THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

Kirk D. Schoenbein

“[I]f you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” - Jn. 8:24¹

“For I resolved to know nothing ... except Christ and him crucified.” - 1Cor. 2:2

I. Jesus The Question: “Who Do You Say that I am?” (Mt. 16:15):

A. The persistent question:

Since his appearance 2000 years ago in Israel, Jesus of Nazareth has for all history confronted humanity with the question of his identity. Although some deny his historical existence, the evidence for his historicity is overwhelming. See Appendix A: The Historical Evidence for Jesus of Nazareth. Humanity has never been the same since it has had to wrestle with his radical claims to be the Son of God, the Savior of humanity and the Incarnation of Truth. These claims provoke the same questions that haunted the people of First Century Judea:

- “What kind of man is this?” (Mt. 8:27)(the Disciples)
- “Are you the one who was to come...?” (Mt. 11:3)(John the Baptist)
- “Could this be the Son of David?” (Mt. 12:23)(the people)
- “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son?” (Mt. 15:55)(the people)
- “Who is this?” (Matt. 21:10)(the people)
- “Who is this who even forgives sins?” (Lk.7:49)(dinner guests)
- “Who do you think you are? (Jn. 8:53)(the Pharisees)
- “Are you then the Son of God?” (Lk.22:70)(the Sanhedrin)
- “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One ?” (Mk. 14:61)(the High Priest)
- “Are you the king of the Jews?” (Lk. 23:3)(Pilate)

B. The proposed answers:

1. then:

Those who personally encountered Jesus in the First Century wrestled with the issue of his true identity, coming to many divergent conclusions:

- John the Baptist (Mt. 14:2; 16:14)
- Elijah (Mt. 16:14)
- Jeremiah (Mt. 16:14)
- one of the prophets (Mt. 16:14)
- a great prophet (Lk. 7: 16)
- a political deliverer (Jn. 6:15)

¹ All Biblical references unless otherwise noted: Oxford NIV Scofield Study Bible, (Oxford University Press, 1984).

- a good man (Jn. 7:12)
- a mere man (Jn. 10:33)
- Joseph and Mary's son (Mt. 13:55)
- the carpenter (Mk. 6:3)
- a Samaritan (Jn. 8:48)
- a political subversive (Lk.23:2)
- a tax protester (Lk.23:2)
- a blasphemer (Mt. 9:3)
- a mentally ill man (Mk. 3:21)
- a deceiver (Mt. 27:63)
- a criminal (Jn. 18:30)
- a demon possessed man (Mk. 3:22)

2. now:

Today, the world attributes many virtues and superlative qualities to Jesus, but it uniformly and unanimously denies that he was who he claimed to be; the Divine Son of God:

a. Mormons:

- Jesus was the spirit brother of Satan and the son of the Father, Elohim:

“One of the Father’s spirit sons was to be chosen to create the earth and redeem its inhabitants. When the Father, Elohim, inquired, ‘Whom shall I send?’ there were two who volunteered to go. Because the Father selected the first, the second became angry and did not keep his first estate; and in his rebellion there were many who followed after him...” - Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price, p. 107-09. See also, Journal of Discourses, 13:282; The Pearl of Great Price, Moses 4:1-4.

- Jesus was begotten by sexual relations between the Father (Adam) and Mary:

“When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who was the Father? He is the first of the human family ... Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven” Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, 1:50-51.

“Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers.” Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, 1:18.

- Jesus fathered many children by several wives:

“I discover that some...represent me as a great blasphemer, because I said...that Jesus Christ was married at Cana of Galilee, that Mary, Martha, and others were his wives, and that he begat children. All I have to say in reply to that charge is this - they worship a Savior that is too pure and holy.” Orson Hyde, Journal of Discourses, 2:210.

b. The Jehovah's Witnesses (The Watchtower Organization):

- Jesus is an exalted, created being but He is not God:

"In other words, he was the first and direct creation of Jehovah God." Kingdom is at Hand, (WTBS, 1949, pp. 46-49); "...the true Scripture speak of God's Son, the Word, as a 'god'. He is a 'mighty god', but not the Almighty God." The Truth Shall Make You Free, (WTBS, 1979, p.49).

- Jesus is actually Michael the Archangel:

"...Jesus whom we understand from the Scripture to be Michael the Archangel...", The Watchtower, 2/15/79, p. 31.; "It proves that Michael the Archangel is no other than the only-begotten Son of God, now Jesus Christ." New Heavens and New Earth, (WTBS, pp.30-31).

c. The Unification Church (The Moonies):

- Jesus was not God, but merely a "perfected man":

"The Principle does not deny the attitude of faith held by many Christians that Jesus is God, since it is true that a (any) perfected man is one body with God." Divine Principle, p. 209; "We must understand that this (John 8:58) also does not signify that Jesus was God Himself. Jesus, on earth, was a man no different from us except for the fact that he was without original sin." Divine Principle p. 212.

d. The Unity School of Christianity:

- Jesus was not God, but merely a spiritually-enlightened man:

"This Christ or perfect-man idea existing eternally in divine Mind is the true, spiritual, higher-self of every individual...the super-conscious mind, Christ-conscious, or spiritual-consciousness." Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, Unity School of Christianity, pp. 150-55; "Christ, meaning 'messiah' or 'anointed' designates one who had received a spiritual quickening from God, while Jesus is the name of the personality." Jesus Christ Heals, Unity School of Christianity, p.10; "The difference between Christ and us is not one of inherent spiritual capacity, but in difference of demonstration of it. Jesus was potentially perfect, and He expressed it; we are potentially perfect, and we have not yet expressed it." What Unity Teaches, Unity School of Christianity, p. 3.

e. The Baha'i faith:

- Jesus is one in a line of divine manifestations:

Q: "Is Jesus Christ the only manifestation of Deity, that is, is He to be believed when He said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by me?'"
A: "No, we believe that Jesus was only one of nine manifestations of the divine being...Jesus was the way, the truth and the life for His time but certainly not for all time." - Interview of Baha'i teacher by Dr. Walter Martin as recorded in The Kingdom of the Cults, Rev'd ed. (Minneapolis, Minn., Bethany House, 1985) p.274.

f. Islam:

- Jesus was a prophet from God but he was neither God nor God's Son:²

“They do blaspheme who say: ‘Allah is Christ the son of Mary.’ But Christ said: ‘O children of Israel ! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.’ Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the Garden, and the Fire will be his abode.”- The Qur’an, Sura 5:72.

“Christ, the son of Mary, was no more than a messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their food. See how Allah doth make His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the Truth!” - The Qur’an, Sura 5:75.

“...the Christians call Christ the Son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; they but imitate what Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah’s curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth.” - The Qur’an, Sura 9:30

g. Liberal Christianity:

- Jesus was not God but a mere man:

“We can honor him as a leader, a hero, a martyr; but we cannot directly bind ourselves to him, or root ourselves in him: we cannot unconditionally submit to him. Still less can we make him the centre of worship. To do so, from our point of view, would be nothing less than an intolerable deification of a human being.” – Rudolf Eucken (1911)³

- Jesus is not essential to Christianity and may not even have been historical:

“Christian faith is trust in the Christ-like God; whether Christ be regarded as historical act or mere ideal, it is trust in the God of holy and unselfish love, whose purpose is the spiritual redemption of humanity and who is revealed in the Christ-like everywhere.”; “So far as the content of Christianity is concerned, our religion would remain essentially the same, whatever judgment might be rendered upon questions of historical fact.”; “The disproof, or rendering seriously doubtful, of the historicity of Jesus would not mean the disappearance of any essential content from the Christian religion.” - Douglas C. Macintosh (1911-12)⁴

² Quotes of The Qur’an from Sproul, R.C. and Abdull Saleeb, The Dark Side of Islam, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003)

³ Quoted in B.B. Warfield, *Christless Christianity*, The Works of Benjamin. B. Warfield, Vol. III, (NY: Oxford U. Press, 1932), p. 322.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 333-34.

C. The pronounced division:

An inherent attribute of truth is that it necessarily excludes that which is not true. Jesus taught that the truth as to his identity would sharply divide humanity. For those who seek to make Christianity inclusive of other religions and to deny its inherent exclusiveness, Christ himself is the one who opposes them by declaring that he is the very incarnation of truth and the ultimate point of division among humanity:

- “I have come to bring fire on the earth... Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father...” – Lk.12:49-53
- “He who is not with me is against me...” (Mt.12:30)
- “Whoever believes in him (Christ) is not condemned and whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” (Jn. 3:18)(Christ here recognizes no third option to belief or unbelief in Him.)
- “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ... I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ... whoever enters through me will be saved.” (Jn. 10:1-9)
- “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jn. 14:6)

D. The precluded middle: Jesus is either God (Lord) or not God (Liar or Lunatic):

In speaking about himself, Jesus asserted that he was in reality the eternal, self-existing, divine Being; in other words, He claimed he was God! ***See Appendix B: The Radical Claims of Jesus.*** When a man claims to be God our options on how we can view him are drastically narrowed. Either Jesus is God and we must pledge our very souls to Him, or He is not God and we must pity Him as a raving lunatic or reject Him as an abominable evil. It is impossible to for a mere man to claim to be God and be a good prophet or moral teacher as expressed below:

Jesus: Liar, Lunatic or Lord

- “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would rather be a lunatic - on the level of the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a Demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” - *C.S. Lewis* (1943)⁵

⁵ C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (N.Y., N.Y., Macmillan Publishing, 1943), p.56

- “Not only in His own day but throughout all time the alternatives constantly stare us in the face – *aut Deus aut non sanus; aut Deus aut bonus* (“not God, not sane; not God, not good”). ... At bottom ... disbelief, when it works itself out, must not merely neglect Jesus but condemn Him ... Either Jesus came from God, or we can scarcely avoid declaring Him possessed of the Evil One. He makes or mars the world.” - **B.B. Warfield** (1914)⁶
- “Was Jesus the silliest of men; or the most wicked? ... Are we to ask with Renan how far Jesus may be supposed to have gone in assuming a *rôle* He knew He had no claim upon? Are we to ask, with Oscar Holtzmann, was Jesus a fanatic? These are the alternatives; grossly deceiving; grossly deceived; or else neither deceiving nor deceived, but speaking the words of soberness and truth, He, the flower of human sanity; He, the ripe fruit of human perfection; can He be supposed to have announced to His followers that He was above all angels, abode continually in equal intercourse with the Father, shared with Him in the ineffable Name – and it not be true?” – **B.B. Warfield** (1907)⁷
- “Whether he is explained as a paranoiac lunatic or merely as a visionary ecstatic, it is inevitable that those who cannot see in Him the Divine Being He proclaimed Himself to be, ... should seek the account of His too lofty estimate of Himself in some – greater or lesser – mental derangement. ... In simple fact, Jesus’ career was not that of an ordinary man: and the dilemma is inevitable that He was either something more than a normal man or something less. We, like His contemporaries – and His contemporaries like us – have only the alternatives: either superhuman or subnormal, either Divine or else “out of His mind.” – **B.B. Warfield** (1914)⁸
- “So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath”(Mk. 2:28); “When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind.’ And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He is possessed by Beelezebub.’” **Mark** (Mk.2:28; 3:20-22)(68 AD)

Jesus: God or not God

The three options on Jesus can ultimately be reduced to two: either he is who claimed to be, God, or he is not God, and this reduction to two options on Jesus is presented to us by none other than Jesus himself:

- “He who is not with me is against me...”- Mt. 12:20

⁶ B.B. Warfield, *Misconception of Jesus, and Blasphemy of the Son of Man*, The Works of Benjamin. B. Warfield, Vol. III, pp. 93-94.

⁷ B.B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*, (Birmingham, AL, Solid Ground Christian Books, 1907), p. 302.

⁸ B.B. Warfield, *Misconception of Jesus, and Blasphemy of the Son of Man*, pp.71-72.

- “I have come to bring fire on the earth ... Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father...” – Lk.12:49-53 ***See Appendix C: Jesus: The Division Between True Religion and False Religion.***
- “Whoever believes in him (Christ) is not condemned and whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” - Jn. 3:18
- “[I]f you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins”- Jn. 8:24).

E. The proven truth:

As this study will demonstrate, the Scriptures present Jesus with an objectively true identity upon which the redemption of humanity from sin hangs. When demons identified Him as “the Holy One of God”, Jesus ordered them to be silent “because they knew who He was”; an assertion of His objectively true identity. (Mk. 1:24-34). When Peter confessed to Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”, Jesus blessed Peter thereby confirming the objective truth of the confession. (Mt. 16:17). When the Sanhedrin asked Jesus directly if He was the Son of God, His reply, “You are right”, affirmed the objective reality of His identity. (Lk. 22:70-71). By warning Christians about those who teach “a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached”, Paul verified that the doctrine of Christ is a defining, objectively true doctrine of Christianity. (2Cor. 11:4). Accordingly, the Biblical identity of Jesus is a non-negotiable, objective, defining, doctrinal truth to be known, embraced and defended.

In evaluating the Liar, Lunatic and Lord alternative explanatory hypotheses concerning Christ, we would do well to follow the inductive reasoning processes of a good detective:

We must fall back upon the old axiom that when all other contingencies fail, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. – Sherlock Holmes⁹

Since we can eliminate the hypotheses of Jesus the Liar and Jesus the Lunatic, we irresistibly arrive at Jesus the Lord who told the truth when he said he was our Divine Savior.

F. The profound implication:

In a statement that must rank as the most radical claim from the human mouth, Jesus proclaimed: “[I]f you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins”. (Jn. 8:24). In this singular statement Jesus made each person’s eternal destiny dependent upon their accepting Him for who He claimed to be. Since only God could rightly claim such significance, Jesus should be understood by this statement alone to be identifying Himself as God. With eternal life and eternal damnation in the balance, there is no more significant question confronting humanity generally and individually than who is Jesus Christ.

⁹ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*, The Complete Sherlock Holmes, (Garden City, NY; Doubleday & Company, 1988), p. 926.

II. Jesus the Answer: Truly God and Truly Man

“[T]he doctrine of the Two Natures is only another way of stating the doctrine of the Incarnation; and the doctrine of the Incarnation is the hinge on which the Christian system turns. No Two Natures, no Incarnation; no Incarnation, no Christianity is any distinctive sense.” – B.B. Warfield¹⁰

An irresistible dogmatic truth emerges from the NT about Jesus: He is both truly God and truly man. Apart from this doctrine, the NT Jesus would be a mass of crass contradictions:

Jesus Son of God (Jn. 3:16)	<u>vs.</u>	Jesus Son of Man (Mk. 2:10)
Jesus David’s Lord (Mt.22:41-45)	<u>vs.</u>	Jesus David’s Son (Mt. 22:41-45)
Jesus eternal (Jn. 8:58)	<u>vs.</u>	Jesus born (Lk. 2:11)
Jesus equal with God (Jn. 1:1)	<u>vs.</u>	Jesus not as great as God (Jn. 10:30)
Jesus omniscient (Mt.11:27)	<u>vs.</u>	Jesus with limited knowledge (Mt. 24:36)
Jesus omnipresent (Mt. 28:20)	<u>vs.</u>	Jesus not present today (Jn. 14:2-3)
Jesus Creator (Jn. 1:3)	<u>vs.</u>	Jesus created (Heb.2:9,17)

Although the Incarnation is beyond human comprehension, what about Christianity isn’t? Is a God without a cause or beginning, who determines all events without being evil and compromising man’s accountability any more comprehensible? As Warfield contends, the doctrine of the two natures of Christ is the key that unlocks the apparent contradictions because it has that tell-tale sign of the truth; greater coherence, consistency and explanatory power than its denial:

- “The two-natured Christ is the synthesis of the whole mass of biblical data concerning Christ. The doctrine of the Two Natures underlies all the New Testament writings severally, and it is commended to us by the combined authority of all the primitive followers of Christ who have left written records of their faith. It is the only doctrine of Christ which can be discerned lying back of our formal records in pre-written tradition; it is the aboriginal faith of the Christian community. It is the only alternative to a non-existent Christ; we must choose between a two-natured Christ and a simply mythical Christ.”¹¹
- “If Jesus was both the Son of God, in all the majesty of true deity, and a true child of man, in creaturely humility- if, that is, He was both God and man, in two distinct natures united, however inseparably and eternally, yet without conversion or confusion in one person-we have in His person, no doubt, an inexhaustible mystery, the mystery surpassing all mysteries, of combined divine love and human devotion. If He was not both God and man in two distinct natures combined in one person, the mystery of His personality passes over into a mass of crass contradictions which cannot all be believed ... The doctrines of the Two Natures supplies, in a word, the only possible solution of the enigmas of the life - manifestation of the historical Jesus. It presents itself to us, not as the creator, but as the solvent of difficulties...”¹²

¹⁰ B.B. Warfield, *The “Two Natures” and Recent Christological Speculation*, The Works of Benjamin. B. Warfield, Vol. III, p. 259.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 306-10.

- “Say that the union of God and man in one person is intrinsically an incomprehensible mystery. It is nevertheless a mystery which, if it cannot be itself explained, yet explains. Without it, everything else is an incomprehensible mystery: the whole developing history of the kingdom of God, the gospel-record, the great figure of Paul and his great Christological conceptions, the rise and the growth and marvelous power of nascent Christianity, the history of Christianity in the world, the history of the world itself for two thousand years – your regenerated life and mine, our changed hearts and lives, our assurance of salvation, our deathless hope of eternal life. And yet we are invited to believe Him to have been a mere man, on no other ground than that it is easier to believe him to have been mere man than a God-man!”¹³

A. Jesus: Truly God

By ascribing to Jesus exclusively Divine rights, powers, prerogatives, attributes and titles, the Bible irresistibly identifies Him as God. There is nothing in Scripture said about God that is not also said about Jesus and what is said about Jesus is said about no created thing. The irrefutable conclusion that emerges from a systematic study of Scripture is that Jesus is God. All attempts to extract a merely human Jesus from the NT fail because a divine-human Jesus is the only Jesus presented to the world by the NT. Ironically, as Warfield contended, those who accuse early Christians of fabricating a mythical Divine Jesus have themselves concocted a mythical merely human Jesus:

The Jesus of the New Testament is not fundamentally man, however divinely gifted; he is God tabernacling for a while among men, with heaven lying about Him not merely in his infancy, but throughout all the days of His flesh. The intense supernaturalism of this portraiture is, of course, an offense to our anti-supernaturalistic age. It is only what was to be expected, therefore, that throughout the last century and a half a long series of scholars, imbued with the antisupernaturalistic instinct of the time, have assumed the task of desupernaturalizing it. ... In the process of such criticism it is pure subjectivity which rules, and the investigator gets out as results only what he puts in as premises. ... It admits of no doubt, and it is not doubted, that supernaturalistic Christianity is the only historical Christianity. It is agreed on all hands that very first followers of Jesus ascribed to him a supernatural character. It is even allowed that it is precisely by virtue of its supernaturalistic elements that Christianity has made its way in the world. It is freely admitted that it was by the force of its enthusiastic proclamation of the divine Christ, who could not be holden of death but burst the bonds of the grave, that Christianity conquered the world itself. What account shall be given of all this? There is presented a problem here, which is insoluble on the naturalistic hypothesis. The old mythical theory fails because it requires time, and no time is at its disposal; the primitive Christians community believed in the divine Christ. ... Naturalistic criticism thus overreaches itself and is caught up suddenly by the discovery that in abolishing the supernatural Jesus it has abolished Jesus altogether, since this supernatural Jesus is the only Jesus which enters as a factor into the historical development. It is the desupernaturalized Jesus which is the mythical Jesus, who never had any existence, the postulation of the existence of whom explains nothing and leaves the whole historical development hanging in the air.¹⁴

¹³ B.B. Warfield, *The Twentieth-Century Christ*, The Works of Benjamin. B. Warfield, Vol. III, p. 389.

¹⁴ B.B. Warfield, *Jesus Christ*, The Works of Benjamin. B. Warfield, Vol. III, pp. 163-66.

1. Divine eternal existence:

God is self-existent; that is He is eternal, without a beginning: “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”(Ps. 90:2). Scripture predicates this same existence about Christ:

- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” – Jn. 1:1,2
- “ ‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, before Abraham was, I am!’ ”- Jn. 8:58
- “Father, glorify me ... with the glory I had with you before the world began.” – Jn. 17:5
- “He (the Son) is before all things and in him all things hold together.” – Col. 1:17
- “I (Jesus) am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and Last, the Beginning and the End.” Rev. 22:13, cp. “This is what the LORD says ... the LORD Almighty: I am the first and the last. There is no God apart from me.” – Is. 44:6

2. Divine essence:

In revealing the true essence of Christ, Scripture advances a startling assertion; Christ possesses the identical nature and essence as God:

- “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in the very nature God ...” – Phil. 2:6
- “He is the image (Gk.: *eikon* – “essential nature”) of the invisible God ...” – Col. 1:15
- “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form ...” – Col. 2:9
- “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” – Heb. 1:3

3. Divine omniscience:

God’s knowledge is infinite, perfect and without addition or limitation, and Scripture predicates this same knowledge to Christ:

- “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son” – Mt. 11:27 cp. “Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord?” (Rom. 11:33,34)
- “But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.” – Jn. 2:25
- “Jesus knew from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.” – Jn. 6:64 cp. “would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart.” (Ps. 44:21); “O Lord you ... know me ... you perceive my thoughts from afar ... Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely.” (Ps. 139:1-4)

4. Divine omnipresence:

God is without spatial limitations and is therefore everywhere present:

- “ ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ declares the LORD.” – Jer. 23:24
- “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.” – Ps. 139:7,8

Although Christ, in His human nature is subject to spatial limitations (“I am going there to prepare a place for you. And ... I will come back ...”- Jn. 14: 2,3), the Bible also predicates a divine omnipresence which must belong to His divine nature:

- “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” – Mt. 18:20
- “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” – Mt. 28:20

5. Divine creator and sustainer:

Scripture unambiguously attributes the power of creation to God and to God alone:

- “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” – Gen.1:1
- “I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself ...” – Is. 44:24
- “My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens;” – Is. 48:13
- “He (Jehovah) is the maker of all things”. – Jer. 51:19

Thus, when the Bible ascribes to Christ the power and purpose in creation it is declaring Him to be God and specifically excluding Him from the created realm. To be the Creator of all things and to be the purpose for which all things exist is by definition to be God:

- “Through him (Christ) all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made.” – John 1:3
- “[F]or us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” 1Cor. 8:6
- “For by him (Christ) all things were created...all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Col. 1:16, 17 cp. Heb. 2:10: “God, for whom and through whom everything exists”.
- “But about the Son he says ...’In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands.’ ”- Heb. 1:8-10

6. Divine omnipotence:

Christ exercised and displayed power that only God could possess:

- “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.” Mk. 4:39 cp. Ps. 107:29: “He (God) stilled the storm.”
- “... I will raise him up at the last day.” – Jn. 6:40; “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” – Jn. 2:19 cp. “But God raised him from the dead.” Acts 2:24.

7. Divine prerogatives and positions:

The Bible presses the case for the Deity of Jesus by depicting Him exercising the prerogatives and assuming the significance, status and position that exclusively belong to God which would be blasphemy for a mere mortal creature to do:

- **heals by his own will as the possessor of that power and sovereign will:**
“I am willing, he said, ‘Be clean!’” – Mt. 8:3
- **forgives sin as the offended party:**
“‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’ ... ‘Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’” – Lk. 5:20,21 cp “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness...” – Ps. 130:3,4.
- **imposes judgment as the judge of all humanity:**
“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another ... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” – Mt. 25:31-41. cp. “The LORD reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness;” – Ps. 9:7,8.
- **grants eternal life and rewards as the judge of all humanity:**
“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life.”- Jn. 10:28; “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”- Rev. 22:12
- **sends, commissions and empowers the Apostles as God did the prophets:**
“He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority ... I am sending you..” – Mt.10:1,16; “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven ...” – Mt. 16:19; “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ... Mt. 28:19.
- **speaks and commands with words that are equal with Scripture:**
Jesus issued taught, commanded and prophesied by His own authority and set His words on par with Scripture, which are the very words of God:
 - “You have heard...but I tell you...” – Mt. 5:21-44 cp. Mt. 19:8,9
 - “My words will never pass away”- Mt. 24:35 cp. Lk. 16:17 (“It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.”)
 - “... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” – Mt. 28:20.
 - “Listen to me...Jesus declared all foods clean” – Mk. 7:14-19
 - “... who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice” – Lk. 6:46,47 cp. Lk. 8:21(“who hear God’s words and puts it into practice”).
 - “If anyone keeps my words, he will never see death.”- Jn. 8:51 cp. Is. 55:2, 3: “Listen to me (God) ... hear me, that your soul may live.”)
 - “My command is this...do what I command.” – Jn. 15:12,13.

8. Divine subject of Scripture: Who, other than God, could be THE subject of Scripture, and yet Christ repeatedly declared that all the Scriptures were about Him! This is another radical claim of Christ that if made by any mere man would be an outrageous blasphemy. However, given Christ’s authentic piety and morality, these claims should be received as the truth spoken by God the Son about sharing in His Father’s Divine nature:

“You diligently study the Scriptures ... These are the Scriptures that testify about me” – Jn. 5:39; “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself... Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” – Lk. 24:27-44

9. Divine superiority over the Sabbath, the Temple, angels, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon and Jonah: Only God could be greater than all these:

- “So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” – Mk. 2:27
- “I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.” – Mt. 12:6
- “For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son...’ Or again ... ‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’ ” – Heb. 1:5-6
- “Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day...” Jn. 8:56
- “Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, ... Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house ... But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house.” – Hb. 3:3-6
- “David calls him ‘Lord’” - Mt. 22:43-45
- “... now one greater than Jonah is here... – Mt. 12:41
- “... now one greater than Solomon is here.” – Mt. 12:42

10. Divine ownership:

Jesus claimed ownership of things that could only be rightfully owned by God:

- “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ... Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” – Mt. 13:41-43, cp. Lk. 12:8: “the angels of God” and Jn. 3:3: “the kingdom of God”
- “I will build my (Christ’s) church... - Mt. 16:18 cp. “Be shepherds of the church of God”- Acts 20:28; “church of the living God” – 1 Tim. 3:15
- “At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect ...” Mk. 13:26,27 cp. Titus 1:1; 1Pet. 1:1 (“God’s elect”)
- “My sheep listen to my voice”- Jn. 10:27 cp. Ps. 100:3:“the sheep of His (God’s) pasture”
- “my peace I give you...” – Jn. 14:27 cp. “... the peace of God ...”- Phil. 4:7
- “when the Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones” – 1Thes. 3:13 cp. Zech. 14:5: “the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him”
- “All that belongs to the Father is mine.” – Jn. 16:15

11. Divine equality, dignity, honor and intimacy:

This category of proof-texts presents a consistent, coherent and compelling one-to-one correspondence in Divine equality, dignity, honor, worship and intimacy which irresistibly leads to the mysterious and unfathomable conclusion that Jesus is God:

- To speak against the Son is blasphemy: Matt. 12:31-32:
- To deny the Son is to deny the Father; to acknowledge the Son is to acknowledge the Father: 1Jn. 2:23
- To trust in Jesus is to trust in God: Jn. 14:1: “Trust in God; trust also in me.” cp. Is. 2:22 “Stop trusting in man”; Jer. 17:5: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man”
- Must honor Jesus “just as” we honor God: Jn. 5:23: “that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father”

- To know Jesus is to know God; not to know Jesus is to not know God - Jn 8:19;14:7
- Jesus and God have equal knowledge of each other: Mt.11:27: “No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son”
- Jesus, as the Son, is equal in essence to the Father: Jn. 17,18: “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working. For this reason the Jew tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”
- Jesus and God are one in essence and being: John 10:30-33 “ ‘I and the Father are one’ ... ‘We are not stoning you for any of these ... but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.’ ”
- To see Jesus is to see God: Jn:14:9: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”
- Jesus is in God and God is in Jesus: Jn. 14:11: “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me...”
- Persecution for Jesus’s sake is persecution for God’s sake: Mt. 5:11-12
- Jesus’ blood is considered God’s blood: Acts 20:28: “Be shepherds of the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.”
- Jesus’ first coming as a child and as our redeemer is the coming of God: “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in Isaiah the prophet: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way’ – ‘a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’ ” – Mk.1:1-3 cp. Is. 40:3: “...prepare the way for the LORD (“Yahweh” / “Jehovah”); make straight in wilderness a highway for our God.”
- Jesus’ second coming as King and Judge is the coming of God: “ ...when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”- 1Thes.3:13 cp. Zech. 14:5: “Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.”

12. Divine worship, reverence and praise:

The worship of a created being is unequivocally forbidden by God as idolatry. (Ex. 20:3-6; Rom. 1:25). Neither men (Acts 12:21-23; 14:11-15) nor angels (Rev. 22:8-9) should be worshipped in any way. God will not share His praise or worship with anyone. (Is. 42:8). Only the name of God is to be revered and honored. (Is. 26:13: O Lord our God...your name alone do we honor”). Thus, Satan’s desire for worship was sin despite being of the highest created order. (Matt. 4:8-10). How could God’s Word forbid idolatry and repudiate polytheism but then endorse the worship of a Jesus as a mere man, or an angel or created “god”? The Biblical imperative to worship, praise and glorify Jesus and meditate upon him and to invoke his name in prayer can only mean that he is God:

- **Jesus was worshipped and accepted worship as God:**
“ ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshipped him.” – Jn 9:38; “Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ”- Jn. 20:29
- **Jesus is to be worshipped by the angels:**
“For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father?’ ... And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’” – Heb. 1:5-6

- **Jesus will be worshipped by all creation:**
 “[T]hat at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” – Phil. 2:10,11 cp. Is. 45:23 “Before me (God) every knee will bow...”; “Worthy is the Lamb...to...receive...honor and glory and praise.” –Rev. 5:8-12 cp. Dan. 7:13-14: “one like the son of man ... men of every language worshipped him”; cp. Ps. 96:4 “For great is Jehovah and most worthy of praise”
- **Jesus is to be worshipped in the sacrament of communion:**
 “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me ... This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” – Lk. 22:19,20
- **Jesus is to be worshipped in the sacrament of baptism:**
 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...” – Mt. 28:19
- **Jesus is glorified and is to be glorified as God:**
 “...it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”- Jn. 11:4; “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.”- Jn. 13:31,32; “He (the Holy Spirit) will bring glory to me ...” – Jn. 16:14; “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ... Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” – Jn. 17:1-5.
- **Jesus is to be prayed to and invoked in prayer:**
 “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” – Jn, 14:13,14 cp. 2Cor. 12:8-10: “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said ‘My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ’s power may rest of me.”
- **Jesus is to be contemplated and mediated upon:**
 “Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest who we confess.” – Heb. 3:1.

13. Divine means for salvation:

This category of Biblical proof for the Deity of Christ can be expressed by this syllogism:

Major Premise: Salvation is only by God
 Minor Salvation: Salvation is only by Jesus
 Conclusion: Therefore, Jesus is God

- **salvation is only by God:** Who but God could be the basis of salvation, the object of faith and the giver of eternal life ? Is it possible that a created being is the object of saving faith, and if that is so then what place is there for God and what of the prohibitions upon creature worship or idolatry? Scripture unequivocally attributes the salvation of man and the title of Savior to God and God alone: Is. 12:2: “Surely God is my salvation...”; Is. 25:9: “Surely this is our God, we trusted in him, and he saved us.”; Is. 43:11: “I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior”; Is. 49:26: “I, the Lord, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

- **salvation is only by Jesus:** Scripture teaches that salvation by Jesus and by Jesus alone:
 - Jn. 3:14-16: "...so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life ... whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."
 - Jn. 10:9: "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."
 - Jn. 11:25,26: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies..."
 - Jn. 14:6: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
 - Acts 4:12: "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... that this man stands before you healed. ... Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.
 - Rom. 10:9-13: "That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ... As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will not be put to shame (Is. 28:16).' ... 'Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD (Heb. *Adonai*) will be saved (Joel 2:32)."

14. Divine names and titles:

The correspondence between the Divine names and titles for God and those for Jesus leads to an irresistible conclusion: Jesus is God. See Appendix D.: Biblical Names and Titles for Jesus. Although all Biblical names for Christ indicate His Deity, these are the clearest:

- **"God":**
 - Jn. 1:1,14: "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
 - Jn. 20:28: "My Lord and my God!"
 - Hb. 1:6-12: "But about the Son he (God) says, 'Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever ...' ... He also says (about the Son), 'In the beginning, O Lord you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands.'
- **"Our Great God and Savior":**
 - Titus 2:13: "...while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."
 - 2 Pt. 1:1: "... the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ ..."
- **"the true God":**
 - 1Jn. 5:20: "And we are in him, who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." cp. 1Jn 1:2: "The life appeared; we have seen it ... and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us."; Jn 17:1-3: "Father ... Now this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God"
- **"I Am":**
 - Jn. 8:58,59: "before Abraham was born, I am" cp. Ex. 3:14: "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me...'"
- **"Lord of lords and King of Kings":**
 - Rv. 17:14: "They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings" cp. 1Tim. 6:15: "God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords."

- **“the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”**:
 - Rv. 22:12,13: “Behold I am coming soon . . . I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” cp. Is. 44:6: “This is what the LORD says – Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last: apart from me there is no God.”
- **“the Word of God”; the Power of God”; the Wisdom of God”**:
 - Rv. 19:18: “his name is the Word of God”
 - 1Cor. 1:24: “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”
- **“Lord”**: The NT use of “Lord” for Jesus conveys the sense and title of Lord God:
 - Ps. 110:1 cp. Mt. 22:41-46 (Gk. *kurios* trans Heb. *adonai* in LXX)

15. Divine Messiah:

Scripture equates the coming of the Messiah with the coming of God and declares that the Messiah will be God Himself. With Scripture also declaring that Jesus is this Messiah, we arrive at another irresistible Biblical syllogism that leads to the conclusion that Jesus is God:

Major Premise: The Messiah is God
 Minor Premise: Jesus is the Messiah
 Conclusion: Jesus is God

- **the Messiah is God**: The OT Messianic prophecies consistently present the coming Messiah as an appearing of God on earth.¹⁵ Accordingly, the Messiah will be entitled to all the worship, praise, honor and glory due God and not appropriate for any mere man:
 - Ps. 45:6,7: “Your throne O God (*Elohim*) will last forever and ever.” cp. Heb. 1:8: “About the Son he says, ‘Your throne O God will last forever and ever’”
 - Ps. 45:17: “the nations will praise you (the Messiah-King) for ever and ever”
 - Ps. 96:13: “sing before the LORD (*Jehovah/Yahweh*), for He comes”
 - Ps. 110:1: “My LORD (*Jehovah / Yahweh*) says to my Lord (*Adonai*)” cp. Matt. 22:41-46
 - Is. 7:14: “... and will call him Immanuel (God with us)” cp. Matt. 1:23
 - Is. 9:6: “He will be called...Mighty God” (*El Gibbor*)
 - Is. 40:3-5: “prepare the way for the Lord; make straight...a highway for our God...And the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all mankind together will see it.” cp. Mal. 3:1: “the Lord (*Adonai*)...will come to His temple”
 - Jer. 23:6: “he will be called: The LORD (*Jehovah/Yahweh*) Our Righteousness”
 - Dan. 7:14: “men of every language worshipped Him (the Son of Man)”
 - Micah 5:2 - “whose origins are from old, from ancient times”
- **Jesus is the Messiah**: Jesus unequivocally viewed himself as the Messiah. He endorsed that view of himself by others and by his miracles and his resurrection he validated that view of himself. Jesus further authenticated his claim to be the Messiah by his comprehensive and meticulous fulfilment all the OT prophecies predicting his coming, ministry, life, death and resurrection as the Messiah: **See: Appendix E: Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus**. It necessarily follows that as Messiah, Jesus is God.

¹⁵ Warfield, *The Divine Messiah in the Old Testament*, The Works of Benjamin. B. Warfield, Vol. III, pp. 3-49.

B. Jesus: Truly Man

Having established the Deity of Christ, it remains to establish the equally important truth of His humanity. Scripture teaches that Christ's true humanity is inextricably linked to our redemption:

For this reason He had to be made like his brother in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. (Heb. 2:17)

To deny Christ's humanity is to deny our redemption, and to affirm His humanity is to affirm a *sine qua non* of the atonement He made for our sins. Here is Warfield's eloquent and compelling summation of the Biblical portrait of Christ's true humanity:

It would appear to be impossible to read Luke's language and doubt the real humanity of the child whose advance into manhood he is describing – advance along every element of his being – physical, intellectual and spiritual – alike. And this attribution of a complete and real humanity to Jesus is continued throughout the whole gospel narrative, and that in all the Gospels alike. Everywhere the man Christ Jesus is kept before our eyes, and every characteristic that belongs to a complete and perfect manhood is exhibited in his life as dramatized in the gospel story. All the limitations of humanity, therefore, remained his throughout ... There are no human traits lacking to the picture that is drawn of him: he was open to temptation; he was conscious of dependence on God; he was a man of prayer; he knew a "will" within him that might conceivably be opposed to the will of God; he exercised faith; he learned obedience by the things he suffered. It was not merely the mind of a man that was in him, but the heart of a man as well, and the spirit of a man. In a word, he was all that a man - a man without error and sin – is, and must be conceived to have grown, as it is proper for a man to grow, not only during his youth, but continuously through life, not alone in knowledge, but in wisdom, and not alone in wisdom, but in ... in moral strength and in beauty of holiness alike. ... We need not fear, therefore, that we may emphasize too strongly the true, the complete humanity of Christ. It is gain and nothing but gain, that we should realize it with an acuteness that may bear the term poignant. All that man as man is, that Christ is to eternity.¹⁶

From a systematic study of the NT presentation of Jesus he emerges as an authentic and genuine human with all necessary human attributes and predicates:

1. Human descent:

- "her offspring (or seed)" of woman - Gen. 3:15
- "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son" - Is. 7:14
- "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given" - Is. 9:6
- "who as to his human nature was a descendant of David" - Rom. 1:3 cp. Lk. 3:23-28 (genealogy of Christ probably through Mary to David)
- "from them (Israel) is traced the human ancestry of Christ" - Rom. 9:5
- "Seed of Abraham" - Gal. 3:16
- "born of a woman" - Gal. 4:4

¹⁶ B.B. Warfield, *The Human Development of Jesus*, Benjamin B. Warfield: Selected Shorter Writings, Vol. 1, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 161-62.

2. Human essence:

- “The Word was God ... The Word became flesh” - John 1:1,14
- “My spirit” - Luke 23:46
- “a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” - Luke 24:38-39
- “being made in human likeness...being found in appearance as a man”-Phil. 2:7-8
- “He too shared in their humanity ... he had to be made like his brothers in every way” - Heb. 2:14-17
- “He was put to death in the body” - 1Pet. 3:18
- “Christ has come in the flesh” - 1John 4:2

3. Human identity:

- “a man of sorrows” - Is. 53: 3
- “Behold the man!” - John 19:5 (Lt. “*Ecce Homo*”)
- “a man who has told you the truth” John 8:40
- “Jesus of Nazareth was a man” - Acts 2:22-23
- “the one man, Jesus Christ” - Rom. 5:15-19; 1Cor. 15:20-22, 45-49; Paul systematically presents Jesus as the Second Adam; humanity’s second federal representative in moral testing who succeeds through obedience in contrast to Adam who failed through sin.
- “the man Christ Jesus” - 1Tim. 2:5

4. Human experiences, learning, development and limitations:

In His Human nature, Jesus experienced all of the limitations and emotions associated with humanity. These limitations do not apply to the Divine nature of Jesus since that nature retains all of its own attributes such as omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. Thus, when Jesus was hungry, tired, thirsty or when he experienced any limitation He always experienced it in His human nature without contradicting His Deity. The following historical facts about Jesus Christ testify to His authentic and genuine human development:

- ***in utero* development** - Matt. 1:18-21; While the virgin conception of Jesus is unique in that it was accomplished directly by the Holy Spirit instead of a joint contribution by a human father and mother (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:34-35), it is evident that this fact did not exclude Him from having a true human nature. Apparently His virgin birth allowed Him to enter humanity and to acquire a genuine human nature without being under the guilt or corruption that Adam acquired and passed onto his posterity. Once miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit, Jesus then experienced normal *in utero* life and development. Just as Adam and Eve’s miraculous creations apart from normal conception did not detract from their genuine humanity, so Christ’s miraculous conception did not detract from his genuine humanity.
- **birth** - Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:6-7
- **circumcision** - Luke 2:21
- **physical, intellectual and spiritual growth and development:** “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God all men.” (Lk. 2:52): “baby” (Lk. 2:16) → “child” (Lk. 2:40) → “boy” (Lk. 2:43) → “man” (Jn. 19:5)
- **tempted** - Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 2:18; 4:15
- **spatial limitations** - John 16:7,17 (“I am going away...I am going to the Father”).
- **limited knowledge** - Mark. 13:32 (“No one knows...nor the Son”)

- **hunger and thirst** - Matt. 4:2; John 19:28
- **tired and slept** - John 4:6; Matt. 8:24
- **wept** - Luke 19:41; John 11:35
- **emotional pain, sorrow and distress** - Matt. 27:36-42; Luke 22:39-44
- **physical pain and suffering** - beaten by the Sanhedrin guard (Luke 22:63-65); tortured before Pilate's condemnation (John 19:1-3); tortured after Pilate's condemnation (Matt. 27:26-31); crucified (Matt. 27:32-49)
- **death** - Matt. 27:50; Heb. 2:9 "He suffered death"; 1 Pet. 3:18

5. Human as humanity was intended to be: In God's sovereign will over the will of man, He ordained that Pilate, in presenting a tortured, marred and disfigured Jesus to the mob, announced "Behold, the man!" (Lt. "*ecce homo*") (KJV Jn. 19:5). A more true description of the humanity of Christ could not have been uttered, for indeed Jesus was "The Man". As Warfield insightfully notes, Jesus was not only human as we are, but he was in fact the only human to be human as God intended humanity to be:

- "This is, therefore, no ordinary human development that Luke pictures to us here; but it is none the less - say, rather, all the more - a normal human development, the only strictly normal human development, from birth to manhood, the world has ever seen. For this child is the only child who has ever been born into the world without the fatal entail of sin, and the only child that has ever grown into manhood without having his walk and speech marred at every step by the destructive influences of sin and error. We may well account it one of the gains that we derive from the picture which Luke draws for us of the growth of Jesus from infancy to manhood, that thus we are given the sight of one normally developing human being. This is how men ought to grow up; how, were men not sinners, we would grow up. It is a great thing to have seen one such instance."¹⁷
- "Therefore it is to Him that we are to look if we would see man as man, man in possession and use of all those faculties, powers, dignities for which he was destined by the Creator. In this way the author of [Hebrews] presents Jesus before us as the pattern, the ideal, the realization of man. Looking upon Him, we have man revealed to us. . . . All the beauties of character which exhibit themselves singly in the world's saints and heroes, assemble in Him, each in its perfection and all in perfect balance and harmonious combination. If we ask what manner of man He was, we can only respond, No manner of man, but rather, by way of eminence, *the* man, the only perfect man that ever existed on earth, to whom gathered all the perfections proper to man and possible for man, that they might find a fitting home in His heart and that they might play brightly about His person. If you would know what man is, in the height of His divine idea, look at Jesus Christ."¹⁸

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-61.

¹⁸ B.B. Warfield, *The Revelation of Man, The Power of God Unto Salvation*, (Vestavia Hills, AL, Solid Ground Christian Books, 2004), pp. 9, 13-14.

C. Jesus: The Sinless Man:

1. **Was Jesus sinless?:** The Bible clearly asserts that Jesus was without any sin:
 - “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?” – Jn. 8:46
 - “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us ...” – 2Cor. 5:21
 - “...who has been tempted in every way just as we are – yet was without sin.” – Hb.4:15
 - “one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners...” – Hb. 7:26
 - “with the blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” – 1Pet. 1:19
 - “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” – 1Pet. 2:22
 - “And in him is no sin.” – 1Jn. 3:5

However, objections to his moral perfection are made based upon certain episodes in his life:

a. “Why do you call me good?” - Mark 10:18-21:

Jesus is not denying that he is good, but confronting the man with who he really is. The man views Jesus as a mere good human teacher. However, if Jesus is a mere man, as the rich young ruler supposed, he cannot be good in the sense of absolute goodness. Jesus is challenging this man’s standard of goodness and his erroneous presupposition that a mere man, whom the ruler believed Jesus to be, could be good as God counts goodness. After directing the man to follow the absolute standard of goodness as found in God’s Law, Jesus then commands him to follow himself thereby placing himself on par with God. Far from confessing that he himself is not good, Jesus is using the Socratic method of questioning presuppositions to imply that he is good and in fact he is God.

b. “Jesus came ... to be baptized by John.” - Matt. 3:13:

By receiving the baptism of John which was a baptism of repentance, Jesus was not acknowledging his sinfulness. Instead, as a man “born under the law” (Gal.4:4), Jesus had to meet all the moral obligations of his people. When John was reluctant to baptize Jesus, Jesus did not correct John’s view of His righteousness, but instead revealed to John that he had to go through the process to “fulfill all righteousness” as the Second Adam. This is also why Jesus was circumcised, why his parents presented a sacrifice for him at his birth and why he observed religious ceremonies such as the annual feasts which are all designed to convey man’s sin and God’s redemption of sinners.

c. “it was fitting that God...should make [Christ] perfect through suffering” - Heb.

2:9-10: When Scripture speaks of Christ being “made perfect” through His suffering, it is speaking of Christ in His human nature developing into a mature and complete state of human Godliness and obedience. As a child, Christ was not yet spiritually complete and prior to his suffering he had not yet undergone the ultimate test of being an obedient man. It was only through the crucifixion that Christ was given the opportunity to perform the ultimate human act of obedience. In this sense, Christ’s human spiritual and moral character was tested and proven to be perfect and complete when he submitted to the crucifixion. Given that this verse is speaking to Christ’s human nature being made complete or proven to be perfect, it stands as no refutation of His sinlessness. A man can still be without sin and yet not complete or perfect because he has not yet experienced the ultimate test of obedience.

d. “He learned obedience” - Heb. 5:8: That Jesus “learned obedience” does not mean he was sinful. By resisting every temptation, Jesus experienced on a human level what it is to obey God in the face of increased degrees of temptation and suffering. In contrast, we, as fallen but redeemed people, learn obedience through the experience of disobedience and then gradually growing in obedience through God’s sanctifying power.

e. specific alleged sins: Critics of Christianity often cite examples of Christ’s conduct as being instances of sin, but in each instance it is obvious Christ is not sinning:

- cursing the fig tree → object lesson against the mere appearance of being good
- calling Pharisees “vipers” → true because of their poisonous, false doctrine
- driving out the Temple merchants → righteous wrath of God against corrupt worship

2. Does being sinless mean Jesus was not genuinely human?

Because of the universal reality that all people sin and because of our own existential verification of that reality, we presuppose that sin is a “natural” and “essential” aspect of humanity. However, the universal reality of human sin does not mean that it is a necessary element of genuine humanity. When God first created humanity, sinfulness was not an intrinsic part of the human essence or nature. Adam and Eve were both without sin and yet genuinely human. When they committed sin, their human nature became corrupted, marred and burdened by sin, but their acquired sin nature was foreign to the original sinless humanity that God had created in them. Thus, sin is not a necessary attribute of humanity. This is further demonstrated by the fact that in heaven we will be sinless and yet very much human. Indeed, humanity without sin is the original design for humanity, man as man was meant to be. Christ’s sinlessness doesn’t detract from his humanness, it enhances it.

3. Did Jesus being tempted mean that He was not sinless?

The temptation of Christ is one of the best documented aspects of His life. (Matt. 4:1-11; 16:22-23; 27:39-40; Mk.1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Yet how can the sinlessness of Jesus be reconciled with His being tempted? Does being tempted necessarily mean that He had sinful desires and therefore He had sin in His heart? As morally fallen creatures we are often tempted to sin internally by our own evil desires. (James 1:14). However, temptation can also come externally with the archetypal external source of temptation being Satan. It was Satan who tempted Adam and Eve who were nonetheless sinless at the time. Thus, being tempted from an external source does not necessarily imply being sinful. Temptation may also be thought of in terms of an opportunity to disobey God. Because Christ was presented with occasions and opportunities to depart from God’s will, it can truly be said that He was tempted without impugning His intrinsic sinlessness.

D. Jesus: The Tempted Man

Since it is Christ’s righteousness that justifies believers (Rom. 2:23; 5:18-19) then Christ’s temptation which proved that righteousness is inextricably linked to our redemption. Yet, how real was this temptation? If Jesus is God and if God cannot be tempted (Jam. 1:13) was Jesus really tempted? Could He have sinned when tempted? If He could not have sinned then how can Scripture say that Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin”? (Heb. 4:15 cp. Heb. 2:17,18). In considering the questions of Christ’s temptation and peccability (ability to sin), we must acknowledge these points:

1. Jesus was tempted under more rigorous conditions than Adam: Any analysis of the reality of Christ’s temptation must begin with the recognition of the stark contrasts between the temptation of the First Adam and the temptation of the Last Adam:

Adam’s Garden Temptation	Christ’s Wilderness Temptation
In a world without sin	In a sin dominated world
In a garden paradise	In a barren wilderness
With a mutually supporting companion	Alone without any support
Command: Not to eat <u>one</u> type of food	Command: Not to eat <u>any</u> food
Fully nourished and satisfied	Racked by starvation after 40 day fast

2. Jesus was continuously tempted to depart from God’s intended way: Although the temptation of Jesus commonly refers to the singular incident of moral testing in the wilderness, Scripture has other references to Jesus being tempted. In Luke 4:13, it is recorded that after the temptation of Christ, Satan “left Him until an opportune time”, implying that the Tempter was not finished. Later, Satan, through Peter, repeated his enticement of Jesus to avoid the Divinely appointed cup of Messianic suffering. (Matt. 16:22). Jesus also wrestled with temptation in Gethsemane. (Mt. 26:36-42). Even while Jesus was in agony on the cross the Satanic challenge “if you are the Son of God” echoed from the wilderness in the mocking of His enemies. (Matt. 27:39-44). At times of intense human vulnerability Jesus experienced repeated temptations to violate His Father’s will.

3. Temptation successfully resisted is more intense than temptation succumbed: When a person facing temptation overcomes it by obedience to God then they have experienced that particular temptation to a greater degree than the person who surrenders to it. Thus, by successfully resisting every temptation he faced, Jesus experienced temptation to a greater degree than any other human being since all others except Christ have given into sin.

4. Jesus had the means and opportunity to sin: During His temptation by Satan, Jesus experienced in His human nature a real desire for food with His body aching with pangs of starvation. At the same time, Jesus had the power in His divine nature to satisfy His human hunger by turning rocks into bread. Thus, Jesus possessed the means and opportunity to satisfy an intense human desire against God’s will which is the essence of human temptation. As His appointed suffering in the atonement neared, Christ acknowledged His ability and opportunity to avoid it (Matt. 26:53), yet He resisted that temptation and was obedient to the glory of His Father and to the benefit of humanity. In fact Jesus was tempted beyond what any human has ever been tempted. What man has ever been tempted to turn stone into bread when starving or to call upon 12 legions of angels for deliverance when facing violence?

5. God not being subject to temptation does not apply to Christ’s human nature: When considering the question of whether Christ could legitimately be tempted, it is critical to keep in mind Christ’s two natures and that each nature retained all its essential attributes. Thus, the impeccability of God applies only to Christ’s Divine nature, not His human nature. So it is proper to speak of Christ being tempted only in His human nature. However, just because the temptation is addressed only to His human nature in no way renders it illusory.

6. The dominance of Christ's Divine nature ensured that Christ, as God, could not sin:

While Jesus possessed the physical ability to disobey God, actually committing sin requires more than physical ability; it also requires the moral ability to sin. Of paramount importance to the dilemma of the peccability of Christ is the operative relationship of His two natures in that His Divine nature controls and prevails over His human nature. Jesus ultimately is a Divine self or a Divine Person who added a human nature to Himself. If Jesus had sinned, the guilt for that sin would have extended to His Divine nature and since it is impossible for God to sin, Jesus therefore must have been impeccable. In order to sin, Jesus would have had to have the desire to sin and as the Second Person of the Trinity that simply is impossible as stated in these classic theological arguments on the issue:¹⁹

- “Christ would have been able to sin only by a completely free opposition of his will to the divine. But that was impossible since the managing possessor of the human will was the Logos; hence God would have had to apostatize from Himself - which is an absurdity.” - Bartman, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* I, p. 360;
- “The inner incapacity for sin results from the fact that the ‘I’ of the human will is the Logos.” - Schmaus, *Kathol. Dogm.*, II p. 655;
- “But since Jesus did not assume a human person ... but a human nature, and since there was in him no human ego... but, on the contrary, the human nature remained eternally united to the second person of the trinity, therefore the control of this divine person makes it absolutely impossible for the ‘possibilitas’ to become reality.” - Kuyper, *Loci* III, Ch. 3, par. 6, p. 11.

7. However, in His human nature Christ may not have known He was impeccable: In His human nature, Christ was not omniscient (Mk. 13:32). So it is distinctly possible that Christ did not know whether, in His human nature, He could sin. Not knowing whether as a man He could sin, then each temptation would be a real test of his human will and faith and therefore a real temptation. For instance, God could sovereignly ordain that a Christian be in a situation in which he is tempted to commit adultery and at the same time God could decree that he will not commit the sin because God will deliver him from the temptation through a special sanctification by the Spirit at that moment. However, because he does not know deliverance has been ordained, the Christian experiences it as a real contest of his will.

8. Revelation over Rationalism: Jesus was tempted and Jesus could not sin: The question of how the Scriptural truth of Christ's impeccability relates to the Scriptural truth of Christ's temptation calls for the Christian to embrace both propositions and to consign the resolution to the realm of the mystery of the Incarnation. Thus, both truths should be embraced and the mystery acknowledged; Christ was tempted and Christ could never sin. To require God to satisfy our finite curiosities and objections is to demand that God's revelation submit to man's rationalism, which is the height of arrogance. As with the eternity of God, the Trinity and the Sovereignty of God in relation to man's accountability, on this issue we accept the Scriptural assertions and trust the mind of God for resolution of the paradoxes.

¹⁹ quoted in G.C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1954), pp. 258-59.

III. The Person of Jesus Christ: Orthodox Truth v. Heretical Error

A. Orthodox Christology: True doctrine based on Scripture and expressed in Creeds:

Because of the limitations of human comprehension and language, the Incarnation will be an eternal mystery beyond complete our understanding as noted by church historian Phillip Schaff:

The person of Jesus Christ in the fullness of the theanthropic life cannot be exclusively set forth by any formulas of human logic. Even the imperfect, finite personality of man has a mysterious background, that escapes the speculative comprehension; how much more then the perfect personality of Christ, in which the tremendous antitheses of Creator and creature, Infinite and finite, immutable, eternal Being and changing, temporal becoming, are harmoniously conjoined! The formulas of orthodoxy can neither beget true faith, nor nourish it; they are not the bread and the water of life, but the standard for theological investigation and a rule for public teaching.

Such considerations suggest the true position and the just value of the Creed of Chalcedon, against both exaggeration and disparagement. That symbol does not aspire to comprehend the Christological mystery, but contents itself with setting forth the facts and establishing the boundaries of orthodox doctrine. It does not preclude further theological discussion, but to guard against such erroneous conceptions as would mutilate either the divine or the human in Christ, or place the two in a false relation. It is the light-house, to point out to the ship of Christological speculation the channel ... and to save it from the reefs of Nestorian dyophysitism (two natures in two persons in Christ) or of Eutychian monophysitism (one Christ with one mixed nature).²⁰

Orthodox (true) Christology was forged by the Church in the crucible of the struggle for truth against heresy. From this struggle came these definitive expressions called Creeds:

1. The Nicene Creed: To resolve the controversy occasioned by Arius' teaching that Christ was a created being, the Emperor Constantine called the bishops of the empire together to Nicea in 325 AD. In condemning Arianism, the Council of Nicea defined the Incarnation in a creed that was revised at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. This creed has been accepted as authoritative by the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches:

I believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (Gk. *homo-ousios*) with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.²¹

²⁰ Schaff, Phillip, History of the Christian Church, Vol. III, (Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1867), p.749.

²¹ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, (Leicester. England: Inter-Varsity Press), p. 1169.

2. The Chalcedonian Creed: In the years and decades following Nicea, the Church continued to wrestle with fixing the precise boundaries of how to express the Scriptural teaching on the person of Christ. The tension between Christ being one person with two distinct natures resulted in proponents either stressing the Divine nature to the exclusion of the true Human nature or *vice versa*, or stressing the one person to the exclusion of the two natures or stressing the two natures to the exclusion of the one person. This eventually led to another ecumenical meeting of bishops in 451 AD that became known as the Council of Chalcedon. To prohibit the heretical distortions of the person of Christ that arose after Nicea, the Council of Chalcedon added statements of specific exclusion about the person of Christ to the Nicene positive assertions. By this *via negativa* (Lt. “by way of negating”), the Chalcedonian Creed established tighter boundaries of orthodoxy on the doctrine of the person of Christ. Here then is the enduring confession of the Church that was forged at Chalcedon and that must wait until the coming of Christ for any improvement:

We ... teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man (Lt. *vere Deus, vere homo*), of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial (Gk. *homo-ousios*) with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-Begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ ...²²

3. The summation of orthodox Christology:

“Four elements thus enter into the orthodox doctrine concerning Christ: [1] He is true God; [2] he is true man; [3] he is one person; and [4] the divine and human in him, with all personal union and harmony, remain distinct.”²³

Schaff’s four elements can be further reduced to three summary propositions:

- **Christ has two natures: a true human nature added to His true Divine nature:**

“It is better to say that the *person* of the Son of God became incarnate than to say that the *divine nature* assumed flesh. ... When we are told that the Word became flesh, this does not mean that the logos ceased to be what He was before. ... but simply that He took on that particular character, that He acquired an additional form, without in any way changing His original nature.”²⁴

²² *Ibid*, pp. 1169-70.

²³ *Ibid*, Schaff, Phillip, History of the Christian Church, Vol. III, p.706.

²⁴ Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), pp. 323, 334.

- **The two natures of Christ never merge into one nature but remain distinct:**

“The incarnation is neither a conversion of God into man, nor a conversion of a man into God; neither a humanizing of the divine, nor a deification or apotheosis of the human; not on the other hand is it a mere outward, transitory connection of the two factors; but an actual and abiding union of the two in one personal life.”²⁵

- **The two natures are never so separated as to make Christ into two persons:**

“Therefore it cannot be said: The Logos assumed a *human* person, or united himself with a definite human individual: for then the God-man would consist of two persons; but he took upon himself the human *nature*, which is common to all men; and therefore he redeemed not a particular man, but all men, as partakers of the same nature or substance. ... In the gospel history this personal unity everywhere unmistakably appears. The self-consciousness of Christ is not divided.”²⁶

4. The *Modus Operandi* of Christological heretics: Calvin succinctly summarized the methodology of Christological heretics:

They (false teachers) seize upon the attributes of his humanity to take away his divinity, conversely upon those of his divinity to take away his humanity; and upon those spoken of both natures so conjointly that they are applicable to neither, to take away both. But what else is this than to contend that Christ is not man because he is God; that he is not God because he is man; that he is neither man nor God because he is man and God at the same time?

We therefore hold that Christ, as he is God and man, consisting of two natures united but not mingled, is our Lord ... Away with the error of Nestorius, who in wanting to pull apart rather than distinguish the nature of Christ devised a double Christ! ... Let us beware, also, of Eutyches' madness; lest, while meaning to show unity of the person, we destroy either nature... For it is no more permissible to commingle the two natures in Christ than to pull them apart.²⁷

Ultimately, all false teachings on the person of Christ commit one or more of these errors:

- **Deny one of the two natures of Christ in their true, essential attributes; or**
- **Mix the two natures into one neither truly Divine nor truly human nature; or**
- **Separate the two natures from their unity in the Son into two persons.**

²⁵ Schaff, *Ibid*, p.750.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 751-52.

²⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. I, (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, 486-87.

B. Heretical Christology: False doctrine based on Rationalism and not Revelation:

Whenever a Christian subordinates Scripture to his presuppositions of what God should be like, he in effect constructs an idol that corresponds to his rationalistic concept of God. The history of heresy in Christianity is the history of the struggle for supremacy between human philosophy and Divine revelation. The proud human mind refuses to accept mystery in God and demands a satisfactory explanation for all His judgments and choices. When human philosophy reigns in the Christian's mind, consciously or unconsciously, he wants to bring God before the bar of human inquiry and demand a satisfactory explanation. Instead of trusting Scripture for the reconciliation of the apparent contradictions and the deep mysteries of God, some Christians construct their own theology to resolve these difficulties even if it is at the expense of Biblical truth. The Scriptural teachings on any issue should be accepted whether or not we can reconcile the apparent contradictions, as the Church has done with these cherished doctrines:

<u>Proposition</u>	<u>Apparently contradictory proposition(s)</u>	<u>Doctrinal Resolution</u>
There is one God.	The Father, the Son and the Spirit are God.	→ Trinity
God authors Scripture.	Man authors Scripture.	→ Inspiration of Scripture
God determines all things.	God is not the author of sin.	→ Divine Providence of God
God predestines sinners.	Sinners are morally accountable.	→ Predestination / Election
God predestines sinners.	Christians are to evangelize/pray for sinners.	→ Predestination / Election

As with the above paradoxes of the Christian faith, the Incarnation of Christ also calls for the Christian to submit all the mysteries and paradoxes in Jesus being both God and man to the mind of God for the resolution while embracing the Scriptural teachings on Christ:

<u>Proposition</u>	<u>Apparently contradictory proposition(s)</u>	<u>Doctrinal Resolution</u>
Christ is truly God.	Christ is truly man.	→ Incarnation of Christ
Christ has two natures.	Christ is one person.	→ Incarnation of Christ

God without mystery, God without anything beyond our comprehension, God who could be completely contained within our intellectual confines would not be God, but a god of our imagination. Therefore, as we seek to explore the complexities, grasp the truths and embrace the mysteries of the Incarnation of Christ we must have these humble admonitions in mind:

- “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” (Job 42:3);
- “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of the law.” (Dt. 29:29);
- “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” (Pv. 3:5);
- “Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his “judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (Rom. 11:33)

Each of the following Christological heresies began with their authors rejecting Scripture in favor of their philosophical presuppositions of what was possible or not possible with Christ's person. They reversed the correct hierarchy and subordinated the Bible to their philosophy.

1. Docetism: Christ is Divine but not truly human; He only appeared in a human form: Out of the Greek philosophy of Gnosticism that held to a dualistic world in which all matter was evil and only non-material existence could be good, came a heresy that denied Christ's true, essential humanity. This heresy accepted Christ's Deity but, because of its tenet of the intrinsic evil of matter, it denied that Christ was truly human. It asserted that he only appeared in a human form. From the Greek word "*dokeo*" which means "to appear to be", this heresy became known as Docetism and it was one of the very first heresies on Christ that the Church had to confront.

Rationalistic presupposition: God as good and spirit could never unite with evil matter.

Characteristic of heretics, the Docetic teachers took a few isolated verses out of context to make them support their philosophical presuppositions and then they used them to trump all the numerous, plain passages that teach Christ is a true human. This distortion of Scripture violated these rules of Biblical interpretation called hermeneutics:

1. Clear passages on an issue control the interpretation of obscure passages;
2. Passages specifically addressing the issue control the interpretation of passages that either don't address the issue at all or only address it indirectly.
3. Read all Scriptures in a way that makes them consistent with each other. Do not read Scriptures in a way that pits them against each other or makes them contradictory.

The Docetists cited Rom. 8:3 ("in the likeness of sinful man") and Phil. 2:7-8 ("being made in human likeness") to argue that Christ only appeared in mere human form but not in true human substance. God, they argued, being a Spirit, could never unite with evil matter.

Refutation:

Rom. 8:3: In context, when Paul wrote that Christ came in "the likeness" of man he could not have meant the mere form of a man because he goes on to say that Christ was a "sin offering" and only a flesh and blood human could be a sin offering. Also, in Romans, Paul wrote that Christ "as to his human nature was a descendant of David" (Rom.1:3) and that he was the "one man" by whose righteousness sinners will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:5-19). So, in the very letter of Paul the Docetists cite to prove Jesus was not a man, Paul is in fact teaching that Christ had an authentic human nature.

Phil. 2:7-8: Again, "likeness" and "appearance" as used by Paul in this passage convey true, not "mere outward likeness or appearance." The Docetist reads the concept of "mere" into this passage to support his presupposition that God could never unite with a material existence that is intrinsically evil. When Paul asserts in this passage that Christ "took on the very nature of a servant" and "humbled himself" and experienced "even death on the cross" he is emphatically maintaining the true humanity of Christ, not denying it! It is inconceivable that Paul is denying Christ's humanity in either of these passages when that same Paul that also described Christ as "the man" and "the last Adam" (1Cor. 15:20-22; 45-49) and as "born of woman" (Gal. 4:4) and as "the man Christ Jesus" (1Tim. 2:5) who "appeared in a body" (1Tim. 3:16).

overall teaching of Scripture: By seizing upon two verses to teach their heresy, the Docetists ignored the rest of the Scriptural teaching on Christ that clearly asserted his true humanity. All the Scriptures previously cited in the outline (Section II. B.) prove that Jesus Christ has a true human nature, not a mere outward appearance or form of a human.

the Apostle John: Docetism is unique in that it is a heresy that was directly confronted by one of the Apostles themselves. When Docetism emerged to deny Christ's humanity John, in his Apostolic authority, declared it to be the doctrine of the antichrist:

- **John 1:1, 14:** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."
- **1 John 4:1-3:** "Every spirit that acknowledges that Christ Jesus has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God."
- **2 John 7:** "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist."

redemption: The Person of Christ is inextricably linked to the Work of Christ. In order to perform his work of being mankind's redeemer and substitute in atonement, Jesus had to be truly human. Only a genuine human could take the place of other humans in obedience to the Law, in the wrath of God for sin, in being the mediator between God and Man, in being our High Priest in heaven and our example on earth. What is at stake in the humanity of Christ is nothing less than the redemption of humanity. This Scriptural connection between Christ's Person and His Work will also be a refutation against those who would deny that Christ was genuinely God.

2. Ebionism: Christ is truly human but not Divine: In the Second Century a sect of Jewish Christians began to teach that Jesus was the Messiah and a great prophet and man like Moses, but he was not Divine. Instead, Jesus was a mere man who was adopted and exalted by God to be His son to participate in a moral or ethical unity with God but not in a unity of Divine essence. This sect, known as the Ebionites (from Heb. "poor") came from the Judaizers whom Paul wrote against in Galatians for retaining the Law in the doctrine of salvation. Rejecting the NT revelation of the Deity of Christ, the Ebionites held to a rationalistic belief that monotheism precluded one God from existing in more than one person. Any Ebionite denial of the Deity of Christ has become known as "adoptionism."

Rationalistic presupposition: One God cannot exist in more than one person.

Refutation: Because of the comprehensive OT presentation of a Divine Messiah and the NT revelation of a Divine Jesus, along with Paul's definitive refutation in Galatians of any attempt to retain Judaistic legalism in the Christian doctrine of redemption, the Ebionite heresy never became generally accepted and it eventually died out. It however resurfaced in the German Christian Liberalism of the 19th Century that Warfield fought.

3. Sabellianism: God is one person acting as Father, Son and Spirit; Jesus is not a distinct Divine Person, but one mode of God acting as the Son: Sabellius, a gentile teacher in Rome around 260 A.D, like the Jewish Ebionites, held to a philosophical presupposition that one God can only be one person. He taught that Jesus was just a mode or manifestation of God. According to Sabellius, God, being one person, operated in successive, historical modes of being; first in the mode of the Father before Jesus' coming, then in the mode of the Son when Jesus lived on earth, and then finally in the mode of the Spirit after Jesus left the earth. This assertion that Christ is just a mode of God acting became known as "modalistic monarchianism" because it sought to defend the "monarchy" (*Gk.* "one-ruler") of one God through the concept of modalism. It may also exist in the form that teaches a contemporaneous modalism of God acting presently in three modes, versus in successive theory of modalism. Sabellianism appealed to the Greek word *homo-ousios* (*Gk.*: "of the same substance") to convey the idea that Christ was the same person as the one God who was just acting in one of the three modes.

Rationalistic presuppositions: One God can only exist as one Person. Monotheism requires that we deny that Jesus is a divine person. If there are three Divine Persons then there must be three Gods, which is polytheism. One God in three persons is impossible.

Refutation: In 268, the Church convened a synod at Antioch and declared Sabellianism to be heresy because it denied the Trinity by denying that Christ was a distinct Divine Person. Although the term "trinity" was not found in Scripture, the Church recognized that the inescapable revelation of God in the Bible was a God who was one in essence but three in Person in that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each revealed as distinct persons within the one God. In addition to the Scriptures that convey the individual personhood of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, there are many verses that mention them together as distinct persons in a unity of Divine being:

John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

John 17:1-5: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. .. I have brought you glory ... by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me ... with the glory I had with you before the world began."

Matt. 3:16-17: "[H]e (the Baptist) saw the Spirit of God descending... on him (Jesus). And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my (the Father) Son, whom I love; and with him I am well pleased.'"

Matt. 28:19: "... baptizing them in the name (singular) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..."

2Cor. 13:14: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Eph. 4:4-6: “There is ... one Spirit ... one Lord , one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Titus 1:4: “Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.”

Titus 3:4-6: “...God our Savior ... saved us ... by the ... renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

1Peter. 1:2: “...chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ...”

Because Sabellius had appropriated the term *homo-ousios* to convey that Christ was not a distinct Divine person but only an emanation of God, the Synod repudiated that term and used the term *homoi-ousios* (Gk.: “of a similar substance”) to emphasize Christ as a distinct Divine Person in the Trinity. However, later the Church would embrace *homo-ousios* to convey that Christ, although a distinct person from God the Father (*contra* Sabellius), was of the “same substance” as the Father (*contra* Arius). So the Sabellian use of *homo-ousios* to mean God is only one person is heresy, but the Nicene use of *homo-ousios* to mean Christ is a distinct person from the Father but of the same divine substance and essence as the Father is orthodoxy.

4. Arianism: Christ is the highest created being, but not God: Out of the adoptionist ranks came a leader by the name of Paul of Samosata who was Bishop of Antioch in Syria from 260 to 268. He taught that Jesus had no preexistence, but came into being when conceived by Mary and that he eventually grew into such a godly man that at his Baptism God adopted him as his Son. Eventually, Jesus acquired a god-like existence but he was not God in true essence or nature. At a Synod (local council v. ecumenical council) held in Antioch in 269, Paul of Samosata was deposed and condemned for his teaching. However, his teachings inspired and continued on in his disciple Lucian of Antioch. The brand of adoptionism taught by Paul of Samosata and Lucian became known as “dynamic monarchianism” because it sought to preserve monotheism (monarchianism) by denying that Christ had an eternal, ontological (essence of being) unity with God and by attributing a gradual changing (dynamic) essence of Jesus from a mere man into the adopted and god-like Son of God. This heresy denies orthodox Christology’s affirmation of the Biblical teaching that an eternally Divine Son of God became a man while retaining His Deity. A disciple of Lucian was Arius who around 318 A.D. moved to Alexandria, Egypt to become a presbyter or pastor. Arius brought with him the Antiochian theology that Jesus is a creature and not divine. In 321, Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, ex-communicated Arius for denying the Deity of Christ. Arius sought to reverse his ex-communication by appealing to the rest of the Church, especially to the Church at Antioch. The Arian controversy caused a great disruption within the Roman Empire and in 325 Constantine called a council at Nicea in Bithynia to resolve the dispute. The case for the Deity of Christ was led by Athanasius, an assistant to Bishop Alexander. Ultimately, Alexander prevailed and Arius was condemned as a heretic and the Deity of Christ was formally enshrined in the creedal formula; “begotten not made, being of one substance (*homo-ousios*) with the Father”. In the Nicene context, *homo-ousios* asserted that Christ was a distinct Divine person who as equal to God, as

opposed to the Sabellian use of the term to describe Christ as a mere emanation of the one person God. After the council, the debate raged on within the Church with the Arians continuing to contend for a created Christ and the defenders of orthodoxy, led by Athanasius, continuing to assert the Deity of Christ. Ultimately, the Deity of Christ was re-affirmed at the Council of Constantinople in 381 and Arianism since then has been repudiated as a heretical denial of the Deity of Christ. The Jehovah's Witnesses are the heretical Arians of today. Ultimately, Arianism refuses to accept the two, complimentary and compatible, albeit paradoxical, Scriptural revelations of one God in three Persons including the Son as reconciled in the doctrine of the Trinity. Arianism is premised upon several rationalistic, philosophical presuppositions which are exalted and elevated above Scripture. Each of these Arian presuppositions warrant individual consideration and refutation:

- ***Rationalistic presupposition:*** The Trinity is a logical impossibility. One God can only exist as one person. If you have more than one person who is God then you have polytheism which the Bible condemns and denies.

Refutation: This presupposition is a product of human reasoning, not Scripture. Christians are obligated to receive God's revelation of His nature and essence no matter how mysterious or paradoxical, and not to construct of a God of our imagination or philosophy which would be to engage in idolatry. If the Bible teaches that God never had a beginning then we must accept that whether or not we can fathom it or if it strikes at our notions of how things are or should be. Likewise, if the Bible teaches that there is one God and that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are that one God then the Christian must bow and submit to that revelation. We are not to reject Biblical teachings because they violate our subjective, philosophical beliefs. Arianism exalts human rationalism over God's revelation as to His nature and existence. Its claim of a logical contradiction in the Trinity is wrong. The Law of Contradiction states that something cannot be both A and Non-A at the same time and in the same way. However, there is no logical contradiction in affirming the number of one in the category of God and the number of three in the category of Persons within the category of that one God, as shown below:

Arian (and Judaism and Islam) misrepresentation of a contradictory Trinity:

Christians teach and believe that there is only One God and that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are Three Gods; a logical contradiction.

Biblical presentation of the non-contradictory Trinity: Christians teach and believe that there is only One God and that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons who are unified together as that One God, thus there is no logical contradiction.

Once the Arian rationalistic presupposition against One God existing as three Divine Persons is rejected, then the Scriptures can be read without those biased, philosophical lens. Suddenly the Scriptures come alive with that comprehensive and compelling presentation of Jesus as the Divine Son that we previously examined in **Section II. A. Jesus Christ: Truly God** (pp. 9-17).

- **Rationalistic presupposition:** Because a human son does not exist until begotten by his father, Jesus did not exist until he was begotten by the Father.

Refutation: There is a profound and fundamental error in this presupposition: that humans fathers begetting human sons is the paradigm to understand the Divine Son and His “begotten” relationship to the Divine Father. Creaturely existence as the way to understand the Divine existence is fraught with dangers. That is why when we traverse the ground of the Divine existence we must only use God’s revelation in Scripture as our guide and not to postulate things about God that are true of us unless Scripture endorses it. While there are Biblical analogies between us and God, such as thought, will and emotion, the Bible repudiates any transfer of our limited, dependent, contingent and finite nature to God’s nature. When confronted with the comprehensive Biblical data revealing Christ as God the Son, Arians seek to support their philosophical presuppositions by reading them into the Scriptures. This tactic of reading the reader’s meaning into Scripture is known as eisegesis and is contrary to the duty of seeking to draw out the Scriptural author’s meaning which is called exegesis.

Scriptures cited by Arians to argue against the Deity of Christ

1. **“only-begotten Son” → means made with a beginning as humans are begotten.**

Refutation:

a. must interpret it consistently with all the verses that teach Christ’s Deity:

Instead of interpreting Scriptural passages consistently so as not to create a contradiction between them, the Arians, as all heretics, pit Scripture against Scripture. With literally hundreds of Scriptures that shout out that Jesus Christ is God, the Arians pull out a few select verses, such as the “only-begotten” passages, and pour their presuppositions into them to make them nullify the rest of Scripture that portrays a Divine Jesus. The proper interpretative approach for the professing Christian is to seek an interpretation of the “only-begotten” passages that is consistent with the overwhelming Biblical data that establishes the Deity of Christ.

b. “only-begotten” is an older and less accurate translation: The Greek NT word that was originally translated “only-begotten” in older translations is *monogenes* (John 1:14, 18; 3:16; 1John 4:9). However, modern translations have since translated *monogenes* (Gk. *mono*: “one; *genes*: “kind”) with an emphasis on the uniqueness and singularity of Christ as God’s Son without the emphasis on being “begotten”.²⁸

NIV: “the One and Only, who came from the Father”

ESV: “the only Son from the Father.”

²⁸ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 1249.

c. even translated as “only-begotten”, *monogenes* supports Christ’s Deity:

- **“begotten” as a human does not apply to “begotten” as a Divine person:**
Again, the Arian assumes that because when a human son is “begotten” of a human father there is a time when that son was not and then comes into being, that sense of “begotten with a beginning” also applies to a Divine Father and a Divine Son. However, that assumption is not only gratuitous and without foundation, it is positively false and inapplicable to a Divine Son begotten of a Divine Father. The reason a human son is begotten with a beginning is not by reason of the term “begotten” but the term “human”. Because humans have a beginning, the nature of their being begotten involves a beginning. But with God, who exists eternally, “begotten” must mean “eternally begotten”. In some mysterious way that is beyond our comprehension, the Son has been eternally, “begotten” or generated from the Father, without any beginning to being begotten as Athanasius argued against Arius and the original Arians:

Thus it appears that the phrases ‘once was not,’ and ‘before it came to be,’ and ‘when’ and the like, belong to things originate and creatures, which come out of nothing, but are alien to the Word. ... For never was the essence of the Father imperfect, that what is proper to it should be added afterwards; nor a man from man has the Son been begotten, so as to be later than His Father’s existence, but He is God’s offspring, and as being proper So of God, who is ever, He exists eternally. For, whereas it is proper to men to beget in time, from the imperfection of their nature, God’s offspring is eternal, for His nature is ever perfect. ... But if God be not as man, as He is not, we must not impute to Him attributes of man. ... [F]or not as man is God; for the Father is not from a father; therefore doth he not beget one who shall become a father; nor is the Son from effluence of the Father, nor is He begotten from a father that was begotten...²⁹

- **it conveys that Jesus is God’s Son by nature, not by creation or adoption:**
The description of Christ being the “only-begotten” of the Father is conveying the sense that Christ relates to the Father as a Son by nature who shares in Father’s Deity, and not as a work or creation of God who is a son by adoption, like us, who does not share in the Father’s Deity. Because we are sons of God by adoption (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15, 23; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5) and not by nature, we don’t share in the Father’s nature and therefore we are not Divine. Conversely, because we are sons by nature to a human father who is finite and contingent, we therefore are finite and contingent because by being begotten of a human father we share in that father’s nature. Likewise, Jesus Christ must be eternal and infinite God because He is begotten of the Father who is eternal and infinite God. In both instances, with us and with Christ, the son shares in the existence of his father: human father = human son; Divine Father = Divine Son. Therefore,

²⁹ Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, Disc. II, Ch. XIV, 5, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2d Series, Vol. 4 (Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids, Mich., 1978), pp. 314-15, 319.

“Only-begotten” is best understood as conveying the truth that Christ shares in the Divine nature of the Father. That is why his Sonship is “only” and “one of a kind.” To demonstrate the fallacy of the Arian’s argument all that is necessary is to take the argument to its logical conclusion which reveals its absurdity:

If Jesus had a beginning because human sons who are begotten of human fathers have a beginning, then Jesus’ Father must also have had a beginning because human sons have fathers who have had a beginning. Therefore God the Father had a beginning!

- **the other titles for Jesus preclude “begotten” meaning created:** To achieve their objective of imposing their rationalistic rejection of the Deity of Christ, Arians ignored all of the other names and titles for Christ which can only mean that He is Divine as the Father is Divine:

“Son of God”: Again, the primary idea conveyed by the term “son” in any context is a distinct individual from the father but of the same essence of the father. A lion’s son is a lion; a horse’s son is a horse, a human’s son is a human and God’s Son is God. That son means a person separate from but of the same essence as the father explains why the Jewish authorities tried to kill Jesus because “he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” (John 5:18). Thus, the Hebrew understanding of “son” is understood to convey the sense of “same essence as the father” whatever or whoever the father may be.

“the Truth” (John 14:6) - God is eternal and God is Truth therefore Truth is also eternal, and since the Son is the Truth He is eternal. Again, if Christ is the Truth it is inconceivable that God existed without the Truth which means that the Truth is of the same eternal existence as God.

“the Power of God” (1Cor. 1:24) - The infinite, self-existent and eternal God has infinite, self-existent and eternal power and, as the Power of God, Christ must also be infinite, self-existent and eternal. No created being could possess this attribute or have this title. Moreover, the eternal God must have always been with His Power therefore His Power is eternal therefore Christ as the Power of God is eternal.

“the Word” (John 1:1-3) - To be the Word of God, Christ must have the same existence as God since it is inconceivable that God was ever without His Word. Also, because God created all things that were created by His Word, (Gen. 1:1) then His Word itself could not have been created. If Christ is created, then how did God create Christ since Christ is the Word and all things were created by the Word?

“the Wisdom of God” (1Cor. 1:24) - As with the other preceding titles, the title of God’s Wisdom is a title for the Son that conveys the Son’s Divine existence that is equal with the Father’s existence. Since God have never been without His Wisdom, then neither could He have ever been without His Son who is His Wisdom! Athanasius’ ancient rebuttal to Arius about the eternal Word and Wisdom of God s rings as true today as it did over 1600 years ago:

[W]hen persons ask whether the Lord is a creature or a work, it is proper to ask of them this first, whether He is Son and Word and Wisdom. For if this is shewn, the surmise about work and creation falls to the ground at once and is ended. For a work could never be a Son and Word; nor could the Son be a work. ...For if the Son be a creature, by what word then and by what wisdom was He made Himself? For all the works were made through the Word and the Wisdom, as it is written, ‘In wisdom hast Thou made them all’, and, ‘All things were made by Him (the Word), and without Him was not anything made.’ But if it be He who is the Word and the Wisdom, by which all things come to be, it follows that He is not in the number of works, nor in sort of things originate, but the Offspring of the Father. ³⁰

“the Image of God” (Col. 1:15) - For the Son to be The Image of God is to be so intimately related to God as to be God Himself. Could God ever have been without His image? Could The Image of the infinite God be finite? Never! As with the other titles and functions of the Son as the Word of God, the Truth, the Power of God, the Wisdom of God, the title and function as the Image of God reveals Christ’s Sonship to be a Divine Sonship.

“the Radiance of God’s Glory (Heb. 1:3) - The Eternal and Infinite God has always possessed His glory; there never was a time when His glory did not have its radiance. Thus, as the very Radiance of God’s Glory, the Son Himself must also be God, otherwise it would mean that God was without “the radiance of His Glory” until the Son was created, which is absurd.

- **God is eternal and God is love so there must be an eternal object of God’s love:** If “God is love” (1Jn. 4:16) and God is eternal (Ps. 90:2), then necessarily there had to be an eternal person who was an eternal object of God’s love. If the One God did not have more than one Person in the Divine Being to love in eternity then love could not be eternal. So the Son has to be eternal in order for the eternal Father to be love. Thus, by these two doctrinal truths that Arians concede, God being love and by God being eternal, we arrive at the refutation of Arianism; an eternal Son and Father who have loved each other eternally!

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 350-51.

2. “first-born” → means that Christ had to have had a beginning:

Refutation:

The title of “first-born” as used by Paul of Christ (Col. 1:15) is another Hebrew concept that connotes a meaning different from Greek or Roman thought. In Jewish thought, whoever was deemed to have the pre-eminent right to an estate was referred to as the “first-born” whether or not they were actually the first to be born. For instance, Israel was declared by God to be His “firstborn son” (Ex. 4:22) even though there were many nations before Israel, and David was declared to be the “firstborn” even though he was not Jesse’s first son (Ps. 89:27) In both instances, it is “preeminence” that is stressed not chronological order. That Paul did not use the Greek word that means the first to be born in chronological order (*protoktisis*) and instead used the Greek term for pre-eminence (*protokos*) is decisive on the issue. Paul’s intent to convey Christ’s supremacy is also indicated by his qualifier that Christ is firstborn “over all creation” and by the immediate context in which he asserts that “all things were created” by Christ and that he is “before all things and in him all things hold together ... so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” (vv. 16-18). With these words, Paul did all he could do linguistically to separate Christ from creation and distinguish him as the cause of creation and not a part of creation. So powerful is the assertion of Christ being the Divine Creator in this passage, that the modern-day Arians, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, have corrupted these verses by adding the adjective “other” to each occurrence of the word “things” so as to make Christ a part of the created realm, which is specifically what Paul is excluding by the words he used.

3. John 14:28 → “the Father is greater than I” means Christ is not God:

Refutation:

Arianism wrongly assumes that “greater” in this passage means “greater in essence or nature” so that Christ cannot be God as the Father is God. There are two senses in which God the Father is greater than God the Son and neither one of them deny Christ’s Divinity. **First**, at the time of speaking these words, Christ was in His human nature. Thus, it would be true that Christ, speaking as a man, would be inferior to the Father as all men are inferior to God in essence. However, that would not detract from Christ’s equality with God in His divine nature. **Second**, the Bible reveals that within the Godhead there are three equally Divine Persons with an ontological equality of being, but within the Trinity there is also an economic subordination of roles that does not compromise the essential equality of the Divine Persons. The logical compatibility of an essential equality and an economic subordination is demonstrated by the relationships between husband and wife, between parent and child and between employer and employee wherein both persons are equally human within the context of an economic hierarchy. John’s use of the Greek in this passage (14:28) is decisive on this issue. In quoting Christ, John used the Greek word that conveys greater in position (*meizon*) and not the Greek word that means better or greater in nature or essence (*kreitton*) as the author of Hebrews used to convey Christ’s superiority over angels. (Heb. 1:4).

4. John 1:1: → translated as “the Word was a god” meaning Christ was not God:

Refutation:

John does not begin Christ’s narrative with His life on earth as the other Gospels but with Christ’s eternal existence before creation:

“In the beginning (*en arche*) was the Word (*ho logos*), and the Word was with God (*pro ho theos*), and the Word was God (*theos*). He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ... The Word became flesh...” (John 1:1-14)

The Arians/Jeohvah’s Witnesses contend that since the second *theos* (Gk. “God” or “god”) in reference to the Word is not preceded by the definite article “the” (Gk. *ho*) then this *theos* cannot mean “the God” but only “a god”. While it is true that whenever the definite article precedes *theos* (*ho theos*) the only meaning can be “the God” in the highest sense, the reverse isn’t true; that whenever *theos* is not preceded by the definite article it cannot mean “God” in the highest sense. For the following reasons, this passage must be translated “the Word was God” in the fullest sense:

a. Colwell’s Rule: To identify the second *theos* as the predicate and not the subject of the sentence, which is “the Word” (*ho logos*), this rule of Greek grammar requires that the definite article should be dropped before the second *theos* as further explained by NT scholar F.F. Bruce:

The structure of the third clause in verse 1, *theos en ho logos*, demands the translation ‘The Word was God’. Since *logos* has the article preceding it, it is marked out as the subject. The fact that *theos* is the first word after the conjunction *kai* (‘and’) shows the main emphasis of the clause lies on it. Had *theos* as well as *logos* been preceded by the article the meaning would have been that the Word was completely identical with God, which is impossible of the Word was also ‘with God’. What is meant is that the Word shared the nature and being of God ... So, when heaven and earth were created, there was the Word of God, already existing in the closest association with God and partaking of the essence of God. No matter how far back we may try to push our imagination, we can never reach a point at which we could say of the Divine Word, as Arius did, ‘There was once when he was not.’³¹

Thus, John structured this sentence exactly the way he should have if he intended to assert the Logos was God, but a distinct person within the Godhead.³²

³¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, The Gospel and Epistles of John, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1983), p. 31.

³² David J. MacLeod, “The Eternality and Deity of the Word: John 1:1-2”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (January-March, 2003), p. 60 (“With this carefully crafted sentence John said that the Word is deity. Yet he did not say, “God was the Word,” that is, he did not say all of deity is the Word. There is more to God than the Word. There is also God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. So, while the λόγος is not the Father, He has all the qualities that add up to the fact that He too is God.”).

b. noun v. adjective: If John had intended to convey the idea that the Logos was merely a god-like being he surely would have used the adjective *theois* and not the noun *theos* which conveys the stronger sense of deity.

c. immediate context: The immediate context compels the conclusion that John is intending to identify the Logos as God with the second *theos* even though the definite article is not used. **First**, that the Logos is with God (*ho theos*) before anything was created (*en arche*) necessarily means that the Logos is not created and thus is self-existent and eternal only as God is. **Second**, John describes the relationship between the Logos and God with the Greek word (*pros*) that conveys an intimate relationship with God, but obviously as a distinct God-person. **Finally**, that John identifies the Logos as having created all things and that nothing was created without Him that had been created (Jn. 1:3,10) is decisive on John conveying that the Word was God *via negative* (by the way of negation). Because the Word is excluded from the created realm then He is necessarily Creator, since those are the only two logical, existential and ontological possibilities for any existing thing.³³

d. broader context: In the broader context of the Gospel of John (John 20:28: “My Lord and my God”) and in Hebrews (Heb. 1:8) Christ is referred to as *ho theos*, “the God”, and yet the Arians still would not concede His Deity.

e. consistency: The Arian and Jehovah Witnesses’ mistranslation of John 1:1 suffers from a fatal inconsistency. In the verses following John 1:1 there are several instances in which the Arians translate *theos* without the definite article as “God”. Theological bias emerges as the only explanation for translating John 1:1 “a god”. If the Arian position were to be applied consistency, each one of the following verses in John and in the rest of Scripture would have to be translated as “a god” which would be absurd: John 1:6,12,13,18; 3:2,21; 9:16,33; Matt. 5:9; 6:4; Luke 1:35, 78; 2:40; Rom. 1:7,17,18; 1Cor. 1:30; 15:10; Phil. 2:11,13; Titus 1:1.

f. polytheism and idolatry: The Arian translation of John 1:1 that makes Jesus a “god” creates huge theological inconsistencies in the Bible. If this “god” is in addition to God then John is advocating polytheism in violation of Scripture (Dt.32:29, Is.43:10; 44:8; 45:5) and he is advocating the worship of a creature which is the sin of idolatry (Ex.20:3-6; Rom.1:25). Whereas the correct translation of the Word being “God” is consistent with there being only one true God (John 17:3) in three persons (Matt.28:19) and in line with the Scriptural commands to worship and to have faith in Christ. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have systematically mistranslated Scripture to deflect its refutation of their denial of Christ’s Deity. **See Appendix F: Further Refutation of Jehovah’s Witnesses.**

³³ David J. MacLeod, “The Creation of the Universe by the Word: John 1:3-5”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (April-June, 2003), p. 189 (“In John’s Prologue (John 1:1-18), the creative work of Christ points forward to His incarnation and earthly life, but it also points back. Christ could be the Creator because He is the eternal Logos, the preexistent Son of God. ‘The Word was God.’”).

5. Apollinarianism: Christ was Divine and only had a human body, not a human spirit. Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea in 361, taught that the humanity of Christ was restricted to a human body and it did not include a human mind or spirit. In the Incarnation, the Logos displaced the immaterial essence of the humanity and assumed only the material essence of humanity. Because of the denial of Christ's complete and true humanity, Apollinarianism was condemned as heresy at the ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381.

Rationalistic presupposition: If Christ had all the attributes of humanity, including body and spirit, then He would be two persons: a Divine person and a human person. For Christ to be one person he can only have assumed a human body.

Refutation:

a. Heb. 2:14-17: Christ assumed a true and complete humanity to redeem sinners:
To redeem us, Christ had to be human "like his brothers in every way":

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death ... For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (Heb. 2:14-17)

To be truly and completely human, Christ had to have both a material and an immaterial human essence because humans have both a material and immaterial essence. Whatever the difficulties, the mysteries, the paradoxes or the enigmas, Christians must confess Christ as One Person who is truly God and truly Man.

b. Scripture describes Christ as having a human spirit and being a true man: As all heretics, Apollinaris trumped Scripture with his philosophy of what was or was not possible in theology. Scripture presents Christ as a true, complete human with a spirit:

- **OT:** Is. 6:14: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son...; Is. 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ..."; Is. 53:3: "...he was a despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows..." (Not a human body of sorrows but a man of sorrows. Jesus could only be a "man of sorrows" if he was a man with a spirit.)
- **NT:** Jn. 11:33: "he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled"; Jn.12:27: "Now my heart is troubled"; Jn. 13:21: "Jesus was troubled in spirit"; Mt. 26:36: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."; Mt. 27:50: "And when Jesus cried again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit."; Lk. 23:46: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

c. John 1:14: "the Word became flesh" does not limit Christ's humanity to a body:
To refute the Docetism of his day, John specifically chose to assert the Word's humanity by the synecdoche (literary device where part refers to whole) "flesh" (Gk. *sarx*) for true and complete humanity, which is taught in all of John's writings and the rest of the NT.

6. Nestorianism: In Christ there are two persons; a divine person and a human person:

Nestorius was a teacher in Antioch who became the Bishop of Constantinople sometime after 438. He had defended the complete humanity of Christ over against Apollinaris who had taught that Christ did not have a human spirit. However, in his quest to defend the two true natures of Christ, Nestorius separated them to the point of essentially teaching that in Christ there were two persons; a Divine person and a human person. He presupposed that two natures necessitated two persons. His position led him to object to the Church referring to Mary as the “Mother of God” (Gk. *theotokos*) since he believed the two natures of Christ were completely separated and that there could be no unification between God (Divine nature) and Mary as mother (human nature). According to Nestorius, the two natures were not united in the one person of the Logos, but the natures each existed in distinct persons, the Logos as the Divine person and Jesus of Nazareth as the human person, who had a moral unity such as exists between God and a righteous man. Nestorianism was condemned in the Council of Ephesus in 431 and again in 451 at Chalcedon.

Rationalistic presupposition: If there are two natures, Divine and human, then there must be two persons. One person could not have two natures.

Refutation: Based upon the Scriptural presentation of Christ as one person with two natures and not two persons, the Church has consistently confessed Christ to be a singular person who is the Divine Logos and Son of God. All of the authoritative statements of the Church since Nestorius have repudiated his division of the two natures of Christ into two persons:

- **the Creed of Chalcedon:** “the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ ...”³⁴
- **the Athanasian Creed (34-37):** “Who although he be God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh in one man; so God and Man is one Christ.”³⁵
- **The Westminster Confession of Faith: (8:2)** “So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person”³⁶

³⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 1169-70.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1171.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1184.

7. Eutychianism: Christ's Divine and Human natures are mixed into one, synthetic nature that is neither truly divine nor truly human: After the Church condemned Nestorianism (Christ is two persons) in 431, Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, to reinforce Christ being one person and presupposing that one person can only have one nature, taught that in the incarnation Christ's Divine nature blended with His human nature to form one mixed nature. After Cyril died in 444, Eutyches, a presbyter (pastor) and head of a monastery in Constantinople, advanced Cyril's teaching by stating in the incarnation Christ had only one nature whereby the Divine nature of the logos became blended with Christ's human nature into one "theanthropic" nature, which could best be defined as "humanized Deity" or a "Deified humanity". In 448, Eutyches was deposed at a local Synod in Constantinople. However, powerful friends of Eutyches appealed to the Emperor Theodosius II and he convened a general Council at Ephesus in 449 to review Eutyches' deposition and Christology. Dioscurus, Cyril's successor as Bishop of Alexandria and Eutyches' patron, presided over the council. During the council, Dioscurus had Eutyches' accusers either excluded or threatened with violence, while Eutyches was given a free reign to present his theology. Eventually, this council exonerated Eutyches, condemned the doctrine of the two natures of Christ as dividing Christ into two persons (Nestorianism) and excommunicated all those who taught the two natures ("dyophysitism"), including all Eutyches' accusers and the Roman Bishop, Leo II, who had supported the two natures of Christ. Because of the intimidating and heavy-handed tactics of the presiding bishop and his party, the Second Council of Ephesus in 449 has been notoriously referred to as the "Council of Robbers." Eventually, the Emperor Theodosius died and his successor, Marcian, a supporter of "dyophysitism" (two-nature) called another general council at Nicea, in 451, which was re-located to nearby Chalcedon to be closer to the Emperor and Senators. The Council of Chalcedon condemned Eutyches and reaffirmed Christ's Divine nature and human nature united in one person that remained distinct and were not mixed. Because of its advocacy of one nature, this heresy also became known as the "monophysite" (one-nature) heresy.

Rationalistic presupposition: One person can only have one nature. To preserve Christ as one person, Christ's Deity and humanity must be mixed into one, synthetic nature.

Refutation: By mixing the two natures into a synthesis, Eutyches actually ended up denying both natures. A "humanized" Divine nature is not truly Divine and a "Deified" human nature is not truly human. Because the Scriptures reveal that the Christ is one person who has a distinct Divine nature and a distinct human nature, any mixing of the natures is heresy. Redemption requires an authentically human and authentically Divine Redeemer, so the confused nature redeemer of Eutyches is no redeemer at all.

- **Creed of Chalcedon:** "two natures, inconfusedly (without confusion)"³⁷
- **Westminster Confession of Faith:** (8:2) "So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion."³⁸

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1169.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1184.

8. Monothelism: Christ did not have a human will, only a Divine will. Centuries after Chalcedon, a teaching emerged which asserted that it was necessary for Christ to have had only one will to avoid the conclusion that Christ was two persons (Nestorianism). Because the Logos was the eternal Divine Person, Christ must have had only the Divine will and when He assumed humanity in the Incarnation He did so without assuming a human will.

Rationalistic presupposition: One person can only have one will; two wills would mean there are two persons. Christ as a Divine person could only have a Divine will. If he also had a human will, He would be two persons.

b. the refutation - In the Council of Constantinople of 681 (as distinguished from 381), the Church rejected monothelism because by denying a genuine human will it denied Christ's genuine humanity. The Church maintained that for Christ to be *vere homo* He had to have that which is essential for a human nature; a human will. However, by Christ having a human will and a Divine will it did not necessarily mean that Christ was two persons. Christ's human nature, while genuine, is impersonal with the person being the Logos. How Christ, as one person, actually possesses and exercises two wills is just another mystery of the Incarnation.

9. Kenotism: On earth, Christ was not God because He “emptied” Himself of His Divine attributes. In the late 1800's and early 1900's liberal German theologians began to teach that when Christ assumed His human nature he surrendered or gave up at least some of His Divine attributes. In the KJV, Paul's Greek in Phil. 2:7 is translated that Christ “emptied (Gk. verb *kenoo* - “to empty”) himself” in taking on a human nature. The Kenotic theologians argued that Paul meant that Christ emptied Himself of His Deity or some of His Divine attributes to become a human.

Rationalistic presupposition: God and human are mutually exclusive in one person, so Jesus had to give up His Divine Nature in order to take on his human nature. Christ being God and man at the same time is an ontological and psychological impossibility.

Refutation: This Christological teaching not only denies the Deity of Christ, it also denies the Deity of God! If God could stop being God (or if He had to start being God for that matter) then He is not God! Unwilling to accept and submit to the Biblical mystery of Christ's two natures being united in His one person, Kenotic theologians insisted on attempting to explain how Christ had two natures. In their quest to reconcile the Son of God becoming man, they ended up denying Christ's Divine nature. Basic Biblical theology and hermeneutics refute this rationalistic, liberal theology:

a. God is immutable: An essential quality of God is that He cannot change and this absolutely precludes God from ever, even for a moment, ceasing to be God in any essential way: Ps. 102:27: “But you (God) remain the same ...”; Mal.3:6: “I the LORD do not change.”; James 1:17: “Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” Once Christ is predicated as God, to be God, he must always be God. If at any time he stops being God then he was never God.

b. the Trinity cannot ever cease being: If the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, ever stopped being God, then Triune God stopped existing, which is absurd. The Kenotic advocates trump all of the Scriptural teaching on God, the Incarnation and the Trinity because of one Greek word in one NT verse! The heretic *modus operandi* is betrayed once again; instead of reading Scriptures in a harmonious and coherent sense, they pit Scripture against Scripture and trump the entire presentation of the eternal and unchangeable nature of God with one verse!

c. Paul isn't saying Christ stopped being God in the Incarnation: In context, Paul is not asserting in this passage that the Son of God stopped being God during the Incarnation, but rather that Christ relinquished and withheld from asserting and exercising His Divine rights and prerogatives:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing (Gk: *ekenosen*; KJV: “emptied himself”), taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross. - Phil. 2:3-8

That Paul was not conveying in this passage Christ surrendering his divine being and essence in the Incarnation is convincingly established by these points:

- **Paul did not say Christ “emptied himself” of His divine nature:** Without any warrant and against the contextual sense of Paul, the Kenotic advocates read into the phrase “emptied himself” the phrase “of his divine nature” in order to make the passage support their philosophical presupposition that Christ could not be both God and man at the same time. So the first point of refutation is that the plain words of the passage do not say what the Kenotic theologians say it says.
- **In context the meaning is that Christ “emptied himself” of His divine rights:** An owner of property may decline to exercise his rights as an owner to eject someone from his property, but that doesn't mean he gave up being the owner. Likewise, when Christ, as a divine being declined to stand on His divine rights and to exercise His divine prerogatives when he became a man he did not thereby give up his divine being. Not exercising your rights as God does not equate to no longer being God. That Paul was in no way conveying Christ's surrender of His divine being in the incarnation is established by the context of the kenosis passage. Paul was calling the Philippians to emulate Christ by not always asserting their rights and interest in relation to others. He was not suggesting that they surrender their humanity, only that they surrender their rights and interests as humans in deference to others to promote harmony in the Church. So Paul's use of Christ's humble act of surrender as a parallel example for Christians cannot mean that he “emptied himself” of his divine being but his divine rights and prerogatives.

- **Kenosis refers to “equality with God” not “the very nature of God:** As Berkhof argues the verb *ekenosen*, translated by the KJV as “emptied”, does not refer to the phrase “the nature of God” but the phrase “equality with God”, meaning that Christ is foregoing his Divine equality with God in the Incarnation not his Divine essence:

The term “kenosis” ... simply means that Christ made Himself of no account, of no reputation, did not assert His divine prerogative, but took the form of a servant. ... [T]he verb *ekenosen* does not refer to *morphe theou* (“in nature God”), but to *einai isa theoi* (“equality with God”) ... that is, His being on a equality with God. The fact that Christ took the form of a servant does not involve a laying aside of the form of God. There is no exchange of one for the other. Though he pre-existed in the form of God, Christ did not count the being on an equality with God as a prize which He must not let slip, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. Now what does His becoming a servant involve? A state of subjection in which one is called upon to render obedience. And the opposite of this is a state of sovereignty in which one has the right to command. The being on an equality with God does not denote a mode of being, but a state which Christ exchanged for another state.³⁹

- **Kenotism is based on Rationalism not Revelation:** As argued by Grudem and Warfield, Kenotism did not originate out of an effort to better understand Scripture but from an effort to make the Incarnation more plausible to the “modern” man:

We must first realize that no recognized teacher in the first 1800 years of church history, including those who were native speakers of Greek, thought that “emptied himself” in Philippians 2:7 meant that the Son of God gave up some of his divine attributes. ... It is important to realize that the major force persuading people to accept kenotic theory was not that they had discovered a better understanding of Philippians 2:7 or any other passage of the New Testament, but rather the increasing discomfort people were feeling with the formulation of the doctrine of Christ in historic, classical orthodoxy. It just seemed too incredible for modern rational and “scientific” people to believe that Jesus Christ could be truly human and fully, absolutely God at the same time. The kenosis theory began to sound more and more like an acceptable way to say that (in some sense) Jesus was God, but a kind of God who had for a time given up some of his Godlike qualities, those that were most difficult for people to accept in the modern world.⁴⁰

The idea is that the Son of God, in becoming man, abandoned His deity ... by immersing it in the stream of human life. ... [T]his was an attempt to secure a purely human Christ without theoretically denying His Divine nature. In effect it gives us a Christ of one nature and that nature purely human, though it theoretically explains this human nature as really just shrunken deity.⁴¹

³⁹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 328.

⁴⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 550-51.

⁴¹ Warfield, *The Twentieth Century Christ*, p. 375.

IV. The Work of Jesus Christ:

The person of Christ is inextricably tied to the work of Christ in that what He came to do is only understood because of who He is and who He is can only be understood by what He came to do as Reformed Theologian G.C. Berkouwer stressed:

[I]n the study of Christ and his salvation, it is impossible to separate his *person* from his *work*. There is such an inseparable connection between his person and work that any separation causes us to go astray with respect to both his person and his work. ... [A]n isolated consideration of his person “as such” is impossible and illegitimate, because he can be fully known only in connection with his holy work. ... To mention Christ’s name is to point to his work, and to mention the blessing of his work is ... to deal with the work of him of whom the Church in adoration confesses: *vere Deus, vere Homo*.

Berkouwer’s admonition is not novel, but simply reflects Paul’s inspired view of the intertwined truths of Christ’s person and work: “For I resolved to know nothing ... except Christ (person) and him crucified (work).” (1Cor. 2:2).⁴²

A. Christ’s Work is Part of the Trinitarian Work in Redemption:

Christ’s work can never be isolated from the purpose and will of the Father who appointed Christ to His work or from the work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination and regeneration of sinners to enable them to come to Christ in faith and to sanctify them after trusting Christ. In a word, the work of Christ stands as part of the work of the Trinity in redemption in which the Father and the Spirit make their own contributions to Mankind’s salvation:

1. Work of the Father in redemption: Although it was Christ who took on our humanity to fulfill all righteousness on our behalf and to bear our guilt for sin and to endure the wrath of God for us, we must never forget that it was the Father who commissioned Christ to this work because of the Father’s love for us:

- John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son”
- John 4:34: “to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”
- John 6:38: “For I have come ... to do the will of him who sent me.”
- John 10:14-18: “I lay down my life...This command I received from my Father.”
- John 18:11: “the cup the Father has given me”
- John 17:4: “by completing the work you (the Father) gave me (the Son) to do”
- Rom. 3:25: “God presented him (Jesus) as a sacrifice of atonement”
- Rom. 5:8: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this...Christ died for us.”
- Heb. 3:2: “He was faithful to the one who appointed him”
- Heb. 10:7: “Here I am ... I have come to do your will, O God.”
- I John 4:10: “He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins”

⁴² G.C. Berkouwer, The Work of Christ, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1965), p. 19.

2. Work of the Spirit in redemption: In redemption, the Spirit's work compliments the work of the Father and the Son by regenerating the sinner's dead heart and illuminating the sinner's blind eyes to empower the sinner to see and embrace Christ as Savior:

- John 3:5: "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. The flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."
- 1Cor. 2:4-5: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."
- 1Cor. 2:7-10: "[W]e speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden ... but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit."
- 1Cor. 12:3: "[N]o one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

B. Christ's Work Ultimately is to Glorify God:

Ultimately, the redemption of humanity through the work of Christ has the objective of bringing glory to God.

- 1Sam. 12:20-22 - God will not reject His people "for the sake of His great name"
- Is. 43:25 - God forgives the sins of His people "for My own sake"
- Is. 48:9-11 - God restrains his wrath "for the sake of My praise"
- Is. 60:21 - Redeemed humanity is "for the display of my (God's) splendor"
- John 17:1 - Christ's purpose was "that your Son may glorify You."
- Eph. 1:4-14 - God chose the elect "to the praise of His glorious grace"

C. Christ's Work Revealed by Scripture in Numerous Ways:

As with the Doctrine of the Person of Christ, the Doctrine of the Work of Christ exhausts all human categories of thought and expression. Accordingly, God has used these various concepts, types, descriptions and terms to convey and reveal the multidimensional, multifaceted nature of Christ's work. These

1. Christ in His Three Offices (Lt. *Munus Triplex*): Prophet, Priest and King: One way of conveying and illuminating Christ's work that is evident in Scripture is the depiction of His work as Prophet, Priest and King:

a. Prophet: Christ's work as the Great Prophet (Dt. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22,23) involves Him speaking to us as the incarnate Word of God (Heb. 1:1,2). Christ is as unique and superior in this office as He is in His other offices. First, by being the Word of God, Christ can speak as God Himself as opposed to the prophets who spoke only with a derivative authority. Second, not only is Christ the messenger as the Great Prophet, but He is also the message itself! (Luke 24:25-46; John 5:39-47).

b. Priest: From Melchizedek through to Levi to Aaron and all the High Priests after them, Christ's work as the intercessor for His people is depicted by the office of High Priest. The author of Hebrews thoroughly developed this aspect of Christ's work in redemption:

When Christ came as high priest ... he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle ... He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ... Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. ... The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. For the worshippers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ... Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. (Heb. 9:11-26; 10:1-12).

As man and as God, Christ is the only one who could be the true High Priest for mankind. By virtue of His humanity He can be our representative and by virtue of His Deity He has direct access to God on our behalf. Christ's priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek which is superior to the order of Levi in these respects:

- **Divine Oath:** Unlike the Aaronic priestly order which was determined by bloodline, Christ's priesthood is based upon an oath by God to appoint Christ individually as our High priest. (Heb. 7:15-22).
- **Eternal Office:** Unlike the priests after the order of Aaron whose priesthood ended upon their deaths, Christ will be our priest forever. (Heb. 7:23).
- **Intrinsic Holiness:** Unlike a priest after the order of Aaron, Christ is without sin and is intrinsically qualified to be our actual intercessor without any need for a sacrifice on His behalf. (Heb. 7:26-27).
- **Heavenly Intercession:** Unlike the OT priests, Christ carries out His high priestly work in the direct presence of God before His throne in heaven rather than in a mere earthly representation of God's heavenly dwelling such as the Tabernacle or the Temple. (Heb. 4:14; 8:1-5; 9:11, 23-24). This work includes making intercession on our behalf (Heb. 7:25; 9:24), defending us as our Advocate against accusations by Satan (Rom.8:33-34; 1John 2:1; Rev. 12:10) and guarding the security of our souls as the Great Shepherd. (John 10:11-16; Heb. 13:20; 1Pet. 2:25; 5:4).
- **Offeror and Offer:** As the Great High Priest, Christ is not only the one who presents the sacrifice of atonement to God, but He is the sacrifice of atonement. (Heb. 7:27; 9:12 cp. Rom. 3:25).

c. King: Having ascended into glory and having been crowned King of Kings, Jesus Christ reigns as the supreme authority in the universe. (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; 1 Pet. 3:22). Christ's reign is the fulfillment of God's promise to David that the Messiah would be David's descendent and would rule on David's throne forever. (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 110; Is 9:6-7; Lk. 1:32-33). There are two specific aspects to Christ's work as the King which will ultimately be realized upon His return and at the end of the ages:

1.) Victory: One of Christ's Kingly tasks is to defeat all the powers of darkness that are in rebellion against God which are ultimately led by Satan. It is this aspect of Christ's Kingship that explains the pervasive and compelling "victory" motif in Scripture in describing the work of Christ. In his classic work, *Christus Victor*,⁴³ Swedish theologian Gustaf Aulén surveyed Scripture and Church History and concluded that Christ's work is most faithfully considered in terms of conquering the powers of evil. Although Aulén went too far in advocating the "victory" view of the atonement to the exclusion of substitutionary satisfaction purpose in the atonement, by *Christus Victor* he did a service to the Church by correcting its neglect of remembering that Christ is our King who will destroy Satan and his kingdom as taught in these Scriptures:

- Gen. 3:15: "He (Christ) will crush your (the serpent) head"
- Is. 53:12: "He will divide the spoils with the strong"
- Matt. 12:29: "he first ties up the strong man (Satan)"
- John 16:33: "I have overcome the world"
- 1 Cor. 15: 24-27: "after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power"
- 1 Cor. 15: 54-58: "Death has been swallowed up in victory"
- Col. 2:15: "having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross"
- Heb. 2:14: "so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil"
- 1 John 3:8: "to destroy the devil's work."
- Rev. 19:11-21: "His name is the Word of God...Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations"

2.) Judgment: Once Satan is vanquished by Christ as conquering King, he will then exercise the judicial prerogative of His kingship by judging the wicked. In His judicial capacity, Christ will be absolutely just, fearsome, merciless and dreadful (Heb. 10:31). He will fulfill this role without any error or injustice by virtue of His Divine nature.

- Dan. 7:9-14: "As I looked, thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days took his seat...His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. ... The court was seated and the books were opened. ... In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approaches the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power;" (Christ is made Judge by the Father)

⁴³ Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor*, (NY, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1969).

- Matt. 7:21-23 - “Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ ”
- Matt. 13:40-43 - “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom ... all who do evil. They will throw them into a fiery furnace”
- Matt. 25:31-46 - “When the Son of Man comes in His glory...He will sit on His throne ... All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate the people one from another... Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ”
- John 5:22-29 - “the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son”
- Acts 10:42 - “He is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and dead”
- 2 Tim. 4:1 - “Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead”
- Rev. 20:11-15 - “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it. Earth and sky fled from His presence...If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

2. Christ in His Two States: Humiliation and Exaltation: Many theologians have discerned in Scripture a presentation of Christ’s work through his experiencing of two successive states; a state of humiliation followed by a state of exaltation.⁴⁴ One Scriptural basis for this category of thought in reference to the work of Christ is found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians:

Who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:6-11)

As this passage teaches, Christ’s work as the Mediator and Redeemer involves Him first in a state of superlative humiliation of which none greater can be conceived, from the majesty of the Creator to the state of a creature, and then a state of superlative exaltation of which none greater can be conceived, from the humiliation of a condemned, crucified, rejected, despised criminal to the state of the being the Lord of the universe whom everyone, friend and foe, will bow down to in abject submission. Considering Christ’s state of humiliation first, we see that it consists of several specific aspects:

a. Christ’s humiliation:

1.) in His Incarnation: For the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient Son of God to submit to the creaturely limitations of time, space, knowledge and power by assuming a human nature was an unfathomable, intrinsic act of humiliation. Scripture conveys Christ’s humiliation in a number of ways:

⁴⁴ Berkhof, Systematic Theology, pp. 331-55.

- “The Word (God the Son) became flesh (human) and made his dwelling among us.” (Jn. 1:14) cp. “the seed of woman” (Gen. 3:15) Heb. 10:5).
- “For I have come down from heaven ...” (Jn. 6:38): Taking on humanity involved Christ leaving His Divine domain in heaven and exchanging His glory and majesty there for the forsaken, cursed and sin-dominated arena of the Earth where He lived as God *inognito*. A showered and neatly groomed bridegroom wearing a new, pristine, pressed, white tuxedo jumping into a sewer filled with human waste is an accurate but still inadequate comparison of Christ’s humiliation in coming down to earth as a man.
- “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” (2Cor. 8:9).
- “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman (from status of Creator to creature), born under the law (from status as Lawgiver to being subject to the Law), to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of son.” (Gal. 4:4): Like Adam, Christ was made subject to the God’s law. For this reason, Christ fulfilled all the requirements of the law even though many of those requirements were designed to communicate man’s sinful condition. For example, Christ was baptized by John the Baptist not because Christ was in need of repentance, but in “to fulfill all righteousness” for us and on our behalf. (Matt. 3:15). For the holy, morally perfect Son of God to have be circumcised, a depiction of sinful flesh being removed, to have a sacrifice made on behalf of, a depiction of the need for an atonement for sin and to be baptized, a symbol of a sinner having repented and being renewed, all involved a profound humiliation in Christ’s identification with sinners.
- “Who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Phil. 2:6,7): By assuming a human nature, Christ voluntarily experienced the humiliation of relinquishing His divine rights and status. An earthly king taking off his crown, casting away his scepter, abandoning his thrown, putting on sackcloth, walking into a barn and cleaning out the stalls of the king’s horses as a mere stable hand is a depiction, albeit a poor and limited picture, of what was involved in Christ coming to earth to be one of us.

2.) in His suffering: Christ’s humiliation in the Incarnation did not only involve Him giving up His glorious position and status as God the Son, but also enduring the positive pain and suffering of temptation, persecution, rejection, false incrimination and spiritual, emotional and physical anguish. His suffering is absolutely unique in its degree and kind. He is the only innocent human to have ever suffered and He is the only person to have suffered by having His infinite, Divine dignity insulted.

- **suffering by being tempted:** As sinners with depraved moral constitutions, we

cannot appreciate how vexing it was for Christ to endure continuous temptations by His disciples, by Satan and by His circumstances to disobey His Father's calling to bear the wrath for sinners. For Incarnate holiness this was suffering.

- **suffering by being defamed as a sinner and blasphemer:** Christ is the only man to have ever lived a morally perfect life and to have actually loved God with His all His heart, soul, strength and mind, and yet throughout His ministry of teaching and healing He was publically accused and defamed as being a sinner, a law-breaker and a blasphemer by the religious authorities. False criminal and moral accusations and character defamations are among the most hurtful forms of suffering even for sinners. For Jesus, who is incarnate holiness, being falsely accused, convicted and condemned as a blasphemer was a suffering beyond our human, sinful comprehension.
- **suffering by being mocked, ridiculed and scorned:** The true King of the Universe scorned and mocked as a pretend king by soldiers whom He could have instantly destroyed. The true Prophet of God blindfolded and struck and mocked to “prophecy” who hit Him. The true Savior of mankind mocked for not being able to save Himself from the cross when in reality the only thing keeping Him on that cross was His love for sinners and for His Father who sent Him to save those sinners. For God the Son, whom the angels, the demons, the storms, the stars and the galaxies obey, Christ had to endure a level and type of humiliation that no other human could have experienced.
- **suffering by being physically tortured and crucified:** The Gospels and the OT Messianic Psalms and prophecies record the intense, prolonged and diverse physical suffering of Christ during His prosecution and crucifixion: spit upon, blindfolded, slapped and punched by Jewish guards (Mt. 26:67); whipped, stripped naked, pierced scalp with thorns and beaten with a staff by Roman guards (Mt. 27:27-33); beard plucked out and face beaten until He was unrecognizable (Is. 50:6; 52:40); forced to carry His cross to Golgotha (John 18:17); crucified by being nailed to the cross through his hands and feet and then hung on the elevated cross (Ps. 22:16; Lk. 23:33); racked with thirst, exhaustion, pain and agony (Ps. 22:15; Jn. 19:28-30); and the whole time watching His mother in her agony as she viewed Him (Jn. 19:19:25-27).
- **suffering by bearing the guilt and wrath for sin:** A pure heart laden with the guilt for the most vilest of sins; a guiltless and clean conscience burdened with the all the guilt for all the sins of His people; Christ bearing the guilt of our sins is another dimension of suffering beyond our comprehension. However, even then Christ's suffering did not reach its highest degree. That occurred when the Father poured out His righteous, holy and consuming wrath upon His Son and, in a way we will never understand, forsook Him, causing Jesus to cry out in infinite anguish; “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!” (Mk. 15:34).

3.) in His Death and Burial: Death is the ignoble end of a sinner's life and burial a curse for sin of having the body return to its material origin. Both are judgments which are imposed upon sinners. Yet, Jesus, whom death had no claim upon because of His sinlessness voluntarily submitted to death and burial to receive the curse, punishment and shame on our behalf and to identify Himself with sinners. (John 10:17,18).

b. Christ's exaltation:

1.) in His Resurrection: Christ's exaltation began with the His resurrection which was a Trinitarian work: by Christ: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days"(Jn. 2:19); by the Father; "... the Father who raised him from the dead." (Gal.1:1); by the Spirit; "... the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead."(Rom. 8:11). Two aspects of this event warrant in-depth study:

a.) its historical reality: As Warfield argued, Christianity is a religion based on historical facts and one of those facts is the Resurrection of Christ:

It is a somewhat difficult matter to distinguish between Christian doctrines and facts. The doctrines of Christianity are doctrines only because they are facts; and the facts of Christianity become its most indispensable doctrines. ... [T]he Resurrection of Christ is a fact, an external occurrence within the cognizance of men to be established by their testimony. And yet, it is the cardinal doctrine of our system: on it hangs all other doctrines.⁴⁵

The Apostle Paul attested to the historical reality of Christ's resurrection and to the significance of it being a historical reality:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day 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 ... Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also ... And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (1Cor. 15:3-19).

Throughout its 2000 years of history, Christianity has defended the historical reality of the Resurrection and the enemies of Christianity have attacked it. Both recognize that Christianity stands or falls on this fact. ***See Appendix G: The Historical Reality of the Resurrection.*** Just as the Crucifixion of Christ was an event of history that is critical to the Christian faith, so is the Resurrection:

⁴⁵ B.B. Warfield, *The Resurrection of Christ a Historical Fact, Selected Shorter Writings*, Vol. 1 (Phillipsburgh, NJ; Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1970), p.178

It is impossible to separate the fact from the significance of the resurrection, as though the main thing were the idea rather than the historical reality. The Scriptures present the message of Christ's resurrection as being of essential and decisive significance. Again and again the apostolic message calls our attention to both the crucifixion and the resurrection. The fact of the cross is followed by the "but" of the fact of the resurrection. This but expresses the joy and superior power of God's activity in the glorification of the Son of man.⁴⁶

b.) its theological significance: When Christ rose from the dead, His sinlessness was verified, His claims to be God were vindicated, the Father's acceptance of His redemptive atonement for our sins was validated and the hold of sin and death over those in Christ was broken. Christ's resurrection is woven throughout the NT theology of Redemption:

- **it is a sign that Christ is the Messiah:** Christ Himself viewed His resurrection as a sign that He was the long-promised Messiah: "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Mt. 12:39-40)
- **it is a public declaration that Christ is the Son of God:** Had Christ not risen His claims to be the Son of God would have been relegated to the scrapheap of the failed and false claims of other narcissistic pretenders. But because He did rise from the dead, His claim to be the Son of God is proven and in a way that is loud and clear: "...who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from dead." (Rom. 1:4)
- **it broke the power of death and is our hope for eternal life in Him:** No one in Christ need fear the abyss of death for He has broken the power of death and has made the way clear for us to pass through death to eternal life:
 - "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live." (Jn. 11:25)
 - "Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1Pet. 1:3)
 - "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." (1Thes. 4:14)
 - "...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead." (Co. 2:12)
 - "...we know that one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence." (2Cor. 4:14)
 - "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection ... and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead." (Phil. 3:10)
 - "God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will also raise you." (1Cor. 6:14)

⁴⁶ G.C. Berkouwer, The Work of Christ, p. 181.

- **it confirmed God’s acceptance of Christ’s atonement for our justification:** Had Christ not been raised after His death on the cross, what indication would there have been that we have been saved by His atonement? However, when Christ was raised from the dead, the Father provided demonstrable, physical confirmation of the spiritual reality that Christ’s substitutionary atonement was accepted and we were thereby justified before God: “He was delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification.” (Rom. 4:25)

Warfield eloquently and cogently pleads the theological and apologetical value of Christ’s resurrection:⁴⁷

Opinions may conceivably differ as to whether, as a mere abstract proposition, it would have been possible to believe in Christianity as a supernaturally given religion had Christ remained holden of the grave. But it is scarcely disputable that, in the actual circumstances, his failure to rise again would have thrown the gravest doubt on the validity of his claims. And it admits of no doubt whatever that the fact that he did rise again, being once established, supplies an irrefragable demonstration of the supernatural origin of Christianity, of the validity of Christ’s claim to be the Son of God, and of the trustworthiness of his teaching as a Messenger from God to man. . . . The religion of Christ is stamped at once from heaven as divine, and all marks of divinity in its preparation, accompaniments, and sequence become at once congruous and natural.

The resurrection of Christ is fundamental to the Christian’s assurance that Christ’s work is complete and redemption is accomplished. . . . That he died manifests his love, and his willingness to save. That he rose again manifests his power, and his ability to save. We are not saved by a dead Christ who undertook but could not perform, and who lies there still, under the Syrian sky, another martyr of impotent love. If we are to be saved at all, it must be by one who did not merely pass to death in our behalf, but who passed through death. If the penalty was fully paid by him, it can not have broken him, it must needs have been broken upon him. Had he not emerged from the tomb, all our hopes, all our salvation would be lying dead with him unto this day. But as we see him issue from the grave we see ourselves issue with him in newness of life. Now we know that his shoulders were strong enough to bear the burden that was laid upon them, and that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him. The resurrection of Christ is thus the indispensable evidence of his completed work, his accomplished redemption.

: [W]e have in it a decisive proof of the divine origin of Christianity; a revolutionary revelation of the reality of immortality, a demonstration of the truth of all Christ’s claims and the trustworthiness of all his promises, an assurance of the perfection of his saving work, and a pledge of our own resurrection.

⁴⁷ B.B. Warfield, *The Resurrection of Christ a Fundamental Doctrine*, Selected Shorter Writings, Vol. 1, pp.197-201.

2.) in His Ascension and Session: Like the resurrection, the ascension of the resurrected Christ in His human nature into the throne-room of heaven and his session at the right hand of the Father are historical events of critical importance. (Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:9-11; 2:33-35). In these events, the suffering, scorned, mocked and executed Savior is triumphantly received in Heaven, crowned as King of Kings and is seated at the right hand of God to rule in absolute sovereignty and power. Through Daniel's vision, we are transported through the veil and into heaven where we witness Christ coming into the presence of the Father after having accomplished His work on earth:

As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. ... In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all people, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Dan. 7:9-14).

Christ often spoke of His return to the Father at the completion of His earthly ministry. (John 6:62; 14:2,12; 16:5-28; 17:5; 20:17). Only by leaving this world could Christ be coronated in heaven as the King of Kings and be exalted to the highest position of glory, honor, authority and power. (Ps.110; Acts: 2:33-36; Eph. 1:20,21; 4:10; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3; 12:2; 1Pet. 3:22). Also, by His ascension, Christ was able to present His blood as the true sacrifice of atonement for us in the true Temple of heaven:

When Christ came as high priest ... he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ... For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence (Ascension). ... But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God (Session). Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Heb. 9:11-24; 10: 12-14).

Through Christ's ascension into heaven and session at the right hand of God we now have a human representative in heaven ruling the universe as King and interceding and advocating on our behalf as Priest. Those in Christ are joined with Him in His exaltation in the ascension and session: "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus..." (Eph. 2:6)

3.) in His Return: At trial before the Sanhedrin, Christ proclaimed to Caiaphas "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Mt. 26:64). Christ's exaltation culminates on earth when He returns in Divine glory and power to vanquish and judge His enemies.

3. Christ as Mediator and Redeemer of humanity: Because only Christ effects the reconciliation of the broken relationship between sinful humanity and righteous God, He is the only way to God (John 14:6) and the only Mediator between God and humanity. (1Tim. 2:5). Only Jesus Christ has the necessary attributes of the Mediator between God and man: He is sinless and therefore does not require mediation for Himself and, by being truly God and truly man, He has an authentic and legitimate connection to both of the parties in the severed relationship. (See Gen. 28:12; John 1:51). Christ also performed the only act which could make reconciliation between God and humanity possible: the atonement. The Scriptural concept of The Mediator essentially parallels that of The Redeemer:

a. “a ransom”: Through sin, man incurred a moral debt to God that he could not pay and this unpaid debt has enslaved him and made him a captive in the moral debtors’ prison. As long as the debt of sin is unpaid there is an adversarial relationship between righteous God and sinful man. However, when Christ died on the cross He not only took the judicial punishment for sin as a crime, but He also paid God the “ransom” for our sin as a moral debt thereby freeing those in Christ from the debtor’s captivity.

- Ps. 49:7: “No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him”
- Mk. 10:45: “the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for (Gk. *anti* :“in place of”) many”
- 1Cor. 6:20: “you were bought at a price”
- Gal. 4:5: “God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law to redeem those under law”
- 1 Tim. 2:5: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom”
- Heb. 9:15: “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant...He died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”
- 1Pet.1:18-19: “you were redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”
- Rev. 5:9: “with your blood you purchased men for God”

b. “peace with God”: By paying our moral debt to God, Christ removed the hostility that separated sinful man from Holy God. In Christ, the believer’s relationship with God is no longer characterized by wrath, enmity and hostility, but rather it is characterized by a state of peace and fellowship:

- Acts 10:36: “the good news of peace through Jesus Christ”
- Rom. 5:1: “since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”
- Col. 1:19-20: “to reconcile all things...by making peace through His blood shed on the cross”

c. “reconciliation”: The objective of Christ’s work as the Mediator is to bring about a reconciliation of sinful man to the Holy God who was violated in that sin. In Christ, the believer has been restored to fellowship with God through the removal of the cause for the enmity: the unpunished crime and unpaid debt of sin:

- Rom. 5:10: “we were reconciled to Him (God) through the death of His Son”
- 2Cor. 5:19: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.”
- Eph. 2:13-14: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ...His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.”

4. Christ as Our Substitutionary Atonement: Christ’s work in accomplishing our atonement for sin is presented in Scripture through two concepts:

a. Christ as the “Second Adam”: - Rom. 5:9-19; 1Cor. 15:21-22; 45-49

Humanity’s condemnation occurred when Adam sinned and brought the wrath of God upon the whole race. God had appointed Adam to be mankind’s representative in the covenant of works with mankind’s destiny being tied to Adam’s obedience. When Adam violated the covenant in the Garden, the guilt was assigned to all humans thereby plunging humanity into a morally fallen and corrupt condition. Had God not desired to redeem us the story would have ended with the eternal and irrevocable separation of man from God in darkness and torment. However, God desired our salvation under the one necessary condition: no compromise of His moral perfection. God appointed His Son to become a man who would be another representative for humanity; a Second Adam.

- **“without sin”** - It is in His obedience and sinlessness that Christ is distinguished from Adam as humanity’s representative. (John 8:46; 2Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26-27; 1Pet.1:19; 2:22; 1John 3:5).
- **“our righteousness”** - Because Christ was our appointed representative His obedience is “credited” to those who trust in Him. (Rom. 4:5, 23-24). Thus, by imputation, Christ’s righteousness becomes “our righteousness” (1Cor. 1:30) which is “a righteousness from God” that justifies the sinner before God. (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:15-19). We meet God’s standard of moral perfection through the imputation of Christ’s actual righteousness to us. God saves us without compromising His holiness.
- **“an example”** - Christ’s work as the Second Adam or our Second Representative established an example for us to live and to think as God intended people to live and think. Whether the issue is how we should react to adversity, how we should treat others, what are priorities in life should be, the question “What would Jesus Do?” is a legitimate theological refrain from these Scriptures that set Christ’s life as the paradigm of the righteous man and thus as the supreme example to help guide is in all righteousness: John 13:15: “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”; 1 Cor. 11:1: “Follow my (Paul’s) example, as I follow the example of Christ.”; 1Cor. 2:21: “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” These Scriptures beckon the Christian to fix our eyes upon Christ as our example of how to live in this world now and of our hope of how we will live in heaven to come:

As an example, it may seem indeed set too high for us; our wings are clipped and we feel that we cannot soar into these elevated regions of doing and living. But, as ideal realized in life, it must stand ever before us an incitement and an inspiration. When we observe this perfect human development of Jesus, issuing into the perfect life of the man, we discern in it a model for every age and for every condition of man of quite inestimable alluring power.⁴⁸

Oh, toil-worn pilgrim, weary with your burden, would you know the glory in store for you? Look at Jesus: you shall be like Him. Are you tempted to despair? Do you shrink from an endless future in which you shall remain for ever yourself? Look at Jesus: not as you are, but like what He is, you are to be. If we can but attain to such a hope, heaven bursts at once upon our souls. To be like Jesus! Is this not a glory, in the presence of which all other glories fade away by reason of the glory that is surpassing? When we look at Jesus, we may not – we cannot afford to – forget that we are looking at that which, by the grace of God, we may and shall become.⁴⁹

b. Christ as “The Lamb Of God” - John 1:29; 1Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6-14

As the Second Adam, Christ has given to us the righteousness and moral perfection which we lacked. However, redemption not only required that we obtain moral perfection, but also that our sins be punished and God’s justice be vindicated. It is through a second act of imputation that humanity is redeemed. As the Lamb of God, Christ bore the guilt of our sins and became the object of God’s holy wrath by imputation.

- **“bore our sins”** - God transferred the guilt for our sins to Christ. By imputation, Christ is deemed by God to be the guilty party even though He personally was without sin. In redemption, there is a double transfer: Christ’s righteousness is transferred to us because He is our Second Adam and our guilt for sin is transferred to Him because He is the Lamb of God:
 - Is. 53:6: “the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all”
 - Is. 53:11: “He will bear their iniquities”
 - Is. 53:12: “He bore the sin of many”
 - 2Cor. 5:21: “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us” (Gk. *huper*).
 - 1Pet. 2:24: “He himself bore our sins”
- **“sacrifice of atonement”** - Once He was imputed with our guilt, Christ then became the object of God’s wrath. The punishment due the guilty sinner is inflicted upon Christ thereby satisfying the righteous wrath of God that is compelled by His holy character. By virtue of Christ being our substitute in punishment, God can now consider the sinner who is in Christ to be justified. The substitutionary aspect of Christ’s suffering and death is explicitly stated in Scripture by the preposition “for us” (Gk. *huper* and *anti*) and is depicted by the Biblical types which include the coat of skins, Abel’s lamb, the ram caught in the thicket and the Passover Lamb;

⁴⁸ B.B. Warfield, *The Human Development of Jesus*, Benjamin B. Warfield: Selected Shorter Writings, Vol. 1, p. 160.

⁴⁹ B.B. Warfield, *The Revelation of Man*, The Power of God Unto Salvation, pp. 24-25.

- Is. 53:5: “But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.” cp. Is. 50:6; 52:14
 - Is. 53:8: “for the transgression of my people He was stricken...it was the Lord’s will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer...the Lord makes His life a guilt offering”
 - Luke 22:19-20: “This is my body given for you. ...my blood...poured out for you”
 - John 10:11-18: “I lay down my life for the sheep”
 - Rom.3:25: “God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement”
 - Rom. 4:25: “He was delivered over to death for our sins”
 - Rom. 5:6-8: Christ died for the ungodly...Christ died for us”
 - Rom. 8:3: “sending His own Son ... to be a sin offering”
 - Heb. 2:17: “that He might make atonement for the sins of the people”
 - 1Pet. 3:18: “Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous”
 - 1Pet. 2:24: “He Himself bore our sins in His body upon the tree”
 - 1John 2:2: “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins”
- **“a curse for us”** - Because of God’s righteous and holy character, sin necessarily brings upon the sinner a curse. It is the nature of God’s covenants that obedience will result in blessing and disobedience will result in a curse. With the imputation of our sin upon Christ, He necessarily became the focus of God’s wrath and an object of God’s curse. (Gal. 3:13). In excruciating detail, Christ, in our place, experienced the totality of the curse of judgment for sin upon the cross:
 - rejected by Israel and condemned by Gentiles - Is. 53:3 (“despised and rejected”)
 - abandoned and betrayed by His friends - Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14
 - outside of the camp (Jerusalem) - Heb. 13:11-12
 - hung upon a tree - Dt.21:23
 - naked - Gen. 3:10 cp. Matt 27:31,35
 - crown of thorns - Gen. 3:17-19
 - among the wicked - Ps. 1:1
 - in darkness - Mt. 22:13; 25:30; Jude 13
 - died - Gen. 2:17 cp. Rom. 6:33 - “the wages of sin is death”
 - **“forsaken”** - God’s holiness compels Him to reject the sinner (Ps. 5:4-5) and to turn away from sin. (Hab.1:13). If being blessed by God is for “the Lord to make His face shine upon you” (Nu. 6:24-26) then being cursed by God is to have God turn His back upon you and to forsake you. (Matt. 25:41: “Depart from me you who are cursed...”). When our sins were imputed to Christ, God had to turn His back upon His Son because at that moment Christ was absolutely repulsive to the holiness of God. It was at that moment that Christ in His distressed humanity cried out, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me!” This was no hallucination of a tormented mind, but rather it was the anguished lament of the Son in His human nature who had truly experienced being rejected and forsaken by His Father. It is at this moment that Christ drank from the cup of the Father’s righteous wrath for us.

D. Coherence of Christ's Work: Sinners Saved Without God's Holiness Surrendered:

Coherence is a *sine qua non* (Lt.: "without which, not") of truth. The truth of Christ being The Way to God is demonstrated, in part, by the coherence of how He saves sinners. The dilemma in the salvation of sinners is this: how can a perfectly holy and righteous God forgive sinners without compromising His holiness. No religion apart from Christ solves this dilemma. All other religions either deny reality of sin in humanity or the reality of holiness in God. Only in Christ is this dilemma solved. Sinners are saved from God's wrath without God's holiness being compromised. This compelling coherence of Christ's work in redemption has been articulated and argued by the greatest minds in Christianity, including Edwards and Anselm:

1. The Dilemma: Sinners owe God an infinite debt for sin that they cannot pay:

a. God's honor has an infinite value:

But God is a being infinitely lovely, because he hath infinite excellency and beauty. To have infinite excellency and beauty, is the same thing as to have infinite loveliness. He is a being of infinite greatness, majesty, and glory; and therefore he is infinitely honourable.⁵⁰ - Edwards

b. God would compromise His infinite honor if He did not punish its violation:

Let us now return to the main argument and see whether it is fitting for God to forgive a sin out of mercy alone, without any restitution of the honour taken away from him. ... To forgive a sin in this way is nothing than to refrain from inflicting punishment. And if no satisfaction is given, the way to regulate sin correctly is none other than to punish it. If, therefore, it is not punished, it is forgiven without its having been regulated. ... Therefore, it is not fitting for God to forgive a sin without punishment. ... In consequence of this reasoning, it is not fitting for God to do anything in an unjust and unregulated manner, it does not belong to his freedom or benevolence or will to release unpunished a sinner who has not repaid to God what he has taken away from him. ... Likewise, if there is nothing greater and nothing better than God, then there is nothing, in the government of the universe, which the supreme justice, which is none other than God himself, preserves more justly than God's honour. ... There is nothing, therefore, which God preserves more justly than the honour of his dignity. ... Does it seem to you that he is preserving his honour intact if he allows it to be taken from himself on such terms, on the one hand, it is not repaid to him, and, on the other, he does not punish the person who takes it?⁵¹ - Anselm

⁵⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *The Justice of God*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. I (Peabody, MA; Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 669.

⁵¹ St. Anselm, *Why God Became Man (Cur Deus Homo)*, Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 284-87.

c. Therefore, sinners owe God an infinite debt of recompense for sin:

So that sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous, and so deserving infinite punishment. – Nothing is more agreeable to the common sense of mankind, than that sins committed against any one, must be proportionable heinous to the dignity of the being offended and abused.⁵² - Edwards

If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the evil punished, and is no more than sin deserves, And if the obligation to love, honour, and obey God be infinite, then sin, which is a violation of this obligation, is a violation of infinite obligation, and so is an our obligation to love, and honour, and obey him is infinitely great.⁵³ - Edwards

d. God cannot forgive a sinner without receiving infinite recompense for the sin:

But mercy of this kind is absolutely contrary to God's justice, which does not allow anything to be given for repayment for sin except punishment. Hence, given that it is impossible for God to be self-contradictory, it is impossible for him to be merciful in this way. ... That this state of bliss ought not to be given to anyone whose sins have not been utterly forgiven, and that this forgiveness ought not to happen except on repayment of the debt which is owed because of sin and which is proportional to the magnitude of his sin, I think I have demonstrated by the logical reasonings set out earlier.⁵⁴ - Anselm

e. However, a sinner cannot pay the infinite debt that he owes God for sin. Because we owe God an obligation of moral perfection, once a sin is committed the sinner can never make up for it by being perfect from that point on because that is only what he is obligated to do even if he had not sinned. Thus, even if the sinner lived a perfect life after committing one sin, that sin would still be left unpaid. That one, unpaid sin has an infinite cost because it violated God's infinitely valuable honor:

Tell me, then, what payment will you give God in recompense for your sin? Penitence, a contrite and humbled heart, fasting and many kinds of bodily labour, the showing of pity through giving and forgiveness, and obedience. What is it that you are giving to God by all these means? ... When you are rendering to God something which you owe him, even if you have not sinned, you ought not to reckon this to be recompense for what you owe him for sin. For you owe to God all the things you refer. ... And in obedience, when truth is told, what are you giving God that you do not owe him, seeing that it is your obligation to give him, at his command, all that you are and all that you have and all that you are capable of? ... What payment, then, are you going to make to God in recompense for your sin?⁵⁵ - Anselm

⁵² Jonathan Edwards, Id.

⁵³ Jonathan Edwards, *The Eternity of Hell Torments*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. II, p. 83.

⁵⁴ St. Anselm, pp. 311-12.

⁵⁵ Id, pp. 303-04.

2. The Solution: Christ as Man can assume our debt and as God can pay our debt:

a. Only a man can stand in man's position in judgment and debt before God.

But the obligation rests with man, and no one else, to make the payment referred to. Otherwise mankind is not making recompense... But if He (God) creates a new man who is not from the race of Adam, this new man will not belong to the human race which is descended from Adam. Consequently, he will not have an obligation to give recompense on behalf of this race, because he will not be from it. ... Therefore, it is necessary that the man through whom the race of Adam is to be restored should be taken from Adam's progeny.⁵⁶ - Anselm

b. Only God is able to receive an infinite punishment and pay an infinite debt for man:

This debt was so large that, although no one but man owed it, only God was capable of repaying it, assuming that there should be a man identical with God. Hence it was a necessity that God should take man into the unity of his person, so that one who ought, by virtue of his nature, to make the repayment and was not capable of doing so, should be the one who, by virtue of his person, was capable of it.⁵⁷ - Anselm

Thus, Christ was tormented not only in the fire of God's wrath, but in the fire of our sins; and our sins were his tormentors; the evil and malignant nature of sin was what Christ endured immediately, as well as more remotely, in bearing the consequences of it. Thus Christ suffered that which the damned in hell do not suffer. ... They have no idea of sin in itself, that is infinitely disagreeable to their nature, as the idea of sin was to Christ's holy nature;⁵⁸ - Edwards

God dealt with him as if he had been the object of his dreadful wrath. This made all the sufferings of Christ the more terrible to him, because they were from the hand of his Father, whom he infinitely loved, and whose infinite love he had had eternal experience of. Besides, it was an effect upon God's wrath that he forsook Christ. ... This was infinitely terrible to Christ.⁵⁹ - Edwards

c. By Christ's atonement, God can now forgive sin without compromising His honor:

So that Christ having fully satisfied for all sin, or having wrought out a satisfaction that is sufficient for all, it is now no way inconsistent with the glory of the divine attributes to pardon the greatest sins of those who in a right manner come unto him for it. – God may now pardon the greatest sinners without any prejudice to the honour of his holiness.⁶⁰ - Edwards

⁵⁶ Id., pp. 320-33.

⁵⁷ Id., p. 348.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *Miscellaneous Remarks*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. II, p. 574.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 575.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *Pardon for the Greatest Sinners*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. II, p. 111.

d. Therefore, Christ, as truly man and truly God, is the only way to God:

When Christ said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6), that was no arbitrary decree by God, but rather it was a revelation of a metaphysical reality and an absolute truth that is compelled by the Holiness of God. If God is going to redeem fallen people, it is going to require a Redeemer who is truly God and truly Man. That is why all religions other than Christianity are false ways of salvation for sinners; not because Christians say so, it is because it is so:

It is also a necessity that someone who can give to God from his own property something which exceeds everything which is inferior to God, must himself be superior to everything that exists apart from God ... Now there is nothing superior to all that exists which is not God – except God ... But the obligation rests with man, and no one else, to make the payment referred to. Otherwise mankind is not making recompense. ... If, therefore, as is agreed, it is necessary that the heavenly city should have its full complement made up by members of the human race, and this cannot be the case if the recompense of which we have spoken is not paid, which no one can pay except God, and no one ought to pay except man: it is necessary that a God-Man should pay it.⁶¹ - Anselm

In order, therefore, that a God-Man should bring about what is necessary, it is essential that the same one person who will make the recompense should be perfect God and perfect man. For he cannot do this if he is not true God, and he has no obligation to do so if he is not true man. Given, therefore, that it is necessary for a God-Man to be found to whom the wholeness of both natures is kept intact it is no less necessary for those two natures to combine, as wholes, in one person, in the same way as the body and the rational soul coalesce into one human being. For otherwise it cannot come about that one and the same person may be perfect God and perfect man.⁶² - Anselm

No member of the human race except Christ ever gave to God, by dying, anything which that person was not at the same time going to lose as a matter of necessity. Nor did anyone ever pay a debt to God which he did not owe. But Christ of his own accord gave to His Father what he was never going to lose as a matter of necessity, and he paid, on behalf of sinners, a debt which he did not owe.⁶³ - Anselm

Christ never so eminently appeared for divine justice, and yet never suffered so much from divine justice, as when he offered himself a sacrifice for our sins. In Christ’s great sufferings, did his infinite regard to the honour of God’s justice distinguishingly appear...And yet in these sufferings, Christ was the mark of the vindictive expressions of that very justice of God. Revenging justice then spent all its force upon him, on account of our guilt; ...And this was the way and means by which Christ stood up for the honour of God’s justice ... For when he had undertaken for sinners, and had substituted himself in their room, divine justice could have its due honour no other

⁶¹ Anselm, pp. 319-20.

⁶² Id., p. 321.

⁶³ Id., p. 349.

way than by his suffering its revenges. In this the diverse excellencies that met in the person of Christ appeared ... his infinite regard to God's justice, and such love to those that have exposed themselves to it, as induced him thus to yield himself a sacrifice to it.⁶⁴ - Edwards

3. The Summary: Christ's criminal death in our place on the cross: To bring this analysis of Christ's work to a close, it should now be evident that God chose a criminal's death for His Son to reveal the human dilemma and the Divine solution in redemption. Nothing could so vividly and profoundly convey God's holy abhorrence of sin than the wrath that He poured out upon His innocent Son whom He loved infinitely. Nothing could confront us so deeply and dramatically with our guilt before God and our impending doom than to see Christ forsaken by His Father in our place. And, finally, nothing could raise us to such heights of hope and praise than to know that God's honor has been vindicated on our behalf and that, in Christ, we will one day stand before God without guilt and in the perfect righteousness of Christ. John Calvin, the greatest systematic theologian since Augustine, said this about Christ's criminal death:

To take away our condemnation, it was not enough for him to suffer any kind of death: to make satisfaction for our redemption a form of death had to be chosen in which he might free us both by transferring our condemnation to himself and by taking our guilt upon himself. If he had been murdered by thieves or slain in an insurrection by a raging mob, in such a death there would have been no evidence of satisfaction. But when he was arraigned before the judgement seat as a criminal, accused and pressed by testimony, and condemned by the mouth of the judge to die – we know by these proofs that he took the role of the guilty man and evildoer... This is our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God. We must, above all, remember this substitution, lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life – as if God's righteous vengeance which the Son of God had taken upon himself, still hung over us.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Excellency of Christ*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. I, p. 684.

⁶⁵ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 1, pp. 509-10.

APPENDIX A: THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS OF NAZARETH

I. Non-Christian Evidence: 6 Sources from the Late 1st and Early 2^d Centuries:

A. Tacitus: Roman Historian (AD c.55-c.117)

Born within 30 years of the event, the Roman historian Tacitus referenced Christ's prosecution as he was narrating Nero's persecution of Christians as a distraction from the rumor that he had started the great fire of Rome:

To suppress this rumour, Nero fabricated scapegoats – and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate.¹

With these two sentences from Tacitus, a source with no interest in validating Christianity has confirmed the fact, the time, the venue, the presiding Roman judge, the verdict and the sentence imposed in Christ's prosecution as recorded in the NT. Although not explicitly stated, Tacitus implies a connection between Christ's religious movement and His ultimate execution. Since he is writing this history around 115 AD, about 85 years after Christ's execution, Tacitus must have been consulting earlier Roman historical sources which may have included extant Roman primary records such as an archive of reports from provincial governors, including Pontius Pilate. Indeed, in making his defense of Christianity to the Emperor in about AD 150, Justin Martyr cited a source presumably available to the Emperor in Rome called "the Acts of Pontius Pilate" for proof of Christ's execution by Pilate.²

B. Suetonius: Roman Historian (AD c.69-c.140)

Writing a history of the reigns of the Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Domitian, Suetonius, a Roman contemporary of Tacitus, made two references testifying to the existence of Christ, the founder of Christianity:

Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from the city.³

Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians (by Nero), a sect professing a new and mischievous religion.⁴

While not specifically mentioning Christ's prosecution, Suetonius adds to the weight of historical evidence confirming the existence of a Jewish religious figure bearing the title Christ whose First Century movement reached the very center of the Roman Empire by the time of Nero and caused a stir with its radical doctrine that apparently challenged the polytheistic foundations of the culture.

C. Pliny the Younger: (AD c.61-c.112)

Further Roman testimony comes from by Pliny the Younger, a friend of both Tacitus and Suetonius. While the Roman Imperial Legate of Bithynia and Pontus, now modern day northern Turkey, Pliny engaged in a regular correspondence with the Emperor Trajan, keeping him informed of provincial events and seeking his advice on

¹ Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, trans. Michael Grant, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1986), p. 365.

² Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin*, *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), p. 175.

³ Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1987), p. 202.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 221

matters of provincial administration. In one particular exchange, he is seeking imperial guidance on how to conduct the prosecution of Christians. Pliny describes his dilemma and his course of action in a letter to the Emperor Trajan:

I have never attended hearings concerning Christians, so I am unaware what is usually punished or investigated, and to what extent. I am more than a little in doubt ... whether it is the name Christian itself untainted with crimes, or the crimes which cling to the name which should be punished. ... Those who remained obstinate I ordered to be executed, for I was in no doubt, whatever it was which they were confessing, that their obstinacy and their inflexible stubbornness should at any rate be punished. .. Those who denied that they were or have been Christians ... and who moreover cursed Christ (those who truly are Christian cannot, it is said, be forced to do any of these things), I ordered acquitted. ... [T]hey were accustomed to assemble at dawn on a fixed day, to sing a hymn antiphonally to Christ as God ... ⁵

Within 80 years of Christ's execution, we have a reference from no less a witness than a Roman Imperial Legate to Jesus of Nazareth being the object of divine worship and devotion as far from Judaea as the southern shores of the Black Sea. In communion with their Lord, these second-century Christians drank from the cup of Roman persecution.

D. Bar-Serapion: (AD c.70)

Aside from these Roman sources, there is an obscure Syrian source, which, although cryptic, almost certainly attests to Christ's noble life and criminal's death. Writing sometime shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 A.D., the Syrian philosopher, Mara Bar-Serapion, wrote a letter referencing the lives of the wisest of men and he included this passage:

What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their King? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. ... Nor did the wise King die for good; He lived on in the teaching which He had given.⁶

Although not mentioned by name, this Jewish King, whose execution preceded the destruction of the Jewish nation and whose teachings survived His death, can be none other than Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified 40 years before Rome's destruction of Jerusalem and whose official record of conviction charged him with being "King of the Jews." Bar-Serapion implies the existence of a corpus of literature containing the teachings of Christ which is suggestive of the early existence of many NT documents.

E. Josephus: (AD. 37-c.100)

To the foregoing Gentile testimony, we may add the Jewish testimony to the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth and His criminal prosecution. First, there is the First Century Jewish historian Josephus who wrote two histories of the Jewish people *The Jewish Wars* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*. While recounting the events during the reigns of the Roman Emperors Tiberius, Gaius and Claudius, Josephus recorded two events:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, he was a doer of wonderful works – a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us,

⁵ Pliny the Younger, *Pliny the Younger: Complete Letters*, Book X.96, trans. P.G.Wals (N.Y., N.Y.: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006), p.278.

⁶ Quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), pp 123.

had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him ... and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.⁷

Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man ... Accordingly, he was sent a prisoner ... to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death.⁸

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he (Annas son of Annas) assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned;⁹

Indeed, just because of its corroboration of the Gospels, these ancient passages have been subjected to intense scholarly attack. In the realm of academia and historical criticism, there is an a priori view that any historical source that may support a NT assertion is immediately presumed to be a forgery inserted by Christians in order to fabricate corroboration. In the final analysis, there are compelling arguments for the authenticity of Josephus' basic factual assertions about Christ, apart from any devotional overtones.¹⁰

F. *The Talmud*: (AD. c.200-c.500)

To Josephus we may add the Jewish testimony of the *Talmud*. Beginning around 200 A.D., the Jewish oral legal tradition dating back for centuries was committed to writing and divided into topical tractates in a work called the *Mishna*. Once produced, the *Mishna* then became the subject of extensive, written rabbinic commentary and exposition that was collected and called the *Gemara*. By 500 A.D., these two bodies of literature, the *Mishna* and the *Gemara*, were combined into one work called the *Talmud*. One version of the *Talmud* was produced by rabbis in Jerusalem and bears the name of that city and another version was produced by rabbinic scholars in Babylon and bears that appellation. Because it is more extensive than its counterpart, the Babylonian Talmud is generally considered the more authoritative version.

Jewish criminal jurisprudence in the *Talmud* is set forth principally in the tractate entitled Sanhedrin. A *Mishna* provision in that tractate required a herald to precede the march of a condemned man to his execution. The herald is to announce the offender's identity and offense and to call for anyone with exculpatory testimony to come forward. In the *Gemara* commentary on this *Mishna* provision, a particular execution is cited as an historical example of the herald's function:

⁷ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:3:3, The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), p. 480.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.5.2, p. 484.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.9.1, p. 538.

¹⁰ For arguments for their authenticity consult William Whiston, "Appendix: Dissertation 1: *The Testimonies of Josephus concerning Jesus Christ, John the Baptist and James the Just, Vindicated*", The Works of Josephus, *Ibid.*, pp. 815-22. For arguments of the authenticity of the non-devotional portions, consult F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, (N.Y., N.Y., Galilee, Doubleday, 1971), p. 166 and the sources cited therein, and Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 126 and the sources cited therein, and Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*, (Joplin, MO: College Press company, 1996), pp. 192-96 and the sources cited therein.

On the eve of the Passover Yeshua was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of Passover.¹¹

One version of this passage includes the phrase "the Nazarean" after "Yeshua." Undoubtedly, the event referenced in this commentary is none other than the prosecution of Jesus of Nazareth, "Yeshua" being the Hebrew name that is translated into the Greek and then transliterated into English as "Jesus".

The claim that the herald cried out for forty days before the execution is obviously unhistorical given that the execution was a Roman execution that was carried out *instanter* after Pilate's verdict. Perhaps uneasy and conscience-stricken about the Sanhedrin's expedited trial and subsequent surrender of Jesus to a Gentile judge for execution, the later rabbis writing this commentary exaggerated the due process afforded the Accused. Nonetheless, the evidentiary value of this rabbinic record is striking. It concedes that Christ was executed during Passover; that He was accused of teaching doctrine that was antithetical to the teachings of the Jewish authorities and that He performed miracles, albeit, by the power of the Evil One. This Jewish account provides considerable corroboration of the NT record by a source that has no motive in verifying the truth-claims of Christianity. Because it supports significant NT historical assertions, it is not surprising that this Gemara passage has been censored from some versions of the Talmud.

G. The "James Son of Joseph Brother of Jesus" Ossuary Inscription:

One final extra-Christian item of evidence warrants mentioning, although its authenticity has been contested. An ossuary, a stone box into which human bones are placed after decomposition of the body in a tomb, dating to the First Century was discovered in Israel that bears the Aramaic inscription "James, the son of Joseph, the brother of Jesus."¹² The significance of this inscription lies in the fact that while it was common in Jewish culture to name the deceased's father, a deceased's brother would only be named if that brother was exceptionally prominent and famous. Therefore, this ossuary stands as evidence of a famous First Century Jewish man named Jesus whose father was Joseph and brother was James. Moreover, the quality of this decorative ossuary and the nature of the inscription is suggestive that this James himself was a prominent First Century Jewish man which is consistent with the NT James who was the first leader of the Jerusalem Church and the author of the NT letter bearing his name whose execution by the Sanhedrin was recorded and lamented by Josephus. Thus, the inscription stands as powerful circumstantial evidence of the historical reality of the Jesus of Nazareth of the NT.

As with any evidence that supports Christianity and the authenticity and reliability of the NT, whether it is textual or archaeological, the "James" ossuary has been vigorously denounced and disputed, especially by Jewish scholars. Indeed, the Israel Antiquities Authority pursued criminal charges of forgery against its owner, but after a several years-long trial and scholarly defense testimony of the inscription's authenticity, he was acquitted. The editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, himself a non-Christian Jew, has written compellingly in favor of the inscription being genuine.¹³

¹¹ Epstein, Rabbi Dr. Isidore, ed., *Tractate Sanhedrin, Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, (London: The Sonico Press, 1994), 43a.

¹² Andre Lemaire, "Burial Box of James the Brother of Jesus", *Biblical Archaeology Review*, November / December, 2002; Andre Lemaire, "The Storm over the Bone Box", *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September / October, 2003; Hershel Shanks, "Brother of Jesus Inscription is Authentic!", *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July / August, 2012; Hershel Shanks, "Predilections: Is the 'Brother of Jesus' Inscription a Forgery?", *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September / October, 2015.

¹³ *Ibid.*

From these sources that can only be fairly characterized non-Christian or even anti-Christian, the following basic outline of a core historical narrative of Christ is established to the degree of ancient historical certainty; that is to a degree, which if rejected, would require the rejection of almost all we accept as historical from that time:

1. During the First Century, a Jewish man named Jesus, who bore the title of Christ, rose to prominence in the Roman province of Judaea and he had a brother named James.
2. This Jesus began a religion whose adherents became known as “Christians” and they included Jews and Gentiles.
3. This religious movement established by Jesus Christ spread throughout the Roman Empire by the time of Claudius and Nero and became the object of scorn and persecution by the Romans.
4. This Jesus was viewed by some as a King of the Jews and was credited with performing miracles, which even the Jewish leaders conceded but attributed to sorcery.
5. During the reign of Emperor Tiberius, this Jesus was crucified at Passover by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate on charges brought by Jewish leaders that included heresy.

Astonishingly, without consulting the NT, we have independently arrived at the central historical NT narrative about Christ! When the NT is added to these non-Christian sources, there is a stunning and compelling convergence of independent, reliable historical testimony to the essential details of the life, ministry and death of Christ.

II. Christian Evidence for the Historical Reality of Jesus:

A. Witnesses Contemporary with Jesus: 27 Writings by 8 to 9 First Century authors: Although the NT is commonly viewed as a single book it is actually a collection of 27 documents written by separate First Century historical sources who had personal encounters with Jesus of Nazareth, including two of his brothers (James and Jude) and three of his disciples (Peter, John and Matthew) and two historians (Mark and Luke) who had personal contact with eyewitnesses to the life and ministry of Jesus:

1. **John: *The Gospel of John, 1John, 2John, 3John and Revelation* (AD c.85-95):** Yohanan bar Zebedee, wrote three letters, one Gospel and one apocalyptic writing about Jesus of Nazareth based upon his personal acquaintance and intimate friendship with Him.
2. **Peter: *1Peter and 2Peter* (AD c.65):** Simon bar Jonah, wrote two letters testifying to his personal relationship and encounter with Jesus of Nazareth and he was also an eyewitness source whom Mark consulted in writing his gospel about Jesus.
3. **Matthew: *The Gospel of Matthew* (AD c.50-70):** A Jewish collector of the *publicum* tax on commodities for Rome, Matthew Levi bar Alphaeus wrote a detailed historical record based upon his own eyewitness perspective of the public ministry and preaching of Jesus of Nazareth. .
4. **James: *James* (AD c.45):** Growing up in the very same home and among the same parents and siblings as Jesus of Nazareth, James (Ar.: Yacob bar Joseph) initially rejected his eldest brother’s claims to be the Messiah until he encountered the Resurrected Jesus. He wrote what is probably the earliest NT document, the Epistle of James, encouraging Christians to live lives that reflected, Jesus, whom James extolled as “the Lord of Glory.” As indicated above, Josephus provides independent corroboration of James’ high moral reputation and relationship to Jesus of Nazareth and we may have the ossuary that contained his bones with the inscription, “James son of Joseph brother of Jesus.”

5. **Jude: *Jude* (AD c.68):** Judas bar Joseph was another brother of Jesus who had initially rejected his brother's Messianic claim but then later embraced as Lord. He wrote a letter that praised eldest brother as "Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."
6. **Mark: *The Gospel of Mark* (AD c.50-c70):** Although it is not known whether Yohanan Marcus (John Mark) ever encountered Jesus himself, it is certain that he knew those who did, including Peter, and that he used them as historical sources for his Gospel. His relationship with Peter was very close. In fact, the ancient Church historian Eusebius wrote that Papias, the Bishop of Hieropolis and a disciple of the Apostle John, had recorded that in writing his Gospel, Mark had obtained much of his historical data directly from Peter. Because of this connection to Peter, the Gospel can be justly described as the Gospel according to Peter. Mark was related to Barnabas and his mother was Mary whose house was a common meeting place for Christians after Christ's death and resurrection.
7. **Luke: *The Gospel of Luke* (AD c.50-c.70):** A Gentile physician and ministry companion of the Apostle Paul, Luke was a First Century historian and Greek writer of the first order. He thoroughly investigated and compiled a two-volume history of the life of Jesus and the spread of the Gospel for a prominent official named Theophilus. Those volumes are contained in the NT and are known as the Gospel of Luke and Acts.
8. **Paul: *13 Epistles* (AD c.50 – c.68):** Saul of Tarsus the arch-enemy of the followers of Jesus who became Paul the Apostle the arch-advocate of Jesus is the most influential and singularly man in history apart from his Lord. His writings have been read, studied, researched, reproduced, translated and disseminated more than any other writings in history. They have influenced the course of history and of faith for 2000 years, including being the impetus for the Protestant Reformation. Today, his writings are read by millions of people and invoked in preaching and liturgies in hundreds of languages and among hundreds of people groups on one every continent. A logical and theological mind of the highest order, Paul provides the most compelling testimony that any witness could ever provide in support of another person; the favorable testimony of an enemy. He had intimate contact with the original eyewitnesses to Jesus and with those Jewish authorities who prosecuted Jesus, giving him first-hand historical sources for his factual assertions in his letters. Beyond that, Paul provides an eyewitness account of his own encounter with the risen Jesus that instantly transformed him into the greatest advocate for the reality of Jesus being exactly who claimed to be and who Paul originally despised him for; the Divine Messiah and Son of God.
9. ***Hebrews*: (AD c.65-c.70):** Written sometime before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, this theological masterpiece was penned either by the Apostle Paul or another theological scholar who was one of his companions and partners in ministry such as Apollos, Aquila, Clement or Barnabas. The author was intimately acquainted with the historical facts of the life of Jesus and used those facts to construct an apologetic of Jesus being the Divine Messiah who made the truly effectual atonement for our sins that was only prefigured by the OT sacrifices and who was presently the true High Priest who interceded on our behalf before the Father in heaven.

B. Witnesses in the First Generation after the Apostles: Known as the Apostolic Fathers:

- 1. Clement of Rome: (AD 30-100):** Clement, Bishop of Rome from AD 92-100, may have in fact been the Clement who was a disciple of Paul mentioned in Phil. 4:3. We have one extant letter from Clement that was written to the Church at Corinth seeking to rebuke and correct divisive factions that arose within that fellowship of believers. In his letter, Clement quoted Paul and Jesus and taught such cardinal doctrines as the Resurrection of Christ, Justification by Faith Alone and the Inspiration of Scripture as well as the Scriptural status of Paul's writings.
- 2. Ignatius of Antioch: (AD. c.30-107):** There is an ancient tradition that the little child recorded in Matt. 18:2 as being held by Jesus was Ignatius who went on to become the Bishop of the Church at Antioch. Whether or not he was that child, there is no doubt that he was the Bishop at Antioch and he authored many letters, seven of which are extant today. In these letters, Ignatius provides early evidence of the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ with statements such as: "of the Father, and Jesus Christ, our God" and Jesus being "God ... manifested in human form." His letters also include many references to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ thereby refuting the assertion of many critics that Christ's resurrection was a myth developed well after Christ's death. Myth does not arise in the very generation of the person who is being mythologized. Ignatius was a friend of Polycarp and was almost certainly a disciple or at least an acquaintance of one or more of the apostles.
- 3. Polycarp of Smyrna: (AD. c.69-155):** This venerable Christian hero was a disciple of the Apostle John and a friend of both Ignatius and Papias. He was the Bishop of the church at Smyrna who was martyred in AD 155 before a large crowd in a coliseum when he refused a Roman governor's demand that he forsake Christ and worship the Emperor. His parting words were: "Eighty and six years have I served Him ... how then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?" There is one extant letter of his that he wrote "to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi" in which he makes several allusions to and quotes from the Gospels and the letters of Paul and Peter.
- 4. Papias of Hierapolis: (AD. c.70-155):** A disciple of the Apostle John and a friend of Polycarp, Papias was the Bishop of Hierapolis, a city just north of Laodicea in West-central Turkey, that is mentioned by Paul in Col. 4:13. Although there are no extant writings from Papias, several sources, including Irenaeus and Eusebius, quote fragments of his writings. In these fragments Papias referenced 1John, 1Peter and Revelation, and also he stated that Mark wrote his Gospel primarily under the direction of the Apostle Peter and that Matthew originally wrote his Gospel in the "Hebrew language," probably meaning Aramaic.

APPENDIX B: THE RADICAL CLAIMS OF JESUS

No mere good man, teacher or prophet would make these radical claims. These sayings of Jesus force us to choose between Jesus the Liar, Jesus the Lunatic or Jesus the Lord:

- “[B]efore Abraham was, I am” - Jn. 8:58
- “I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved.” - Jn. 10:9
- “My sheep listen to my voice ... I give them eternal life” - Jn. 10:28
- “... if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” - Jn. 8:51
- “I and the Father are one.” - Jn. 10:30
- “[W]hatever the Father does the Son does also does.” - Jn. 5:19
- “All that belongs to the Father is mine” - Jn. 16:15
- “All things have been committed to me by my Father.” - Mt. 11:27
- “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father” - Jn. 5:23
- “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son” - Mt. 11:27
- “These are the Scriptures that testify about me” - Jn. 5:40
- “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.” - Jn. 5:46
- “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” - Lk. 24:44
- “I am the bread of life ... I am the bread that came from heaven. ... I am the living bread.” - Jn. 6:35-51
- “I am the light of the world” - Jn. 8:12
- “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live...” - Jn. 11:25
- “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” - Jn. 14:6
- “[I]f you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” - Jn. 8:24
- “If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink.” - Jn. 7:37
- “Come to me, all you who are weary, and I will give you rest.” - Mt. 11:28
- “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?” - Jn. 8:46
- “So, if the Son sets you free, then you will be free indeed.” - Jn. 8:36
- “You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it.” - Jn. 14:14
- “In my name they will drive out demons” - Mk. 16:17
- “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” - Mt. 18:20
- “Apart from me you can do nothing” - Jn. 15:5

- “I tell you that one greater than the temple is here” - Mt. 12:6
- “[N]ow one greater than Jonah is here.” - Mt. 12:41
- “[N]ow one greater than Solomon is here.” - Mt. 12:42
- “Whoever loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” - Mt. 10:37
- “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” - Mt. 24:35
- “[I]f anyone keeps my word he will never see death.” - Jn. 8:51
- “I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” - Mt. 16:20
- “My Kingdom is not of this world” - Jn. 18:36
- “This is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me.” - Lk. 22:19
- “But when he, the Spirit of truth comes... He will bring glory to me” - Jn. 16:14
- “Blessed are you when people insult you [and] persecute you ... because of me.” - Mt. 5:11
- “All men will hate you because of me” - Mt. 10:22
- “[A]nyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” - Mt. 10:38
- “[W]hoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” - Mt. 10:39
- “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” - Mt. 19:28
- “They will see the Son of Man coming on clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. - Mt. 24:30,31
- “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another...Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ – Mt. 25:31-41
- “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” - Mt. 28:18,19

APPENDIX C: JESUS: THE DIVISION BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION

Satan invented the only religion apart from true religion: false religion. These are the only two religions in existence and they are in a perpetual spiritual warfare with no compromise possible. The OT history of Israel is the history of the conflict between these two religions. The reality of the pluralistic OT pagan religions that plagued and tempted Israel were ultimately monistic, in that they were all variations of the one great false religion; the non-worship of the one, true God who revealed this truth in these words:

"I am the LORD your God (true religion), who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery; You shall have no other gods (false religion) before me." (Ex. 20:2,3)

All religions apart from the worship of the God of the Bible are simply different nuances and expressions of the only other religious option; the false religion called "other gods." Christ and the Apostles defined this dichotomy between true religion and false religion as belief in Christ v. unbelief in Christ:

NT: There are only two religions:	True Religion: IN CHRIST	False Religion: NOT IN CHRIST
"For wide is the gate and broad is <u>the road that leads to destruction</u> , and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow <u>the road that leads to life</u> , and only a few find it."- Matt. 7:13,14)	The Road to Life	The Road to Destruction
"He who is not <u>with me</u> is <u>against me</u> ..."- Matt. 12:30	With Christ	Against Christ
"Whoever <u>believes in him</u> is not condemned and whoever <u>does not believe</u> stands condemned"- John 3:18	Belief in Christ	Unbelief in Christ
"... the man who does not enter the sheep pen by <u>the gate</u> , but climbs in by <u>some other way</u> , is a thief and a robber. ... I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved." (John 10:1-9)	The Gate	Some Other Way
"I am <u>the way</u> and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except <u>through me</u> ." (John 14:6)	Through Christ The Way	Not Through Christ Another Way
"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them everything I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19,20)	Disciples of Christ	Not Disciples of Christ
"All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates <u>the sheep</u> from <u>the goats</u> Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Matt. 25:31-41)	Sheep	Goats
"It is by <u>the name of Jesus Christ</u> ... that this man stands before you healed. ... Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no <u>other name</u> under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)	Name of Christ	Another Name
"For there is on God and <u>one mediator</u> between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ..." 1Tim. 2:5	One Mediator	Another Mediator

That these two religions, belief in Christ and unbelief in Christ, are locked in mortal, spiritual combat is not the dogma of Christian apologists like Augustine, Luther or Calvin, but it is the dogma of our Savior and Lord: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10:34). Christ makes Himself the exclusive, objective true way to God that refutes all other religions as false ways to God. That is the nature of truth; it excludes that which is not true.

APPENDIX D: BIBLICAL NAMES AND TITLES FOR JESUS

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Seed of Woman - Gen.3:15- The Son of Man – Mk. 2:8- The Man - Jn .19:5- The Branch of the Lord - Is. 11:1- The Son – Mt..28:19- A Man of Sorrows – Is. 53:3- The Branch of the Lord - Is. 11:1- The Root of Jesse - Is. 11:10- The Root of David – Rv. 5:5- The Root and Offspring of David - Rev. 22:16- The Son of David – Mk. 10:47- The Mighty One of Jacob - Is. 49:26- The Lion of the Tribe of Judah - Rev. 5:5- The Lamb - Rev. 5:12- The Lamb of God – Jn. 1:29- The Lamb that was Slain – Rev. 13:8- The Shepherd – Mt. 26:31- The Good Shepherd – Jn. 10:14- The Great Shepherd of the Sheep - Heb. 13:20- The Gate for the Sheep – Jn. 10:7- The Prophet - Dt. 18:15-19- Our Great High Priest - Heb. 4:15- The King of Israel – Jn. 1:49- The King of the Jews – Mt. 27:37	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The King of Kings - 1 Tim. 6:15- The Lord - Eph. 1:2- The Lord Our Righteousness - Jer. 23:6- The Lord of Lords – 1Tim. 6:15- The Lord of the Sabbath – Lk. 6:5- The Lord of Glory - 1Cor. 2:8- Sovereign and Lord - Jude 4- The Lord of peace - 2Thes. 3:16- The Prince of Peace - Is. 9:6- Our Peace - Eph. 2:14- Shiloh - Gen. 49:10- The Savior - Acts 13:23- The Savior of the world - John 4:42- Prince and Savior - Acts 5:31- Our Great God and Savior - Titus 2:13- Our Passover - 1Cor. 5:6-8- The Way – Jn. 14:6- The Truth – Jn. 14:6- The Life – Jn. 14:6- The Word of Life – 1Jn. 1:1- The Eternal Life – 1Jn. 1:2- The Breath of Life – Jn. 6:35- The Bread of Life – Jn. 6:35- The Bread from Heaven – Jn. 6:41
--	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Resurrection – Jn. 11:25 - The True Vine – Jn. 15:1 - The Light of the World – Jn. 8:12 - The bright Morning Star - Rev. 22:16 - The Bishop of our souls - 1 Pet. 2:25 - The Mystery of God - Col.2:2 - Commander of the Lord’s Army - Josh. 5:14-15 - The Rock cut not by human hands - Dan. 2:34 - The Rock of Offense - Is. 8:14 - The Stone of Stumbling - Is. 8:14 - The Rejected Stone - Mt. 21:42 - The Cornerstone - Mt. 21:42 - The Chief Cornerstone – Eph. 2:20 - The Living Stone - 1Pet. 2:4 - The ruler of the kings of the earth - Rev. 1:5 - The Ruler over God’s Creation - Rev. 3:14 - The Living One - Rev. 2:18 - The Amen – Rev. 3:14 - The Faithful and True Witness - Rev. 3:14 - The Teacher - Matt. 26:18 - The Bridegroom - Mark 2:20 - Christ - Matt. 16:16 - Christ the Lord - Luke 2:11 - The Anointed One - Dan. 9:25 - The Mediator Between God and Man – 1Tim. 2:5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redeemer - Job 19:25 - The Holy One of God - John 6:69 - The Word - John 1:1 - The Word of God - Rev.19:13 - Wonderful Counselor - Is. 9:6 - The Alpha and Omega - Rev. 22:13 - The First and the Last - Rev. 22:13 - The Beginning and the End - Rev. 22:13 - The Son of God – Mk. 1:1 - God’s One and Only Son – Jn. 3:16 - The Firstborn over all creation - Col. 1:15 - The Firstborn from the dead – Rev. 1:5 - The Son of the Living God - Mt. 16:16 - The Son of the Most High – Lk. 1:32 - The Consolation of Israel – Lk. 2:25 - The Power of God – 1Cor. 1:24 - The Wisdom of God – 1Cor. 1:24 - Mighty God - Is. 9:6 - The True God - 1Jn. 5:20 - The Lord our God – Jn. 20:28 - Our Great God and Savior - Titus 2:13 - I Am – Jn. 8:58 - Immanuel - Mt. 1:22 - God – Jn. 1:1,14 - JESUS – Lk. 2:21
---	--

APPENDIX E: MESSIANIC PROPHECIES FULFILLED BY JESUS

1. MESSIANIC TIMING: COMING IN AD 32: Daniel 9:20-26 (c. 600 BC):

“Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgressions, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens’, and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens’, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.”

- “sevens” = weeks of 7 years : In context, the “sevens” in this passage must mean years, not days:

Bridal week: “Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.” - Gen. 29:26-28

Sabbath year: “But in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest ... – Lev. 25:4

Year of Jubilee: “Count off seven Sabbaths of years - seven times seven years - so that the seven Sabbaths amount to a period of forty-nine years.” – Lev. 25:8

Israel’s exile to punishment at the hands of Babylon: “I ... understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD ... that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.” – Dan. 9:2

Daniel distinguished weeks “of days” in the next chapter: “I... mourned for three weeks (Heb.: “weeks of days”) ... I used no lotions ... until the three weeks (Heb. “weeks of days”) were over.” - Dan. 10:2-3

Daniel’s 70th week is divided in half at 42 months: “They (the Gentiles) will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give my power to my two witnesses, and they will prophecy for 1,260 days.” – Rev. 11:2-3 cp. “He (the Antichrist) will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” - Dan. 9:27

MESSIAH’S COMING IN CIRCA 32 AD

<u>Jewish Calendar</u> (360 days /year)	<u>Gregorian Calendar</u> (365 days /year)
$(7 \times 7) + (62 \times 7) = 483$ Jewish years $483(\text{years}) \times 360(\text{days}) = 173,880$ days	$173,880$ days = 476 Roman years: $476(\text{years}) \times 365(\text{days}) = 173,740$ days +116 leap year days (not 119 b/c cent. yrs. aren’t leap yrs.) + 24 days (March 5 – 30 to crucifixion) = 173,880 days
Decree to Rebuild Jerusalem: 445BC (Neh. 2:1:8)(“In the month of Nisan...”)	476 years from 445 BC = 32 AD when Messiah comes! (there is no year 0 between 1BC and AD 1)

FULLFILMENT BY JESUS: The NT specifically records Jesus' birth, public teaching and execution in association with the reign of historical leaders that enables us to fix approximate date of his life:

- Herod the Great (37 BC – 4BC)
- High Priest Joseph Caiaphas (AD 18-36)
- Caesar Tiberius (AD 14-37)
- Pontius Pilate (AD 26-36)

With a birth no earlier than 4 BC and with a death certainly no later than AD 36, the time of the end of the reigns of Caiaphas as High Priest and Pilate as Roman prefect, Jesus falls squarely within the circa AD 32 appearance of the Messiah as prophesied by Daniel. Based upon this historical data, we can even get the time of Jesus' public presentation to Israel as the Messiah even more narrowly within circa AD 32:

Jesus was born shortly before the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC (Mt. 2:1; 13-15); the exact date cannot be determined. His public ministry began when he was 'about thirty years of age' (Lk. 3:32); this was some time after the beginning of John the Baptist's mission in, probably AD 28 (Lk. 3:1ff.). The length of his ministry is again impossible to determine exactly, but a period of roughly 3 years is generally agreed (based on the two springtimes indicated in Mark before the final Passover, Mk. 2:23; 6:39, and the three Passovers of Jn. 2:13; 6:4; 12:1). This would suggest a date of AD 33 for the crucifixion, and if the Gospels indicate that the Passover (Nisan 14/15) fell on a Friday in the year of the crucifixion ..., the astronomical date for AD 33 would support this date. But certainty on the precise dates is impossible.”¹

2. MESSIANIC TIMING: DEATH FOLLOWED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN AD 70:

“Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgressions, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens’, and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens’, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” (Daniel 9:20-26)(c. 600 BC)

FUFILLMENT BY JESUS: It is an irrefutable fact of history that after Jesus of Nazareth was “cut off” (Hebrew phrase for a criminal's execution cp. Lev. 18:29) the Roman general Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple along with the city in 70 AD. Both Roman (Tacitus and Suetonius) and Jewish (Josephus) historians record the event and fix the date. So, Daniel provided two bookends to the coming of the Messiah and Jesus fits between both of them: the Messiah will appear around AD 32 and after he is executed as a criminal a Gentile power will destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, which occurred in AD 70. This is the narrow window when the Divine Messiah of Israel must appear, and Jesus fulfilled this Messianic condition.

¹ R.T. France, *Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings Of, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2, (Leicester, England; Inter-Varsity Pres, 1980), p. 761.

3. MESSIANIC DESCENT:

a. Messiah will descend from the tribe of Judah: (1 out 12 tribes)

“The scepter will not depart from Judah, ... until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.” (Gn.49:10)(1445 BC)

b. Messiah will descend from Jesse:

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from the roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him ... In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him and his place of rest will be glorious.” (Is. 11:1-10)(c. 700 BC)

c. Messiah will descend from the House of David: (1 out 8 sons: 1Sam. 16:10,11)

- “In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it – one from the house of David – one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.” (Is. 16:5)(c. 700 BC)
- “ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days , Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.’” (Jer. 23:5,6)(c. 600 BC)
- “The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he will be my son.” (2Sam. 7:11-14)(c. 900 BC)

FULLFILMENT BY JESUS: The genealogical records of the Gospels confirm Jesus’ descent from Judah, Jesse and David. Matthew’s record traces the legal right of Jesus to David’s throne through Joseph (Mt. 1:1-17), while Luke traces Jesus’ physical descent from David through Mary. (Lk. 3:23-38) Because of their access to genealogical records at the Temple and to Mary and Joseph’s relatives, Christ’s enemies could easily have refuted his Messianic claim either during his teaching ministry or his Sanhedrin trial by proving that he did not descend from Judah, Jesse or David. Their silence stands as their admission that Jesus met this Messianic condition.

5. MESSIANIC BIRTHPLACE:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times.”(Micah 5:2)(c. 700 BC)

FULLFILMENT BY JESUS: Although Joseph and his betrothed Mary were from Nazareth in Galilee, God ordained that a decree from Caesar Augustus to register all subjects of the empire for a census would be the instrumental cause of Jesus being born in Bethlehem in Judea:

“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ... While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.” (Lk, 2:1-7)

6. MESSIANIC FORERUNNER:

- “A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare for the way of the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. ... And the glory of the LORD will be revealed ... ” (Is. 40:3-5)(c. 700 BC)
- “See I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me.” (Malachi 3:1)(c. 400 BC)

FUFLIMENT BY JESUS: It is a historical fact that the public ministry of Jesus was preceded by the appearance of John the Baptist who called Israel to prepare the way for the coming Messiah as set forth in the Gospel records. (Mt. 3:1,2) As previous mentioned in this Outline, Josephus also recorded the appearance and ministry of John the Baptist. (Antiquities 18:5:2).

7. MESSIANIC CONNECTION TO GALILEE:

“[I]n the future he (God) will honor Galilee of the gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan – The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned ... For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor mighty God, Everlasting Father, prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.” (Is. 9:1-7)(c. 800 BC)

FULLFILMENT BY JESUS: The Gospels all record Jesus coming out of Galilee to begin his public ministry. His Galilean connection was the reason Pilate transferred Jesus to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, to review his prosecution: “But they insisted, ‘He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.’ On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod...” (Lk. 23: 5-7).

8. MESSIANIC MIRACLES: The coming of Messiah will be marked by miraculous healings.

- “See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. ... Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen. The minds of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear.” (Is. 32: 1-4)(c. 700 BC)
- “Be strong, do not fear; your God comes ... he will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.” (Is. 35:5,6)(c. 700 BC)

FUFLILLMENT BY JESUS: When John the Baptist began to waver in prison in his conviction that Jesus was the promised Messiah of Israel, he sent his disciples to Jesus for assurance that he was the Messiah. Jesus’ reply reminded of the prophecies that there would be miraculous healings at the coming of Messiah:

“Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.” (Lk. 7:22,23)

Although the Gospel records are filled with accounts of Christ’s miraculous healing powers, sources outside of the NT also testify to his miracles. Josephus referred to Jesus as “a doer of wonderful works” (*Antiquities* 18.3.3.) and the *Talmud* attributed his execution to him practicing “sorcery” (*Sanhedrin* 43a) which is an admission of miraculous works but attributing them to evil as the Pharisees when they witnessed his miracles.

9. MESSIANIC CHARACTER: The portrait of the Messiah that emerges from the totality of OT prophecies depicts him as having an impeccable moral character and of being of the highest and purest piety and godliness. It is a historical fact that Jesus was viewed by his contemporaries as being without moral blemish. He even challenged his enemies to try to establish any moral flaw in his character: “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?” (Jn. 8:46). It is also the universal judgment of history since the time of Jesus that he is the most ethical, moral and Godly man to have ever lived. The world has made him the standard of what is good and right. Thus, in addition to all the other Messianic variables, we must add the variable that Jesus has the character of the Messiah.

10. MESSIANIC TEACHING: Again, the overall OT portrait of the Messiah depicts him as being the superlative prophet and teacher in calling Israel to godliness, righteousness and holiness. No other Jewish personality in all of history was more authentic, more passionate, more profound, more penetrating, more illuminating, more creative, more authoritative and more Biblical in teaching Israel about God than Jesus of Nazareth. The Scribes, Pharisees and Rabbis then and all of the preachers and teachers since have never exhibited a higher level of understanding and teaching on God and on man’s duty to God than Jesus, adding to his Messianic credentials.

11. MESSIANIC CLAIM AND HUMBLE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM: “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zech. 9:9)(c. 500 BC). In this prophecy, Zechariah depicts the Messiah as presenting himself as Israel’s Messiah and King making a formal entry into Jerusalem, yet in the humility of being on a donkey instead of a proud steed. The NT records Jesus’ fulfillment of this specific and counterintuitive prophecy. (Mk. 11:1-11).

12. MESSIANIC REJECTION BY ISRAEL:

- “Who has believed our message ...? ... He was despised and rejected by men ... Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.” (Is. 53:1-4)(c. 700 BC)
- “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone ...” (Ps. 118:22)(c. 1000 BC)
- “They will look upon me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.” (Zech. 12:10)(c. 500 BC)

FUFILLMENT: Zechariah’s prophecy that Israel will mourn when their Messiah comes is best explained by the fact that they rejected him at his first coming by killing him. Thus the intensity of the grief and regret! It is an irrefutable fact of history that the Jewish nation rejected Jesus of Nazareth as the coming Messiah of Israel. Ironically, that rejection was one of the most critical and identifying Messianic variables that Jesus fulfilled!

13. MESSIANIC EXECUTION AS A CRIMINAL: The OT prophesies that the Messiah will die the agonizing, humiliating and cursed death of a criminal and the NT records their fulfillment in Jesus’ crucifixion:

- **Condemned as a criminal through judicial oppression:** Is. 53:7-8 (“By oppression and judgment he was taken away ...”; Dan. 9:26 (“The Anointed One will be cut off ...” cp. Lev. 18:29: “Everyone who does any of these detestable things – such persons must be cut off from the their people.”) “cut off” = execution).
- **Betrayed by a trusted friend for 30 pieces of silver:** Zech. 11:12, 13 cp. Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14 (written from the viewpoint of being betrayed by an intimate friend).
- **Tortured and humiliated:** Is. 50:6 (wounded on his back and face; mocked and spit upon) 52:13, 14 (so savagely beaten as to be unrecognizable); 53: 4,5 (struck, hit, afflicted and crushed)

- **Executed by a method that conforms to a Roman crucifixion:**
 - **Pierced:** Ps. 22:16: “they have pierced my hands and feet”; Is. 53:5: “he was pierced for our transgressions”; Zech. 12:10: “the one they have pierced”
 - **Lifted up on a high structure:** (Dt. 21:22,23: “his body is to be hung on a tree ... anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse”)
 - **Stretched out, thirsty, held in contempt and mocked, and “poured out”:** Ps. 22
 - **Deprived of clothes through casting of lots:** Ps. 22:18

14. MESSIANIC BURIAL AND RESURRECTION: Is. 53: 9: “He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death”; Ps. 16:10” “nor will you let your Holy One see decay”

15. MESSIANIC ACCEPTANCE BY THE GENTILES: Dan. 7:14: “all people, nations and languages should serve him”; Is. 42:6: “I will ... make you ... a light for the Gentiles; Is. 49:6: “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”; Is. 60:3: “Nations will come to your light...”

SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS’ FULFILLMENT OF THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

“We must fall back upon the old axiom that when all other contingencies fail, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” – Sherlock Holmes ²

1. COINCIDENCE – EXCLUDED: Even without any statistical analysis, it is readily apparent that coincidence is cannot explain Jesus’s fulfillment of these detailed, specific and highly improbable Messianic prophecies that were made centuries before His appearance. With a formal statistical analysis we arrive at such an improbability of coincidental fulfillment that it is essentially excluded as a reasonable explanation:

It has been computed by mathematicians that the chances for only 16 prophecies about Christ to come true in Jesus’ life are 1 in 10⁴⁵. For 48 prophecies the chances are an even more amazing 1 in 10¹⁵⁷. ³

2. FRAUD – EXCLUDED: Another possible explanation for Jesus’ stunning fulfillment of all these centuries old, detailed prediction is that he studied them and then went out and intentionally fulfilled them in order to make the fraudulent claim that he was the Messiah. For instance, he conspired with John the Baptist who would act as his Messianic herald and then deliberately taught in parables as the Messiah would, made claims to be the Messiah , came into Jerusalem on a donkey and presented himself as the Messiah and provoked the Jewish and Roman authorities into rejecting and executing him. However, this explanation completely fails because at least three reasons; 1) all the prophecies that are beyond Jesus’ control such as his timing in history, his lineage, his birthplace and his later acceptance by Gentiles; 2) his superlative and impeccable moral and ethical character that excludes him as a charlatan and fraudster; and 3) his proven resurrection which not only was a specific Messianic prophecy in of itself but also validated all of his Messianic teachings and claims.

3. MESSIAH – PROVEN: It must be conceded by adherents of Judaism that someday, somebody would fulfill the Messianic prophecies unless they reject their own Scriptures. By excluding the only other competing explanations about Jesus’s Messianic fulfillment, we necessarily arrive at the truth that Jesus is the long-awaited for Messiah.

² Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*, The Complete Sherlock Holmes, (Garden City, NY; Doubleday & Company, 1988), p. 926.

³ Norman L. Geisler, Christian Apologetics, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 1976), p. 343.

CHALLENGE TO JEWS WAITING FOR MESSIAH: WHY CAN'T JESUS BE THE MESSIAH?

Jewish Replies:

- 1. Because the Messiah will be recognized by all Jews upon his appearance and because Jesus was rejected by the Jews at his appearance in history he could not have been the Messiah.**

Refutation: What OT authority is there for the presupposition that the Messiah was going to be accepted by Israel upon His appearance? Do not these Scriptures of yours predict an initial rejection of the Messiah by Israel: Ps. 118:22; Isaiah 53:1-3; Zechariah 12:10-14? Moreover, has not Israel in the past rejected their God-appointed leaders such as Moses and the prophets whom they killed? Has not God often preserved only a small remnant of the faithful of Israel and doesn't Jesus' acceptance by His first Jewish disciples fit the pattern of a Jewish remnant being faithful versus the entire nation being faithful?

- 2. Because Jesus has been received by the Gentiles and not the Jews, he cannot have been the Messiah.**

Refutation: Don't these Scriptures say that Messiah will be received and worshipped by the Gentiles: Dan. 7:14: "all people, nations and languages should serve him"; Is. 42:6: "I will...make you...a light for the Gentiles; Is. 49:6: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."; Is. 60:3: "Nations will come to your light"? Has not God found on occasions greater obedience by Gentiles than by Israel? (Urriah the Hittite v. David; Naaman the Syrian v. Gehazi the servant of Elisha; Jethro the Midianite v. Korah). Is it logical to reject Jesus as Messiah just because the Gentiles have accepted him? Would that not be the height of prejudice and irrationality to reject Jesus as Messiah just because the Gentile's have received him as Messiah?

- 3. Because the Messiah will establish a visible, world-wide and political-military kingdom on Earth at His appearance and because Jesus did not do this he therefore cannot have been the Messiah.**

Refutation: Why do you presuppose that Messiah will make only one appearance to fulfill His purpose and establish His kingdom? Why can't Messiah make two appearances: one in which he makes a humble appearance and is rejected by Israel, dies as an atonement to redeem people from their sins against a perfectly holy God, ascends back to heaven and is embraced by the Gentiles, and another appearance in which he returns in power and glory at which time He is received by Israel and establishes His reign by restoring Israel and establishing Jerusalem as the center of God's worship among humanity? Isn't this two appearance scenario possible and doesn't it explain the seemingly contradictory descriptions of a rejected, humble, persecuted Messiah and an all-powerful, mighty, warrior-King who openly Rules the whole world? Couldn't the Messiah establish first a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men (as Jesus said to Pilate: Jn. 18:36) and then come back to openly rule as the Messiah (as Jesus said to Caiaphas: Matt. 26:64) as you are now expecting Him to do? In fact, isn't the Messiah you are waiting for exactly like the returning Jesus Christ we Christians are waiting for? We simply have recognized Him for His first humble appearance, in fulfillment of your Scriptures and are now waiting for His fulfillment of the rest of your Scriptures.

- 4. Because lots of people have falsely claimed to be Messiah, Jesus' claim to be the Messiah must be false.**

Refutation: Are you not begging the question? It is Jesus' claim that is the question. Also, isn't this a *non sequitur*? How can false claims by others prove that a claim by another person is false? Couldn't that argument be used to deny the claim of the true Messiah? Don't your Scriptures teach that somebody will come and claim to be the Messiah and that claim will be true? Therefore, isn't the claim itself one sign of the true Messiah, which, if missing, would exclude a candidate from being the Messiah? While the claim is not dispositive of Messiah, isn't its absence dispositive of exclusion? Finally doesn't the character and teaching of Jesus exclude a false claim by him due to lying or lunacy? Doesn't his prophetic fulfillment make being the Messiah the only option for you on Jesus?

APPENDIX F: FURTHER REFUTATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

For a more complete and comprehensive refutation of the Watchtower's deceptive theology consult Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses*, Eugene, Ore., Harvest House Publishers, 1993.

1. John 8:58:

Correct translation: "Before Abraham was born, I am!"

Watchtower mistranslation: "Before Abraham came into existence, I have been"

This Scripture is a clear assertion by Christ of His Deity since He appropriates the same Divine Name, "I am", for Himself that God invoked in Ex. 3:14. To get around Christ's Divine claim, the Watchtower organization has corrupted this passage in their New World Translation (NWT) by translating the Greek "I am" (*ego eimi*) as "I have been". The Watchtower argues that this translation is permissible because the issue at stake in this context was not who Jesus was but how long he had been in existence.

Refutation:

a. context: The entire context of John Chapter 8 is Christ's identity. Indeed, John 8:58 is Christ's answer to the Pharisees' question; "Who do you think you are?" (John 8:53):

- "I am the light of the world" - John 8:12
- "You do not know me" - John 8:19
- "if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" - John 8:24
- "'Who are you?' they asked. 'Just what I have been claiming all along', Jesus replied." - John 8:25
- "you will know that I am the one I claim to be" - John 8:27
- "I came from God" - John 8:42

b. reaction of the Jews:- The Jews immediately attempted to stone Christ for his statement, which clearly indicates they understood Christ to be identifying himself as God. - John 8:59.

c. Septuagint (LXX): The Greek translation of the Old Testament existent at the time of Christ translated the Hebrew words meaning "I AM" in Exodus 3:14 as "*ego eimi*", the same Greek words used by John. To counter this support for Christ's deity, the NWT corrupted the translation of Exodus 3:14 by changing "I Am Who I Am" into "I Shall Prove To Be What I Shall Prove To Be" thereby covering their distortion in both Testaments.

d. inconsistent: Interestingly enough, in every other occurrence of "*ego eimi*", the NWT translates it as "I am". Only in John 8:58 is it rendered "I have been." This is overwhelming evidence that the NWT mistranslation was intended to purge the text of any support for the deity of Christ in pursuit of their doctrine that Christ is a created being.

2. Colossians 1:16,17:

Correct translation: "For by Him (Christ) all things were created...all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."

Watchtower mistranslation: "For by him all other things were created ... all other things were created by him and for him. He is before all other things, and in him all other things hold together."

Refutation:

a. Original Text: In clear terms, the Greek text in Co. 1:16,17 states that Christ created “all things” thereby excluding Christ Himself from the created category. However, since this passage demolishes the Watchtower myth that Christ is a created angel, they had to neutralize it by literally adding a word that conveys the opposite meaning the author intended. The word “other” is simply not in the original text, and since inserting it changes the author’s intended meaning it cannot be claimed, as the Watchtower does, that inserting the word is allowed to render a more smooth English rendition. It is not needed to make it easier to read, rather it is needed to change the Christ from creator to creature.

b. Isaiah 44:24: God claims to have created the universe “alone” and “by myself”, and not through a secondary means, such as the Watchtower’s created Christ.

c. Context: The broader context of the NT in general and Colossians in particular asserts that Christ is the Divine Creator and not a created being through whom God created the universe:

- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him (Christ) all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made.” – Jn. 1:1-3
- “[F]or us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” 1Cor. 8:6 cp. Heb. 2:10: “God, for whom and through whom everything exists”.
- “But about the Son he (God) says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever ...’ ... He also says, ‘In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands.’” – Heb. 1:8-10

3. Zechariah 12:10:

Correct translation: “They will look on me, the one they pierced...”

Watchtower mistranslation: “They will look on the One whom they pierced...”

Refutation:

In this example of scripture distortion, the NWT deletes “me” from this passage to avoid the assertion in the original text that it is the God (*Jehovah / Yahweh*) who the people pierced and will look upon. The person speaking in Zechariah 12:10 is the same person identified in Zechariah 12:1; “This is the word of the LORD” (*Jehovah* for the Watchtower). No Hebrew text or authority supports the NWT’s obvious attempt to change the meaning of this Scripture by omitting the pronoun “me”.

4. Acts 20:28:

Correct translation: “Be shepherds of the word of God which he bought with his own blood.”

Watchtower mistranslation: “... which he bought with the blood of his own [Son].”

Refutation: This passage is another passage which identifies God and Christ to the point of sharing the Divine essence. The NWT literally adds to this passage the word “Son” which is not in the original Greek so that the original assertion that God purchased the Church “with his own blood” is changed to “the blood of his own Son” to avoid the implication of Christ’s deity. Not one Greek manuscript has the word “Son” in this passage, therefore, this NWT translation is just another instance of the Watchtower corrupting Scripture to support its Arian heresy.

5. Titus 2:13:

Correct translation: “the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”

Watchtower mistranslation: “ ... of the Great God and of [the] Savior”

Refutation:

a. Greek text: The NWT in this passage departs from the Greek text by adding the definite article “the” (Gk: *ho*) before “Savior” to make it appear that the author is speaking about two different persons: the Great God and the Savior. By not using the definite article, Paul clearly was intending to convey that Jesus is both; “our great God” and “Savior”. Only by sabotaging God’s word can the NWT deny Christ’s Deity.

b. “Appearing”: Scripture teaches that it is only Jesus who will make an appearance on earth, therefore the NWT’s insertion of the definite article “the” creates a conflict with other Scripture by asserting that there will be separate appearances of God and Jesus. (see: 2Thes. 2:8, 1Tim. 6:14; 2Tim. 1:10; 4:1,8)

c. Isaiah 43:11: Because God alone is the “Savior”, Christ cannot be the Savior without also being God. (“I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.” – Is. 43:11)

APPENDIX G: THE HISTORICAL REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Unique in all of the annals of religious writings and teachings, the Biblical record of the resurrection of Jesus Christ proves the truth of Christ's teaching through legal and historical evidences. Only Christianity attempts to offer proof of its claims instead of subjective emotional and philosophical presupposition. Christ's assertions that He is the Son of God and is the only way to God must be considered in the context of His resurrection. He said that He would be executed and that He would bring His body back to life. Buddha, Confucius, the Dali Lama, Mohammed, Joseph Smith all were conquered by death and their teachings and claims remain unverifiable at best and falsifiable at worst. Thus, the resurrection of Jesus is ultimately what Christians can cite when challenged by the skeptic as to why Christianity should be believed.

I. The Historical Possibility of the Resurrection of Christ:

The case for the resurrection necessarily begins with establishing the possibility of the resurrection since most skeptics are not even willing to consider the evidence due to their philosophical prejudice against such an event. Once the presuppositions against a resurrection have been refuted, the inquiry can then focus on the factual questions and the historical evidence.

- A. Logical possibility:** Nothing about logic prohibits the formal possibility of a dead person coming back to life. Indeed, the issue of whether a resurrection has taken place is not properly framed as a question of logic but should be framed as a question of history. The issue is did this event occur or did it not occur? Challenge the skeptic to cite the formal or informal logical fallacy of a resurrection. There is none.
- B. Metaphysical possibility:** Some critics claim that since a resurrection is contrary to nature it is impossible in a metaphysical sense. This argument should be recognized for what it is: a subjective and arbitrary philosophical presupposition without any evidence. It is absolutely dependent upon the truth of the atheistic philosophies of naturalism and materialism. The mere possibility of God's existence necessitates the mere possibility of the resurrection. Indeed, if God's existence is established as a reality, as it is through apologetics then the possibility of a resurrection is a logical necessity! There is no doubt that if God exists, then He certainly can bring back to life a dead body that He made in the first place! Again, the question should not be one of metaphysics (can God do it) but of history (did God do it).
- C. Epistemological possibility:** The skeptic philosopher David Hume conceded the logical and metaphysical possibility of the resurrection, but attacked it as an epistemological impossibility. From the study of knowledge (epistemology) it is argued that the resurrection is an event that should be rejected as being unknowable even if it did happen. Essentially, Hume argues that since the number of people who die and stay dead is so great we should always reject the conclusion that someone came back to life after dying, even if we witnessed it ourselves! In other words, there can never be enough evidence of a resurrection to justify believing it in light of the long history of non-resurrections. However, Hume doesn't nor can he refute that there are only two necessary abilities to knowing whether a resurrection has occurred and we possess both of them: the ability to know when someone is dead and the ability to know when someone is alive. Thus, Hume is wrong in precluding knowledge of a resurrection. The refutation of Hume's epistemological attack on the resurrection in particular can be summarized as follows:
 - 1. begs the question / circular reasoning:** By definition, a miracle is unique and departs from experience, accordingly rarity can't be an argument against believing that an event is a miracle. Hume begs the question by merely defining a miracle as that which cannot be known. Thus, his argument is circular: that which cannot be known (a miracle) cannot be known. He doesn't prove that a miracle

cannot be known, he assumes it. The uniformity of nature and experience is no reason to reject knowledge of miracles altogether, but is a reason for demanding sufficient historical proof to accept a miracle. Indeed, the prevailing non-occurrence of an event is the necessary context for a rare event!

2. **category fallacy:** Hume uses scientific criteria based upon repeatability to judge a historical event that by its nature is not repeatable. Just because an event cannot be repeated does not mean it did not occur. For instance, violent crimes are non-repeatable historical events that can be solved through historical inquiry of gathering witness accounts and viewing physical evidence, however, strict scientific proof is impossible since the scientific method requires repeatability of the event.
3. **assumes Deism:** Hume falsely assumes a Deistic God whereby the Creator began the universe but does not specially intervene in its operation. Once this assumption is removed from the analysis, a special event signifying the special activity of God that is knowable by man is not only possible but probable based upon the logical conclusion that by creating man God desires a relationship with man whereby man would come to know God. With God, miracles are intended to be known by man.
4. **assumes an atheistic course of nature:** Hume falsely assumes an atheistic course of nature that opposes the resurrection. However, once nature is postulated merely as the regular and uniform will of God for nature, then a miracle does not violate any law of nature but merely is a change in the will of the Director of that nature. I may drink coffee every morning of my life and then one day drink tea. Drinking tea for me did not involve a violation of any inviolable law, but merely a change in my will. So it is with God and human death. The regular and uniform will of the Creator is that dead bodies remain dead. However, on the occasion of the death of Jesus, the Creator changed his will and willed the reanimation of his body. No law outside of God was violated, only a change of God's will. Once this scenario is postulated the Human's "contrary to nature" attack on the resurrection is blunted.
5. **ignores our ability to know:** Hume's criticism ignores our ability to know that a miracle has occurred, and instead is focused on whether or not our conclusion that a miracle has occurred is compatible with past experience. However, since we have the ability to know when a person is alive and the ability to know when a person is dead, we therefore necessarily have the ability to know if a person was dead at one time and is now alive. Thus, Hume is wrong to assert that we could never have enough evidence to believe that a resurrection of a dead person has occurred. There is nothing logically, metaphysically or epistemologically impossible about a resurrection or about our ability to know that a resurrection has happened. It is simple sense perception.
6. **ignores the limitation of experience:** If science had followed Hume's epistemological slavery to experience, there would have been no science. According to Hume, nothing can contradict what we know about nature, so no new scientific discovery should be accepted if it is contrary to our previous knowledge about nature. To Hume, a person is to bind his intellect to his personal experience no matter what the evidence proves. For example, Hume would argue that a person who has always lived in a hot desert and who has never seen ice should never believe that water can become a solid even if he is shown ice since that belief would contradict all of his experience that water has never been in solid form. Thus, Hume's reasoning leads to an irrational and prejudicial rejection of evidence and a fidistic bondage to experience.

II. The Historical Reality of the Resurrection of Christ:

The historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ consists of a set of generally accepted historical facts that are conceded by historians and even by most critics of the resurrection. So the dispute over the resurrection is not so much over whether this set of facts is true, but over what conclusion should be drawn from this set of facts that history has given us. It is the explanatory hypothesis of the resurrection that is the focus of the skeptics' attack; an attack predicated on philosophy rather than history. The most compelling aspect of this set of facts is that it is precisely the set of facts we would expect to have if the resurrection of Christ happened:

- A. **Jesus of Nazareth lived:** No rational person today disputes the historical reality of the life of Jesus of Nazareth during the first century in the Roman province of Judea. No ancient personality has been studied and scrutinized more than Jesus of Nazareth. We know more details of this singular ancient figure than of any other person in ancient history. With the number and quality of historical sources documenting the life of Jesus of Nazareth, if we reject him as being a historical person then all of ancient history must be rejected. These historical sources are summarized in *Appendix A: The Historical Evidence for Jesus of Nazareth*.
- B. **Jesus died by crucifixion on order of Pontius Pilate:** From Christian and non-Christian historical sources, the execution of Jesus Christ is the best documented death of any ancient historical figure. What other historical person's death is recorded by no less than 10 separate contemporary sources including eyewitnesses? What other ancient death is described in such detail regarding the date, time, place, and circumstances of death in addition to the last words of the deceased?
- C. **Jesus' dead body was buried in a known and guarded tomb:** Again, no other burial in ancient history is as well documented as the burial of Jesus Christ. Those that took possession of the body from the cross to the tomb are described by name, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and both were well known to their contemporaries since they were members of the Sanhedrin. The preparation of the body is described in great detail. (John 19:38-40). Joseph's tomb was conspicuous and near the scene of the execution (John 19:41-42). Since it was Passover, Jesus' death and burial occurred at the height of Jerusalem's annual population thereby ensuring general knowledge of the crucifixion and burial. At the request of the Jewish authorities, Pilate had a squad of Roman soldiers posted at the tomb to prevent the body from being stolen which would then be used by the disciples that Jesus's claim that he would rise from the dead came to true. (Mt. 27:62-66).
- D. **Three days later Jesus' tomb was empty:** The fact of the empty tomb remains as one of the convincing proofs for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. After Christ's dead body was laid in it, the tomb was physically sealed with a large stone and was legally sealed on penalty of death with a Roman seal. That the tomb was then guarded by a squad of Roman soldiers under the observation of the Jewish rulers becomes a significant fact corroborating the resurrection. The following evidence compels the conclusion that the tomb was empty on the third day after the crucifixion:
 1. **eyewitnesses:** Numerous eyewitness accounts of the empty tomb are recorded in the NT, including the apostles, the soldiers guarding the tomb and women disciples, who would never be presented as eyewitnesses in a faked account because of their cultural status as unacceptable witnesses in court. (Mt. 28:11-15; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-12; Jn. 20:11-18).
 2. **no veneration of the tomb:** Had Christ's body remained in the tomb, it is inconceivable that the tomb would not have been venerated by his followers. The fact that Christ's tomb never was venerated by the generation that witnessed Him is persuasive evidence to the fact that the tomb was indeed empty.

3. **reaction of the Jewish leaders:** When the Jewish leaders conspired with the soldiers to falsify an explanation for the empty tomb (that the body was stolen), they actually testified in favor of the resurrection by conceding that the tomb was in fact empty! (Matt. 28:11-15).
 4. **Apostolic teaching on the resurrection:** Throughout Acts, the Apostles argued the resurrection with their opponents without mentioning the empty tomb. This absence of any reference to the empty tomb indicates that the fact of the empty tomb was not contested and the only the inference to be drawn from is the empty tomb.
 5. **absence of any rebuttal to Christian claim of the Resurrection:** If the Christ's body was laying in the tomb ready to be produced at any time, how was it that the Apostles were able to teach the resurrection without any recorded rebuttal involving the fact that the tomb still held Christ's body? The absence of any historical rebuttal to the empty tomb is circumstantial evidence that the tomb was indeed empty.
- E. Encounters with the living Jesus after the discovery of the empty tomb:** The factual inquiry into the resurrection of Jesus now proceeds to the ultimate, infallible proof: the bodily appearances of the risen Savior. The only rational explanation for a verified, physically live appearance of Jesus after his verified, physical death is the resurrection. Other explanations reflect philosophical presuppositions against the possibility of a resurrection rather than open-minded, rational inferences from the evidence. Remember, the resurrection has necessarily been demonstrated if these two facts have been established: Jesus died and afterward Jesus was alive. Neither fact is beyond our capacity to know, but each is within the ken of any ordinary person applying everyday powers of observation and inductive reasoning. Thus, the twelve documented resurrection appearances to over 500 people over the course of over forty days eliminate any reasonable doubt as to Christ's resurrection. The number of appearances, the number of witnesses, the variety of appearances (sight, sound, touch, eating), the length of time of the appearances, and the failure of alternate explanations combine to make a strong historical case for the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- F. James and Paul became believers in Jesus Christ:** Contemporaneously with the resurrection appearances of Jesus two suggestive historical facts occurred. James, the unbelieving brother of Jesus (Mark 3:21; 31-35; John 7:1-10) suddenly became a believer and a leader in the Church. (Acts 21:18; 1Cor. 15:7). Also, Paul of Tarsus, a committed enemy of Christianity, suddenly became its most devoted proponent after reportedly encountering the risen Jesus. (Acts 9; 22; 26; 1Cor. 9:1). How could these startling conversions be explained? The actual resurrection of Jesus is consistent not only with the fact of these sudden conversions, but it is also with the testimony of the manner of these conversions.
- G. Within weeks of His death and burial the Church publicly preached the Resurrection:** It is an undisputed fact of history that the followers of Jesus of Nazareth began to publicly claim within weeks of His death and burial that He was now alive. This short interval between the burial of Jesus and a public assertion of His resurrection cannot be accounted for by the "myth" and "legend" theories of the resurrection belief in Christianity since those theories demand sufficient temporal removal from His execution. However, if Jesus actually arose from the dead and appeared to His disciples then an immediate, public and energetic proclamation of His resurrection by the disciples is exactly what you would expect. Again, the set of historical facts that we have on Jesus coheres to the anticipated set of facts in the event of His actual resurrection.
- H. Jewish Christians exchanging the Sabbath for Sunday:** What could cause Jews to suddenly abandon the ancient Sabbath for Sunday as their sacred day of worship? Only the resurrection could explain this reality.

- I. **The body of Jesus was never produced:** All the opponents of Christianity would have had to do to put an end to Christianity was to produce the body of Jesus; something that they could never do. It is inconceivable that the enemies of Christ did not undertake an exhaustive search for His body after the tomb was discovered empty. (cp. Acts 12:18). The identities and residences of the disciples of Jesus were certainly known to the Jewish and Roman authorities, and their ability and opportunity to steal and dispose of His body were extremely limited. Thus the missing body of Jesus is another undisputed fact of history that combines with the other facts to prove the Resurrection.
- J. **Christianity rapidly spread throughout the Roman Empire:** How did a small band of terrified, broken, and disillusioned disciples of Jesus become transformed into an empowered group of advocates that within a generation spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire and eventually became its dominant religion? Having encountered and experienced the real resurrected Jesus Christ would be consistent with the phenomenon of the spread of Christianity as testified to by history.
- K. **The disciples chose execution over recantation of their resurrection testimony:** History tells us that many of the disciples of Jesus who claimed to have encountered Him alive after His death refused to recant their testimony of His resurrection on threat of execution. That they chose death rather than repudiate their belief in Jesus as the Resurrected Lord argues persuasively that they were not defending a conspiratorial fraud or scheme. The martyrdom of the resurrection witnesses remains a compelling historical evidence for the actual resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

III. The Historical Failure of Attempts to Refute the Resurrection of Christ:

- A. **The Fraud Theory:** This alternative explanatory hypothesis contends that the Apostles stole Christ's body as part of a conspiracy of deception whereby the Apostles use the empty tomb to claim Christ's resurrection to induce others to become Christians. According to Matthew, the Jewish leaders' belief in such a conspiracy was their motivation to petition Pilate for a seal and guard of the tomb. (Matt. 27:62-65). When the tomb came up empty, the chief priests pursued their pre-judged explanation by concocting their own plan of deception whereby they bribed the guards to lie about the theft of the body and promised to corroborate this lie before Pilate. Thus, the fraud theory, which actually concedes the fact of the empty tomb, is of ancient origin and is illustrative of the extent to which opponents will go to in resisting the evidence for the truth of Christianity.

cross-examination:

1. **the guarded tomb:** In their desperate opposition to Christ, the chief rulers unwittingly ensured that the theft explanation would be refuted by nothing less than the might of the Roman Empire. To steal the body, the then cowardly and scattered disciples would have had to physically overpower the Roman soldiers who would have resisted to their deaths before they would have failed in their assignment. Yet, the soldiers were alive and unhurt after the empty tomb was discovered and they even reported the empty tomb to the Jews without any claim that the disciples had stolen the body. The idea of the theft originated from the chief priests and not the soldiers who were at the tomb!
2. **the missing body:** Even if it is plausible that the disciples overcame the guards without hurting them and without the guards reporting that occurrence, it is inconceivable that an exhaustive search for the body would not have been conducted whereby all the disciples (who were well known to the authorities) would have been seized and tortured until the body was discovered. When Peter was supernaturally released from prison, Herod ordered a search that involved the tortured examination and

- execution of the guards. (Acts 12:18). If the authorities responded that way to an escaped Christian, isn't it even more likely that they would have done the same in response to the missing body of the leader of this sect! The only rational inferences support the resurrection. Either, the chief priests and the soldiers knew that no theft occurred and so there was no point to searching for the body, or a search for the body was conducted but it did not turn up a body or a natural explanation for its absence.
3. **the grave clothes:** The careful removal and orderly disposition of the spice-saturated linen which was wrapped around Christ's body is inconsistent with a scenario in which grave robbers suddenly overpower Roman soldiers and then take the time to unwrap the body and to carefully fold the wrappings and set them down. A theft hypothesis would have no wrappings in the tomb since time was of the essence and an escape had to be effected before the reinforcements that were sure to come.
 4. **the resurrection appearances:** It is one thing to account for a missing dead body, but it is another thing to explain the empirical, live appearances of a formerly dead person. The fraud theory's failure to account for the eyewitness testimony of Christ's resurrection appearances is the proverbial nail in the coffin of this biased and intellectually bankrupt hypothesis.
 5. **the profile of the disciples:** Would men who abandoned their livelihoods to follow a rabbi who taught honesty and righteousness suddenly become a group of unscrupulous deceivers? Would a band of poor oppressed, powerless, cowardly and unsophisticated men with no experience in crime suddenly become a highly organized criminal enterprise with the resources and ability to pull off a deception that even the Jewish rulers and the Roman Empire could not resist or refute? The moral, psychological and sociological profile of the disciples requires more faith in the fraud theory than in the resurrection!
 6. **the suffering and death of the disciples:** If the disciples in fact stole Christ's body, would they have endured sociological rejection, legal prosecution and ultimately execution for a belief which they knew to be a lie. It is one thing to die for something you believe to be true, but it is inconceivable that a person would knowingly submit to being martyred for something they knew was a lie!
- B. The Resuscitation Theory:** This hypothesis contends that Christ did not actually die on the cross but only entered a death-like coma which he came out of while in the tomb.

cross-examination:

1. **pre-crucifixion torture:** The physical injury inflicted upon Christ weakened his body's ability to withstand this most grueling form of execution. Christ's pre-crucifixion included multiple beatings with hands, staffs and whips and it included even plucking his beard out. By the time he was nailed to the cross by his hands and feet, his body had already endured life-threatening trauma.
2. **public execution:** Christ's execution took place when there were more people in Jerusalem than at any other time of year. Moreover, the execution was the pinnacle of the chief priests efforts to rid themselves of Christ and therefore they were not about to pass up the chance to insult him on the cross and to witness the crowning achievement of their efforts. (Matt. 27:39-44; Luke 23: 35,48). The presence of his murderers ensured that Jesus would not escape execution. It is not plausible that they would have allowed Christ's body to be taken unless they were convinced that their objective was accomplished. Likewise, it is inconceivable that the family and followers of Jesus would have left the scene of his suffering without being sure of his death.

3. **sure execution:** In the annals of ancient history we don't have reports of people escaping crucifixion by simply surviving it. That is because it was a sure thing as executions go. If the Romans could be counted on one thing, it was to successfully execute those whom they despised enough to crucify. By being impaled to the cross, the condemned prisoner is already well on his way to dying. By then being lifted up vertically, his body is positioned such as to require him to push up on his impaled feet in order to take a breath, This process of labored breathing would cause exhaustion in short order and would bring about death by asphyxiation if death had not come by blood loss and trauma.
 4. **military supervision and confirmation of death:** Christ's death was carried out by a contingent of Roman soldiers who were obeying the direct order of the Roman Governor. That soldiers experienced in combat and executions and who faced strict discipline for failing to carry out orders would have been unable to detect that Jesus was still alive is utterly unbelievable. If anyone ever knew how to recognize death it was a combat-experienced Roman soldier assigned to the execution squad. Moreover, peculiar to Christ's crucifixion, a fatal spear thrust was inflicted (John 19:33-34) and a direct order from the Roman Governor to confirm the death was carried out by the supervising Centurion. (Mark 15: 42-45). In His sovereignty, God anticipated the attempts to explain away the resurrection by ordaining the most verified death in all of ancient history.
 5. **body preparation and burial:** Could Christ have been tortured, crucified, speared, wrapped in 75 lbs. of suffocating cloth and laid in a cold tomb only to regain the strength to break out of the burial wrappings, to force the large stone open and to walk away unnoticed by the Roman guard? Moreover, is it even possible that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would have prepared Christ's body and not noticed that their beloved leader was still alive?
- C. **The Hallucination Theory:** As a psychological reaction to the death of their leader, the disciples experienced hallucinations of the resurrected Christ.

cross-examination:

1. **the empty tomb:** To refute the claimed appearances of Christ after his death, all the critics had to do was produce the body. However, the empty tomb was a fact and not a hallucination. In the context of an empty tomb, the resurrection appearances require a better explanation than the self-serving, arbitrary assertion of hallucination.
2. **the nature of hallucinations:** Hallucinations are false, subjective perceptions that are physiologically or psychologically induced. For several reasons, the Hallucination Theory is discredited and refuted:
 - a. **the disciples had no predisposition to believe Jesus was going to rise from the dead:** People have hallucinations which are in accord with their predisposition to believe the event in the hallucination. Their mind is expecting the event and because of a psychological or physiological cause, they experience a false perception of what their mind was already conditioned to experience. However, the disciples of Jesus had no predisposition to believe Jesus was going to rise from the dead. Throughout the public ministry of their Master they failed to grasp his teaching about his coming death and resurrection. Moreover, when he was executed, the disciples displayed no expectation of a resurrection but rather they displayed despair because their minds had resolved that Jesus was dead for good. Thus, these men were not psychologically predisposed for a false perception of seeing Jesus bodily on earth after his death.

- b. identical, contemporaneous hallucinations by multiple people do not occur:** The number of persons experiencing the same resurrection appearances refutes the coincidence of separate hallucinations that were individually uniform and identical. How could a group of over 500 people or for that matter a group of twelve people, all suddenly experience the exact same hallucination for the exact same duration? What explains the sudden onset and cessation of the hallucinations? Why didn't the people continue to experience them? Why wasn't Jesus immediately recognized in some of the appearances if they were hallucinations occasioned by the disciples desire to see him? These unanswered questions are the refutation of this failed attempt to deny the resurrection.
- D. The Legend Theory:** As time went on after Christ's death, more and more stories began to circulate about Him until they eventually developed into a resurrection myth or legend.

cross-examination:

- 1. the Church:** The Church experienced an immediate transformation from an insignificant following into an empowered organization that immediately began to spread throughout the Roman world. The Church would have long died out before the legend could have developed.
- 2. conversions:** How is it that contemporaries of Christ who did not believe in Him suddenly accepted Him as their Lord.(James; Jude; Paul). A legend cannot account for this phenomenon, but a resurrection certainly can.
- 3. opponents:** The opponents of the resurrection could have kept a legend from developing by producing the body or refuting the resurrection appearances which they could not do.
- 4. primitive belief and preaching of resurrection:** For a legend or myth about a person to arise, there has to be a sufficiently long time to pass in order to get beyond the eyewitnesses of the person who could refute the legendary assertions about the person. With the resurrection, it was immediately believed and preached, thereby excluding a legend or myth hypothesis.

IV. Sources for Further Study:

There are several persuasive apologetic works that provide a systematic presentation of the historical evidence for Christ's resurrection and a systematic dismantling of the arguments against it, including these works by authors who are available for further study online:

- Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, [The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus](#), (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004);
- William Lane Craig, [Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics](#), 3d Ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008);
- J.P. Moreland, [Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity](#), (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987)