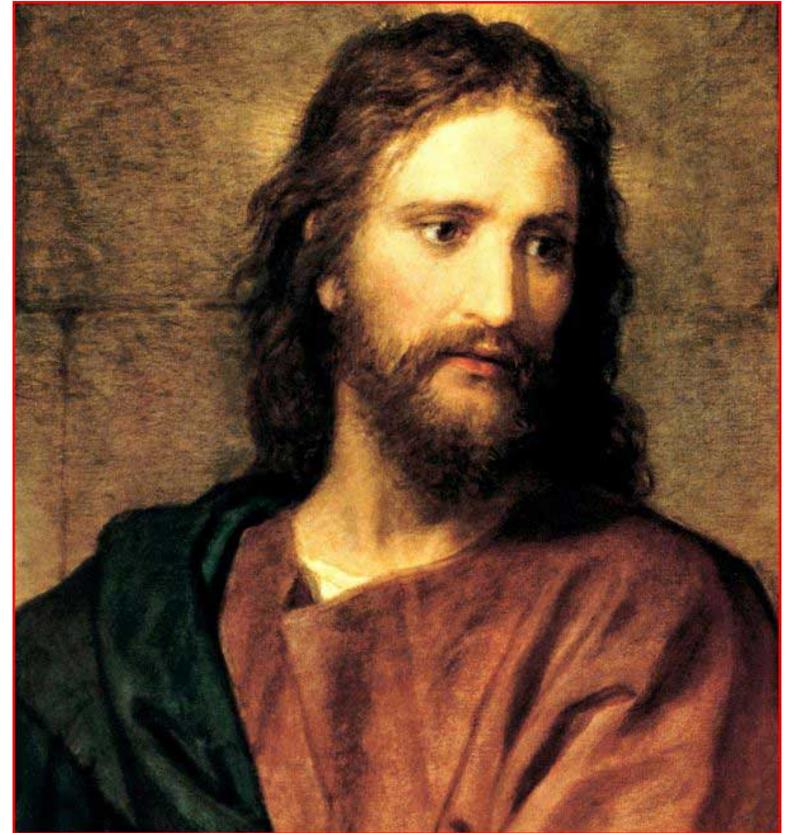


Who Do You Say That I Am?



An Appeal to Muslims who honor Jesus of Nazareth

My dear Muslim brother or sister,

May Almighty God bless you and give you His peace!

I am sure that you believe that God is true, that He cannot lie, and that He is all good. I am sure that you also believe that the purpose of life is to please Him and that our eternity depends on submitting to God's Will as He has revealed it to us.

Most Muslims have been told that Christianity cannot be the true religion for several reasons. But most Muslims have never investigated those reasons to determine if they are true. In this pamphlet we invite you to do your own research and with God's help to determine where the truth lies. If you find that the facts support the Muslim critique of Christianity, then you will be confirmed in your Muslim faith. And if you find that the facts do not support that critique, you will be free to follow the Truth wherever it leads.

The Koran vs. the Bible

From the time of the death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, almost two thousand years ago, Christians have lived and died for their faith in the following propositions:

Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah, or Redeemer, of the world, who suffered and died for the sins of the whole world

Jesus Christ predicted His resurrection from the dead and rose on the third day after His crucifixion as the proof of His claim to be the Divine Savior of the world



“Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Prayer for Divine Mercy

Lord Jesus, I believe that You are truly the Son of God who suffered and died to save me from sin and death.

I am sorry for all of the sins of my past life and I forgive everyone who has ever hurt me.

Lord Jesus, I place my life entirely in Your hands.

I want to do Your Will from now on -- not my own.

I want to receive Your divine life by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the sacraments of Your Church.

Give me the grace to love and obey You always.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me now and at the hour of my death.

Amen.

Contact:

If you have any questions about the information contained in the pamphlet or would like to speak with a member of our congregation, please feel free to send us an email at:

Witnesses for Christ

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May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you and give you peace!

His original teachings have been safeguarded in the Church that He established and in the Holy Scriptures that have been approved by the Church

Those who follow the teachings of Jesus Christ share in His resurrected life on earth and in eternity

Muslims, on the other hand, are taught that Jesus was a great prophet but that

He did not suffer and die for the sins of the whole world

He did not rise from the dead

His original teachings were corrupted by His followers and only restored more than five hundred years after His death in the Koran

Only those who follow the teaching of the Koran will enjoy eternal life

It is obvious that both of these sets of propositions cannot be true. But everyone can agree that it is important to determine which (if either) of them is true. This pamphlet will equip you to be able to make your own investigation and to determine for yourself where the truth lies.

Part I

The Reliability of the Christian Bible

Since the truth or falsity of the Christian faith depends to a great extent on the reliability of the Christian Bible, we will begin our investigation with proposition number three:

Christian Doctrine

The original teachings of Jesus have been safeguarded in the Church that He established and in the Holy Scriptures that have been approved by the Church

Muslim Doctrine

The original teachings of Jesus were corrupted by His followers and only restored more than five hundred years after His death in the Koran

Mohammed wrote down the Koran in the early seventh century, about six hundred years after the birth of Jesus Christ. If Muslims are correct and the Bible was corrupted between the time of Jesus and his time, we should be able to find some evidence of this. However, what we find instead is that the Scriptures of the first centuries of the Christian era are the same as the Scriptures that we have today. This can be established beyond a shadow of a doubt in regard to both the Old Testament of the Jews and Christians and the New Testament of Christian believers.

Our accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus are contained in the 27 books of the New Testament which were written within one hundred years of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We possess many ancient manuscripts of the New Testament dating from the centuries between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the writing of the Koran. The versions of the Biblical books in these manuscripts agree with the texts

Faith and Obedience

Common sense can lead us to believe in God. And common sense can lead us to believe that Jesus **is** God. But common sense alone cannot lead us to everlasting happiness.

To share in God's life before and after death we must believe and obey all of His teachings. In the first century after the Resurrection, the family of the followers of Jesus, united under the Pope and the bishops loyal to him, began to be called the "Catholic Church," from the Greek word "Catholicos," meaning "universal." The Church is "Catholic" because it teaches **all** that Jesus taught, to **all** kinds of people, at **all** times, and in **all** places. Through the Bible, which the Church wrote, assembled, and approved, and through Sacred Tradition -- the authoritative teachings of the Popes and bishops down through the centuries -- the Pope and the Bishops in union with him teach the whole truth about God and our relationship to Him. Those who enter the safety of the Catholic Church enjoy the fullness of God's truth and life. They **experience** the fulfillment of God's promise:

Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

If you would like to receive the fullness of God's truth and life in the Church He founded 2000 years ago, pray the prayer at the bottom of this page, and e-mail us as soon as possible. We will direct you to a priest in your area who can give you additional information about membership in the Catholic Church.

wisdom, and truth to the whole world in their every-day lives. Christ-like acts of love are the infallible sign that Jesus lives in his disciples.

Contrary to the false teaching of reincarnation, Jesus tells us that "it is appointed to man once to die" (Hebrews 9:27) After death, each soul will be judged according to its actions. Those who die with God's life in their souls will go to heaven -- either immediately, or after some period of purification. The joy of heaven will be infinitely greater than any joy we can experience on earth because we will see, know, and enjoy God without interruption. The happiness of heaven will last forever; in heaven, our desire for God will finally be fulfilled. Those who die with God's life in their souls but without having been freed from all the effects of sin and selfishness will go to a place of purification where the human soul is purged of all selfishness. Those who die without God's life in their souls will remain separated from Him forever in eternal misery.

But Jesus came so that you might "have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). No matter what sins you have committed, no matter what abuse you have suffered, no matter what pain you have endured, Jesus bore the pain, the shame, the guilt, and the punishment for you and for all. He is ready and willing to forgive you and to heal you, if you will confess your sins, accept His forgiveness, and declare your willingness to forgive your enemies and to follow His perfect plan for your life.

To everyone who comes to Him in this way, Jesus promises a new life with Him and in Him, a life of love, joy, and peace that passes understanding. St. Paul tells us that we are "God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, that He has prepared beforehand that we might walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus wants to teach you how to become that "masterpiece" that God created you to be. He wants to show you how to live by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, doing everything for the glory of the Father, and offering all of your thoughts, words, and actions to the Father with Jesus, out of love for all mankind. To do this is to "do God's Will on earth as in Heaven"—it is to experience "heaven on earth."

we have today, showing that these texts were not corrupted. Moreover, quotations from the Bible in the writings of the outstanding teachers of the first few hundred years of Christianity known as the Church Fathers allow us to reconstruct almost the entire New Testament from their writings. When this is done, the text of the Bible that they quoted from agrees with the text we have today. According to Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum:

The interval . . . between the dates of original composition [of the New Testament] and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."^{8} Sir Fredric Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), 288ff.

Recent scholarship has established that the Old Testament has been just as remarkably well preserved as the New Testament. Until the middle of the twentieth century, the oldest surviving manuscripts of the books of the Old Testament dated from the a thousand years after the birth of Christ. Consequently, it was impossible to determine their accuracy in comparison with the original versions. However, in 1947 this changed with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls which included large sections of the Old Testament. Careful analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls has shown that medieval manuscripts of the Old Testament books were substantially the same in every respect as the Dead Sea Scrolls versions. For example, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, written around 750 B.C. is virtually identical to the medieval manuscripts of the same book, testifying to an almost perfect preservation of the text over a period of more than 2500 years! Moreover, Isaiah holds special importance for Christians because of its numerous specific predictions regarding the future Messiah, or Redeemer of Israel. In particular,

Isaiah 53 contains detailed predictions of the suffering and death of Jesus, including His crucifixion. Jesus told His disciples that He came to fulfill the Law, not to abolish it. Consequently, from the beginning of the Church, the disciples of Jesus have always revered the Jewish Scriptures as the Word of God, along with the New Testament Scriptures.

Two thousand years after the death and Resurrection of Jesus Jews and Christians agree on the text of the Old Testament. This is what one would expect if the New Testament truly fulfilled the Old. On the other hand, although Mohammed claimed that the Koran fulfilled the Old and New Testaments, Muslims today claim that the text of the Old and the New Testaments was corrupted before the time of Mohammed. If the Old and New Testaments were originally inspired by God, as Mohammed claimed, one might have expected them to be preserved along with the Koran, so that believers could see that the Koran is the fulfillment of them both. Instead, one finds that the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New in a remarkable number of ways, while the Koran fails to fulfill either of them with any specificity at all. In light of all the above, we can definitely conclude that Muslims are wrong in their teaching about the corruption of the Bible, and that the Bible that has come down to us today fulfills the prophetic words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word will not pass away" (Luke 21:33).

Part II

The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

Christian Doctrine:

From the beginning of Christianity, in the first days after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians have testified to the fact that Jesus died on the Cross, was buried, and rose again from the dead on the third day.

characteristic of the Divinity. If there were only one Person in God, it would be impossible for God to *be* love. But, because there are three Divine Persons in God, the Bible clearly teaches that "God is love" and that "all who abide in love abide in Him" (John 4:8).

One day, Jesus stood by a well in the desert and told a Samaritan woman,

Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again. He, however, who drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst; the water that I will give him will become a fountain of living water, springing up unto life everlasting. (John 4: 13-14)

The "living water" of which Jesus spoke was the Divine Life of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This infinite, eternal divine life is the only thing that can satisfy the human longing for lasting happiness. To give us this divine life, Jesus instituted seven special signs called "sacraments" which make us sharers in God's divine life, or "grace": Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick.

Through Baptism, men are "born" into the life of grace as members of God's family. Through penance, we renew God's grace within us when we have lost it through sin. Through the Holy Eucharist, we grow in grace by receiving Jesus Christ Himself under the appearance of bread and wine. In Chrismation, or Confirmation, we receive the grace to bear witness to Christ. In marriage, we receive the grace to be faithful spouses, and to raise holy children for the kingdom of Heaven. In Holy Orders, men receive the power to change bread and wine into Jesus, to forgive sins, and to guide and teach souls. In the Anointing of the Sick, we receive the grace to endure sickness and death in union with Jesus. In addition to the sacraments, through the gift of his Holy Spirit Jesus guides the thoughts, words, and actions of his disciples so that they can bring his divine love,

gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:18-19)

Later, Jesus gave Peter and the Apostles an additional share in His divine mission by giving them the power to change bread and wine into Himself (a mystery, yes, but not an impossibility for God!) (Luke 22: 19-20), the power to forgive sins (John 20: 22-23), and the power to give other men of their choosing these same powers by laying hands on them (2 Timothy 1:6; Titus 1:5). By the laying on of hands, these same powers have been passed from Peter and the Apostles to the present Pope, Benedict XVI, and to the bishops in union with him.

Eternal Life

Among the many truths that Jesus revealed is the truth that God is Love **because** He is a Trinity of Persons Who share the same divine nature. (By way of explanation, a **nature** is **what** someone is; a **person** is who someone is. For example, if I asked, "Reader, **what** are you?" the answer would be "A human being." If I asked, "Reader, **who** are you?" the answer would be "John Foltz" or "Mary Garcia.") God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons who share the same divine Nature. From all eternity, the Father begets, or brings forth the Son, who is the perfect image of the Father. And from all eternity, the Father and the Son love each other with a love so real that it is a Divine Person -- the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Each and every human being is created in the image of the triune God. Each person *exists*; he *knows* that he exists; and, if he is normal, he *loves* his existence, all at the same time. These three acts of being, knowing, and loving, correspond to the relations among the three Divine Persons in God. It is the tri-unity of God that makes divine love the defining

Muslim Doctrine

The teaching of the Koran contradicts the testimony of the Bible and of all Christian leaders during the first centuries of the Christian era. Sura 4 states:

That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah";- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:- Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise;- —Qur'an, sura 4 (An-Nisa) ayat 157-158^[2]

The Koran states that Jesus only appeared to die on the Cross, but the Bible could not be more definite in teaching that He did die on the Cross, even citing multiple eyewitness testimonies to His crucifixion and death. As cited above, what makes the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' sufferings and death all the more remarkable is the fact that the things that they witnessed were described in detail by authors who lived hundreds of years before them. For example, approximately one thousand years before the death and Resurrection of Jesus, King David described the sufferings and death of Jesus on the Cross in great detail in Psalm 22:

In the first lines of the psalm, King David relates the very words that Jesus spoke from the Cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" He describes the Lord's appearance on the Cross, "like a worm, and no man." (22:7) He describes the mockery of the bystanders, down to the very words that some of them spoke: "He hoped in the Lord: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delights in Him" (22:9). He describes the exact nature of Jesus' physical sufferings: "My Heart is become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels; my strength is dried up like a

potsherd, and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws: and thou hast brought me down in to the dust of death . . . They have pierced My hands and My feet. They have numbered all My bones” (22:15-17). The reference to the piercing of Jesus’ hands and feet in crucifixion is all the more remarkable because crucifixion was not known to the Jews of King David’s day and only came into use in the Holy Land centuries after King David wrote this psalm.

Finally, King David describes the actions of some of the bystanders at the crucifixion in minute detail when he writes: “They have parted My garments among them, and for My vesture they cast lots.” (22:18) This verse seems to contain an inherent contradiction, since how could King David foresee a dying man’s garments being divided if lots were being cast to see who would get to keep them all? The answer is contained in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion which reveal that the Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus divided His outer garments but agreed to cast lots for His seamless cloak.

Verse 15 which speaks of a dying man’s heart being “melted” within him relates to an event that occurred **after** Jesus’ death on the Cross when a Roman soldier thrust a spear through Jesus’ Heart. According to the eye-witness, St. John the Evangelist:

One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water (John 19:34).

This eye-witness account is consistent with the characteristics of death by crucifixion, which caused asphyxiation, as the victim had to push himself up with his legs to breathe and eventually became too weak to do so and suffocated. The pericardium, the sac surrounding the heart, contains a small amount of watery fluid.

When the body undergoes great stress, as the Body of Jesus during His scourging and crucifixion, the amount of fluid increases and the sac expands. The Roman lance would then

Jesus did not ask His disciples to place their trust **exclusively** in Him, however. On the contrary, He gave His divine authority to Peter and the Apostles, the leaders of His community, the Church. Before His Ascension into Heaven, Jesus told Peter and the Apostles:

All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, 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 observe all that I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world.
(*Matthew 28: 18-20*)

With these words, Jesus gave His Apostles the power to give men a share in His divine Life through Baptism. He also promised to be with the Apostles and their successors, the bishops, until the end of time. In this way, people could share His Truth and Life by obeying Peter and the Apostles -- and their successors, the Pope and the Bishops loyal to him. During the first centuries after the Resurrection, God guided the Pope and the Bishops in deciding which of the many books and letters written about Jesus contained the pure Truth. In a series of councils, or general meetings, the Popes and the bishops loyal to them approved the 27 books of the New Testament which, together with the books of the Old Testament, make up the Holy Bible.

The Rock of Peter

Jesus made sure that all of His followers understood Peter's special role as Pope, or leader of the Apostles. In the presence of all the Apostles, Jesus told Peter:

I say to you, Peter, you are rock, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the

Part IV

The Importance of the Resurrection: The Greatest Event in Human History

We have seen that the Koran denies the death of Jesus on the Cross and His Resurrection, but that the facts strongly support the faith of Christians in the suffering, death and Resurrection of Jesus as described in the Holy Bible.

The resurrection of Jesus is important for many reasons, but most importantly because it is the definitive proof that He offered and predicted in advance for His total supremacy over all creation—including nature, the devil, sin, and death. In short, the resurrection of Jesus is the final and culminating proof of His divinity—of the fact that Almighty God in Jesus Christ assumed a human nature, so that “we might share in the divinity of Christ who humbled Himself to share in Our humanity.”³ His being born of a virgin, His fulfillment of dozens of Old Testament prophecies through the time and circumstances of his birth, His astonishing miracles, culminating in the raising of Lazarus from the dead after three days in the tomb—all of these signs of Christ’s divinity culminated in the “life-creating, death destroying” mystery of Christ’s Resurrection. In short, the meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead can be summed up in five words: “Repent, and believe the Gospel!”

Jesus and the Church

Jesus invited all people to believe in Him, to repent of their sins, and to accept the forgiveness that He won for them by His suffering and death. To all who would accept Him as Lord, Jesus promised a share in His own divine life, so that they could follow His commandments and enjoy eternal life with Him after death.

³ Offertory Prayers of the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church.

have passed through Jesus' pericardium and into the right side of his heart, which is filled with blood even after death. As the lance was withdrawn, it would draw out the blood from the heart and the watery fluid from the expanded pericardium. . . All physicians who have examined the question agree that Jesus was already dead when the chest wound was inflicted. The blood and water most probably flowed from both the heart and the chest cavity.¹

The Roman soldiers who presided over Jesus’ execution were professional killers whose job was to make sure that their victims were dead before they were removed from their gibbets. Thus, it is no surprise that even pagans who scorned the Christian Faith bore witness to His death on the Cross. These included the historian Cornelius Tacitus and the pagan author Lucian of Samosata, both of whom testified to the crucifixion and death of Jesus in writings published in the second century of the Christian era.² The Jewish Talmud also refers to the execution of Jesus by the Roman authorities.

In short, the eye witness testimony in the Bible and the testimony of pagan and Jewish authors all agree with the ancient creeds of Christendom that Jesus Christ “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.” There is no reliable evidence of any kind to support the Koran’s claim that Jesus only appeared to die on the Cross.

¹ “Forensic Pathology Report on Jesus,”

<http://www.godonthenet.com/evidence/forensic.htm>

² Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 44; Lucian of Samosata, *The Passing Peregrinus*, quoted in *Evidence*

Part III

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

The Koran and the Christian Bible each give readers a criterion by which to judge their truth and reliability. The Koran cites its literary excellence. The Bible cites the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It is hard to believe that Almighty God would offer literary excellence as the best proof for the divine inspiration of a book. There are certainly many passages in the Bible that are of great beauty even in translation, just as there are many passages of poetry of extraordinary beauty in the literature of many different nations. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to seriously argue that the literary excellence of the Koran surpasses the literary excellence of the King James Version of the Bible, or the poetry of Shakespeare, Dante, or Pushkin. Since the determination of literary excellence is to some extent a subjective matter, if God had cited literary excellence as the touchstone of divine revelation He would have condemned mankind to a state of perennial uncertainty as to which of the many literary masterpieces in the world constituted His definitive divine revelation.

With the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the other hand, we are confronted with an historical event—something entirely objective—the reality of which can be determined straightforwardly without any appeals to subjectivity. Indeed, it is not difficult to prove that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the best authenticated fact in ancient history—a rock solid foundation for the Christian faith.

In the first place we have the eyewitness testimony of the New Testament authors who in several cases witnessed the death and burial of the Lord Jesus. According to the New Testament—the reliability of which was established in the preceding section of this booklet—hundreds of witnesses saw Jesus after His Resurrection and testified to

His having been transformed from a corpse into a radiant being with a glorified body, capable of passing through walls and appearing and disappearing at will before the eyes of His disciples. Moreover, it was precisely their knowledge that Jesus had died and risen from the dead that convinced these witnesses of the divinity of Jesus and made them willing to suffer torture and death rather than deny the truth of His Resurrection. If there had been any doubt about the death and resurrection of Jesus in the minds of any of His disciples, they would never have suffered every kind of hardship to proclaim His resurrection to the ends of the earth.

If the Koran were correct in claiming that Jesus only appeared to die on the Cross, this would mean that Jesus somehow survived not only scourging and crucifixion but a spear through his Heart. It would mean that the butchered body of Jesus was buried in a tomb, its entrance blocked by a huge stone bearing a Roman seal, and guarded by Roman soldiers who would have earned a death sentence had they allowed the seal to be broken or the body to be stolen away. If Jesus did not really die but was buried, He would then have had to roll the huge stone away by Himself, overpower the Roman soldiers and somehow recover from his wounds before presenting Himself to His disciples. But what is still more inconceivable is that if the Koran is correct in claiming that Jesus only appeared to die on the Cross, then Jesus must then have lied to His Apostles and disciples by giving them the impression that He had risen from the dead. But this contradicts the portrait of Jesus in the New Testament and in the Koran as a morally perfect man, as incapable of lying as He was of any kind of immorality.

In short, the evidence from the New Testament establishes beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ “suffered, died and was buried,” and that “He rose again on the third day” in accordance with the Scriptures.