

# The Verdict

## THE VERDICT

- **I Peter 3:15 (NLT)** – *Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, ALWAYS BE READY TO EXPLAIN IT.*
- **Jude 1:3 (CEV)** – *My dear friends, I really wanted to write you about God's saving power at work in our lives. But instead, I must write and ask you to DEFEND THE FAITH that God has once for all given to his people.*
- We are not called to simply celebrate this life—we are called to **EXPLAIN IT**. We are commanded to preach the gospel, share the gospel, live by the gospel, and just as importantly, **DEFEND THE GOSPEL**.
- In the first week we showed that a belief in God is supported by more than faith. A belief in God is also supported by logic, reason, scientific plausibility & mathematical probability. Last week, we answered the question, “Can We Trust the Bible” with a resounding “YES” using evidence from archaeology, ancient manuscripts, fulfilled prophecy, and millions upon millions of personal testimonies.

### Week #3 – The Case for Christ: Is Jesus Really the Son of God?

The Christian claim about Jesus is this: He is the Son of God, that He inhabited a human body and lived among real men and women, that He died a sacrificial death for the sins of humanity, that He was buried and was bodily resurrected, and that He is alive today and offers eternal life to all who trust in Him as their Savior and Lord.

It is crucial that this claim be true, because only as the Son of God could He solve the problem of sin and death.

**Matthew 16:15-16 (NIV)** – *“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”*

- The most important question in the history of the world.
- This is the question Jesus forces us to answer: *Was He just a great teacher, a prophet, or truly the Son of God?*
- Today I want to give you some evidence of why we believe the orthodox claims about Jesus to be true, and it is my hope that if you have never embraced these claims, that today can be the day you do.

### Three Questions We Must Answer:

#### **1. Does Historical Evidence Confirm the biblical accounts about Jesus?**

- **J. Warner Wallace** was a DATELINE-featured cold-case detective, who used his investigative expertise to examine the historical claims and evidence surrounding Jesus and the Bible. He applied the same methods he used to solve crimes, including analyzing evidence, identifying witnesses, and assessing credibility. After his investigation, Wallace became convinced of the truth of Christianity and the historicity of Jesus, leading him to convert from atheism to Christianity.
- The following diagram is from a book he published called “Forensic Faith” that displays info about Jesus that comes from ancient accounts that are hostile to the biblical record:

## The Verdict

- Without using a single Christian source, history confirms that: *“Jesus was born and lived in Palestine. He was born, supposedly, to a virgin and had an earthly father who was a carpenter. He was a teacher who taught that through repentance and belief, all followers would become brothers and sisters. He led the Jews away from their beliefs. He was a wise man who claimed to be God and the Messiah. He had unusual magical powers and performed miraculous deeds. He healed the lame. He accurately predicted the future. He was persecuted by the Jews for what He said, betrayed by Judah Iskarioto. He was beaten with rods, forced to drink vinegar and wear a crown of thorns. He was crucified on the eve of the Passover and this crucifixion occurred under the direction of Pontius Pilate, during the time of Tiberius. On the day of His crucifixion, the sky grew dark and there was an earthquake. Afterward, He was buried in a tomb and the tomb was later found to be empty. He appeared to His disciples resurrected from the grave and showed them His wounds. These disciples then told others Jesus was resurrected and ascended into heaven. Jesus’ disciples and followers upheld a high moral code. One of them was named Matthai. The disciples were also persecuted for their faith but were martyred without changing their claims. They met regularly to worship Jesus, even after His death.”* (J. Warner Wallace, coldcasechristianity.com, 10/30/17)
- There are plenty of historical proofs that Jesus of Nazareth existed, and that he was crucified. Two of the most important **non-Christian** sources are historians Josephus and Tacitus.
- **Quote from Josephus:**
- **“Now, there was about this Jesus, a wise man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, 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.”**
- **Quote from Tacitus:**
- **“Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.”**
- This is a lot of facts, but it is important to realize that history proves, at the very least, the historical existence of Jesus. Historical proof of Jesus validates the reliability of the Bible as a historical document. If Jesus can be shown to have existed as a historical figure, it forms the foundation for further discussions about his teachings, miracles, and resurrection.
- When it comes to his teachings, it leads us to our next question:

# The Verdict

## 2. Did Jesus Really Claim to Be the Son of God?

### Jesus Explicitly Claimed Divinity

- **John 10:30 (ESV)** – *I and the Father are one.*
- Jesus wasn't just saying He was *close to God* (Like your family or even your spouse). He was claiming oneness with God.
- The religious leaders understood this claim, which is why they tried to kill Him:
- **John 10:33 (NIV)** – *We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.*
- **Daniel 7:13-14 NLT** - *As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a SON OF MAN coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. 14He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.*
- **Mark 14:61-62 NLT** - *...Then the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 Jesus said, "I Am. And you will see THE SON OF MAN seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."*
- Again, the religious leaders understood the reference, and said: Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, Mark 10:63,64 NLT "Why do we need other witnesses? 64You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?" "Guilty!" they all cried. "He deserves to die!"
- 

### Jesus Claimed the Divine Name ("I AM")

- **John 8:58 (KJV)** – *Before Abraham was, I AM.*
- This was a DIRECT CLAIM TO DIVINITY, referencing Exodus 3:14 where God told Moses: *"I AM that I AM."*
- Again, the Jews reacted by trying to stone Him – because they knew He was equating Himself with YAHWEH.

### Jesus Claimed to Have Divine Authority Over Life & Death

- **John 11:25, 26 (NLT)** – *I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this?*
- **John 14:6-7 NLT** - *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. 7 If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"*
- No other religious leader in history – Muhammad, Buddha, or Confucius – ever made such claims.
- Jesus wasn't just offering GOOD TEACHINGS; He was claiming to be THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL LIFE.
- **QUOTE:** *Either Jesus is the Son of God, or He is a madman or something worse. But His claim cannot be ignored. ~C.S. Lewis*

## 3. Did Jesus Fulfill Messianic Prophecy?

Last week, in our defense of the scripture, we covered a portion about the prophecies Jesus fulfilled and the mathematical probability that a natural man could fulfill those prophecies. We need to look at a few specific prophecies.

# The Verdict

## Prophecies About His Birth

### Born of a Virgin, Born in Bethlehem

- **Micah 5:2 (NASB)** – *But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah... from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.*
- **Isaiah 7:14 (NKJV)** – *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*
- Unlike the resurrection (where there were many eyewitnesses) the only eyewitness of Mary's virginity is Mary. However, there is good evidence that the virgin birth is a very early tradition that goes all the way back to Jesus' generation.
- Two of the four canonical gospel writers (Matthew & Luke) describe the circumstances of Jesus's conception & birth.
- **Matthew 1-2** (written 40-90AD): Matthew presents the story of Jesus' birth from Joseph's perspective, highlighting his initial plan to divorce Mary quietly, his dream visit from an angel, and his subsequent obedience to God's command to name the child Jesus. He says that Jesus was born in Bethlehem but mentions no other details about the night of Jesus' birth. Instead, Matthew skips ahead to where Joseph has another dream visit from an angel where he's warned about Herod's plot to find and kill baby Jesus.
- **Luke 1-2** (written 50-67AD) – Luke presents the story from Mary's perspective, instead highlighting Mary's visit from the angel, her trip to stay with family members, her experience going into labor away from home in Bethlehem, giving birth in a stable, the baby's first outfit, and the people that visited the stable that night.
- Both were probably written less than 30 years after Jesus' death, burial & resurrection. The fact that their perspectives are completely different show they both had separate sources that go back even earlier.

## Prophecies About His Death

- **Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver**
- **Zechariah 11:12 (NIV)** – *They paid me thirty pieces of silver.*
- Fulfilled in **Matthew 26:15 (ESV)** – *And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.*
- **Crucified with Criminals**
- **Isaiah 53:12 (NLT)** – *He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.*
- Fulfilled in **Luke 23:32-33 (CSB)** – *Two others—criminals—were also led away to be executed with Him.*

## His Hands and Feet Pierced (Propheied Before Crucifixion Existed!)

- **Psalms 22:16 (NIV)** – *They pierce my hands and my feet.*
- Fulfilled in **John 19:18 (KJV)** – *Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him.*
- **John**

## Prophecies About His Resurrection

- **The Messiah Would Rise from the Dead**
- **Psalms 16:10 (ESV)** – *You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your Holy One see corruption.*

## The Verdict

- Fulfilled in **Luke 24:6-7 (NIV)** – *He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you... ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’*
- **QUOTE (Tim Keller):** *The resurrection is the cornerstone of Christianity. If Jesus rose, everything He said is true.*

Why does this matter? The fulfillment of these prophecies strengthens our faith by showing coherence between the Old Testament and the New Testament, reinforcing the idea of a unified divine plan.

- “Divine” means it was God’s plan, and only God can fulfill God’s plans.
- Last week we mentioned this **Mathematical Probability:**
  - The chance of **one person** fulfilling just **8** of these prophecies is **1 in 10<sup>17</sup>** (one hundred quadrillion)!
  - That’s like covering Texas in silver dollars **two feet deep**, marking one, and having someone find it **on the first try!**
  - Jesus fulfilled 29 in one day!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (Two Graphics included in today’s notes)

### A Fourth Question: **WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS?**

**John 20:31 (NLT)** – *But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him you will have life by the power of His name.*

- You have historical evidence.
- You have scriptural evidence
- You have the claims of Jesus himself.

CS Lewis was who wrote the *Chronicles of Narnia*, many of us have seen the movie *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, was also an atheist. It was the overwhelming evidence that led him, Lee Strobel, Norman Geisler, J. Warner Wallace, and so many others to surrender. So I want to leave you with this quote from CS Lewis as you are now forced to make a decision with the evidence presented:

*“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with 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 up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”*

# The Verdict

- 1.He will be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 26:49).
- 2.The price of His betrayal will be 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15).
- 3.His betrayal money will be cast to the floor of My temple (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:5).
- 4.His betrayal money will be used to buy the potter's field (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:7).
- 5.He will be forsaken and deserted by His disciples (Zechariah 13:7; Mark 14:50).
- 6.He will be accused by false witnesses (Psalm 35:11; Matthew 26:59 -60).
- 7.He will be silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12).
- 8.He will be wounded and bruised (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 27:26).
- 9.He will be hated without a cause (Psalm 69:4; John 15:25).
- 10.He will be struck and spit on (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67).
- 11.He will be mocked, ridiculed, and rejected (Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 27:27 -31; John 7:5,48).
- 12.He will collapse from weakness (Psalm 109:24 -25; Luke 23:26).
- 13.He will be taunted with specific words (Psalm 22:6 -8; Matthew 27:39 -43).
- 14.People will shake their heads at Him (Psalm 109:25; Matthew 27:39).



# The Verdict

15. People will stare at Him (Psalm 22:17; Luke 23:35).
16. He will be executed among sinners (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38).
17. His hands and feet will be pierced (Psalm 22:16; Luke 23:33).
18. He will pray for His persecutors (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34).
19. His friends and family will stand afar off and watch (Psalm 38:11; Luke 23:49).
20. His garments will be divided up and awarded by the casting of lots (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23 -24).
21. He will thirst (Psalm 69:21; John 19:28).
22. He will be given gall and vinegar (Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34).
23. He will commit Himself to God (Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46).
24. His bones will be left unbroken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33).
25. His heart will rupture (Psalm 22:14; John 19:34).
26. His side will be pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34).
27. Darkness will come over the land at midday (Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45).
28. He will be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57 -60).
29. He will die 483 years after the declaration of Artaxerxes to rebuild the temple in 444 BC (Daniel 9:24).