

Jesus

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)

Following Christ is a radical, sold out, all-encompassing commitment dwarfed only by His trip to planet earth to reconcile you and me to God.

How can I follow someone I have never touched?

Why would I put my eternal trust in Jesus Christ and single out His claims from all other world religions?

How can I believe the Word of God is true and infallible?

How can I believe what I believe?

How can I be sure that God truly exists?

How do I know that Jesus is all He claimed to be?

How do I know that my faith is not in vain?

Would I be willing to sacrifice everything I have to follow Him?

If he hasn't already, the adversary will eventually permeate your mind with these and other questions that can make your knees quiver with doubt.

Historic evidence and a few key real life experiences have helped shed light on questions like these that I, too, have asked in my own personal pilgrimage with God.

One memorable experience happened to me when my oldest son, Brady, and I got lost in a taxi in Chicago with a very pleasant Muslim driver from Syria named Imod. Some time and \$60 later, he found the driveway of our friend's house where we were staying.

If I was going to demolish \$60 in this taxi (I thought), at least I am going to walk away with a new friendship.

Imod and I exchanged stories, laughs, and personal experiences. We did become friends that morning. The personal encounter would have been worth twice the expense! As I was about to disembark, I hesitated momentarily and looked keenly into Imod's eyes.

"Imod, may I ask you a question?"

He gladly gave me permission. "According to your Muslim faith, what will happen to you when you die?"

Imod quickly responded, "When I die, there will be judgment. As I stand before Allah he will put all of my good deeds on my right side and all of my bad deeds on my left side. If my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds," his countenance brightened, "I will go to heaven."

As he concluded his statement of faith I probed, "And what if your bad deeds outweigh your good deeds?"

"Well," his countenance lowered, "I suppose I will go to hell."

"Imod," I spoke tenderly, "that worries me deeply for you."

"Because?"

"If I had to live my life worrying that if my bad deeds outweighed my good deeds I would go to hell, I would be scared to death."
(Trust me I am not counting!)

Knowing that under those conditions he was paddling the same sinking ship as I, Imod returned the question to me.

"What does your faith teach you?"

"Well," (our eyes were welded in earnestness), "my faith clearly teaches me that when I die there will be judgment. But upon judgment God will not look at my good deeds and compare them to my bad deeds. God will look at me based upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ who lives in my heart, and because of Him, I will go to heaven."

Imod received my friendship and my faith with gratitude. "No one ever told me that before, ... By the way, where are you going to church tomorrow?"

I told him and he eagerly wrote it down on a piece of brown paper torn from a grocery bag that he was carrying in the front seat of his taxi.

Friends, the difference between the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the teachings of all the other religions of the world, is the distance of infinity. Let me briefly (and I mean briefly) begin to build a thick steel platform under your faith.

Jesus, Son of God, Prince of Peace, God Incarnate and Everlasting King is the most trusted, followed, written about, read about, talked about, loved, worshipped and powerful figure in human history.

With prophecies starting 1500 years before His birth and continuing to 400 years before His birth, 300 prophetic details foretold His arrival, life and death with uncanny accuracy.

It has been mathematically calculated that the odds of any other man fulfilling a mere 48 of these 300 prophetic details in his life would be the same odds that you could blindfold yourself and wade through a field of silver dollars stacked one foot deep across the state of Texas and pick up a predetermined certain silver dollar on the first attempt.

Just to name a few...

- Born of a virgin* (Isaiah 7:14)
- Born in Bethlehem* (Micah 5:2)
- Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver* (Zechariah 11:12)
- Presented as king on a donkey* (Zechariah 9:9)
- Buried in a rich man's tomb* (Isaiah 53:9)
- Bones not broken* (Psalms 34:20)
- Seed of Abraham* (Genesis 22:18)
- Son of Isaac* (Genesis 21:12)
- Would bruise Satan on the head* (Genesis 3:15)
- Would be scourged* (Isaiah 53:5)
- Beaten beyond recognition* (Isaiah 53:4)

Perhaps the most inexplicable prophecy of Jesus' earthly mission is in Psalm 22, written by David 1000 years before Jesus' birth and 800 years before the Assyrians even invented the hedonist death of a man by crucifixion. Excerpts from Psalm 22 sound more historical than prophetic:

"My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me. Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning....¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." (Psalm 22:1, 15-18)

How providential it is that Pontius Pilate would proclaim his innocence, "I find no fault in this man," and one of his executioners before He "pierced His hands and His feet" would claim His deity, "This man must truly be the Son of God."

Mark these Key Words: Jesus God

Old Testament Viewpoint

Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 53: 4-6

Isaiah 9:6-7 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over His kingdom. To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

New Testament Viewpoint

Colossians 1:15-20; John 6:46; John 14:6-7

I Colossians 1:15-20 And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness To dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

John 6:46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

John 14:6-7 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

 **OBSERVATION: What is God saying?**

1) What do the many fulfilled prophecies about Jesus tell you about God?

2) What do you hear Isaiah saying about the Messiah who is to come?

3) Messiah comes from the Hebrew word "Messiach." The same Greek word is "Christos" from which we get the word Christ. He is to be "The Anointed One." Name five things Colossians points out that make Him unique from all other religious figures who ever lived.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

4) What is the significance of Jesus' life on earth?

5) What does Jesus' life reveal about the character of God?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM:
Describe who Jesus is to you and the difference He has made in your life.



MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.



My Prayers



Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...



Confession: Father, please forgive me for...



Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...



Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...