

## ***Blind Faith?***

by David Stewart

Is New Testament Christianity *blind* faith? By using the adjective “blind,” some people would likely assume that there is no foundation or basis to Christianity. They would think that for a person to be a Christian he would have to be naive or superstitious. However, I propose that not being a Christian is actually the blind stance. One must ignore or brush away all the evidence that has been preserved and laid before us. What proof is there for Jesus and the religion that he established?

1) *Historicity*. The evidence testifies that Jesus was indeed a historical person. Jesus is no comic book character like Superman or fictitious hopeful like the Easter Bunny, Tooth Fairy, or Santa Claus. He was born into this world at a specific time (during the reign of Caesar Augustus; Luke 2:1) and a specific place (Bethlehem of Judea; Luke 2:4). Eyewitnesses surrounded Jesus, and some left records of his life. The twenty-seven documents of the New Testament bear witness to him. The apostle John wrote out of his close association with Jesus: “That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have *looked at* and our hands have *touched*—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1; emphasis added). Even historians outside the New Testament (such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus) wrote about Jesus, confirming his historicity.

2) *Prophecy*. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies that had been spoken about him several centuries beforehand! In the New Testament, we repeatedly read quotations from the Old Testament in which Jesus is the fulfillment of what God had promised long ago. A few examples will illustrate the testimony of prophecy.

First, Jesus would have a Spirit-empowered ministry. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed” (Luke 4:18; see Isaiah 61:1, 2).

Second, Jesus would sacrificially die. “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Acts 8:32; see Isaiah 53:7, 8).

Third, Jesus would be raised from the dead. “You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay” (Acts 2:27; see Psalm 16:9, 10).

These things were fulfilled in the days of the Roman Empire, just as it had been spoken: “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44). God accomplished this through Jesus when he established his church (Matthew 16:18, 19; Acts 2).

3) *Character*. Jesus lived the best life that has ever been lived on the face of the earth. He refused all the temptations to take shortcuts in establishing his kingdom (Matthew 4:8, 9; John 6:15; 18:10, 11). He did not bow to the carnal messianic expectations of the Jewish nation. Rather, he came to serve, even stooping to the task of a slave by washing his disciples' feet (Matthew 20:28; John 13:1-17). Unlike other religious teachers who have come and gone, Jesus never fell for the lures of the evil one. He "had no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21; see 1 Peter 2:22). Through suffering and obedience, he was "made perfect" (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus was "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). He went the distance, having "been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

4) *Teaching*. Jesus' teaching transcends all that of the philosophers and sages of the past, present, and future. He taught God's truth as one who had come from the Father (John 7:16, 17). He emphasized not only performing the right action, but also having the right kind of heart (Matthew 5—7). Jesus presented himself and his way of living as the only possible means of salvation (John 14:6). He declared that his words would serve as the standard of judgment on the last day (John 12:48). His teaching left people shocked: "The crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matthew 7:28, 29).

5) *Miracles*. Jesus demonstrated that he was no ordinary individual. He performed many miracles which were recorded by the Gospel writers. The apostle John called these miracles "signs" because they point to the greater reality of who Jesus is. John did not record very many of Jesus' miracles, but he did share enough of them to produce faith in the hearts of his readers (John 20:30, 31). Jesus himself appealed to the miracles as a basis for faith (John 14:11). They were also used as proof in early gospel preaching that Jesus was the Messiah: "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). The miracles of Jesus were common knowledge among the masses.

6) *Resurrection*. Jesus ultimately overcame death, being raised never to die again! The stone was rolled back, no body was found in the tomb, and the grave clothes were lying there (John 20:1-9). The apostle Paul wrote concerning Jesus' resurrection appearances: "He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers. . . . Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also" (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). Jesus is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). What will you do with the evidence for Jesus?

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