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## Is Jesus of Nazareth a Deity Or Deliverer?

# Christianity

## Jesus Of Nazareth

Here we will examine the Christian Faith.

The life and claims of Jesus the Christ within the Gospels is compared with sources outside the Canonized Bible. The intent is to show how other sources outside the Bible often agree; further explaining meanings, stories and broadening understanding.

The over-riding purpose of this work (World Faiths) is to convey the astonishing realization that the same universal “Word of God” is found within the original core Scriptures of all major world faiths.

**Name: Christianity – Date Approx. 6BC – 3BC**

**1. Family Name of Prophet:**

Jesus of Nazareth

**2. Holy Name:**

The Christ, Messiah, The Anointed One,  
the Son of God

**3. Name For God:**

Father

**4. Name for the Promised One:**

Glory of the Lord or Father, the Spirit of Truth:

*“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” John 16: 12-16*

## 5. Birth Legends & Life:

The birth of Jesus is extolled in ritual and song. The two Gospels telling the story are quite different. It seems like they are telling compatible but yet, different renditions. It does become apparent the popular Christmas scene is a bit faulty.

Although the neighborhood shepherds may well have witnessed a baby in a manger the distant Magi would not have arrived until much later. Jesus, birth date is not mentioned in the Gospels but the birth was probably in the Spring, April 17<sup>th</sup> 6 BC being a popular speculation “Shepherds keeping watch by night” was a Spring-Summer activity.

Zoroastrian astrologers (Magi) of the time observed Jupiter in the sign of Aries of the zodiac fulfilling their prophecy concerning the coming of a great King. These wise men or “Kings from the orient” traveled some 1000 miles from Persia to honor their “King of Kings”. They possibly arrived in Bethlehem the following winter by which time Jesus would have been crawling.

(There is no mention in **Matthew (2:1)** of them seeing Jesus as a new born. The Gospel simply says, “*After Jesus was born,*” There is no mention of them seeing him in a manger. In fact **2:11** says, “*On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother*”. **Luke 2:8** says, “*there were shepherds in a field nearby who immediately went and saw a baby lying in a manger.*”

Combining the shepherds of Luke with the Magi of Matthew add a different enriching allegorical dimension to the reality inherent in Jesus. Poor and rich come from near and far to unite in Christ. Receptive people of both Zoroastrian Orient and Jewish Israeli Descent accepts Christ as their King. People from all over the world would be attracted to the “light” of the Son of God.

The traditional date of December 25<sup>th</sup> was the time of an ancient ceremony celebrating the rebirth of the return of the sun after Winter solstice. It is also the traditional date of the birth of the Roman god Mithra. The early church kept the holiday but used it to their own advantage, as converts did not have to abandon their traditional festival. Instead, the old ways were combined with the celebration of the Birth or “rebirth” of the Christ child.

### **The Birth of Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in Matthew 1:18-24 NIV**

*“ This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “ Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” ...When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded and took Mary home as his wife.”*  
*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod, Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, “ Where is the one who is born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”*

To paraphrase: Herod, disturbed by the news called his priests, who told him the “Christ is prophesied to be born in Bethlehem.” Herod contacted the Magi telling them to report back on Jesus’ location so that he could also come and worship him. The Wise men found the object of their search but were also warned by an angel not to report back to Herod. An angel also appeared to Joseph urging them to flee to Egypt thereby to avoid the murderous plan of Herod against Jesus.

Upon Herod’s death Jesus’ family ended up settling in Nazareth where Jesus grew up, becoming a Nazarene. (At this point Matthew’s narration goes directly to the Baptism by John the Baptist.)

### **The life of Jesus according to the Gospel of Luke 2: 1-12 NIV**

*“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census be taken of the entire Roman world...and everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph went from Nazareth- to Bethlehem, the town of David to register there because he belonged to the lineage of David. He took Mary who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her first-born son. She wrapped him in clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn.*

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. An angel appeared- and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,” Do not be afraid. I bring you news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.*

*When the angels left the shepherds said to one another,” let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing, which has happened, which the Lord has told us about. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in a manger.*

*When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. The narrative continues,”The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which was just as they had been told.”*

(Little Biblical information is known about the young Jesus. Luke 2: 21-51 gives us a rare glimpse of how Jesus, as a youth, was fundamentally different than others.)

To paraphrase: When Jesus’ was eight days old he was brought to the Jewish Temple to be circumcised, purified and named according to the laws of Moses. According to Jewish custom he was then taken to Jerusalem to be consecrated to the Lord.

**Below are two accounts of people recognizing the import of the baby brought to the temple that day to be baptized.**

*“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consecration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit he went into the temple courts.*

*When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."*

*Then Simon blessed them and said to Mary, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

*There was also a prophetess; Anna- She was very old and widowed. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*

**(Luke 2: 25-38 NIV)**

**(Luke 2: 39-52 NIV),** *"When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and he became strong. He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.*

The gap between an 8-month-old baby being circumcised and a precocious twelve-year-old boy teaching at the temple constitutes a large gap in the early development of Jesus. Orthodox Christianity steps in with the logic that; given that Jesus needed to be "sinless" to be an acceptable worthy sacrificial "Lamb of God" it follows Jesus' boyhood life must have been without blemish as well.

Thus do the orthodox Christians speak, especially those who only recognize the Biblical Canon as the inerrant word of God. However, as one begins looking outside of the Canonized traditional Bible we discover there are stories in the "Infancy Gospel of Thomas" recorded in the Apocryphal New Testament. One popular notion was to portray the boy Jesus as immature with supernatural powers. It is only as Jesus matures that he attains the wisdom and perfections so revered by so many.

Believers of old wrestled with not only the deification of Jesus but wondered what he was like as a young boy. These popular stories, whether they may have an element of truth in them or not, are significant as they point at the impact Jesus must already have had before they were recorded. They may not represent true happenings but certainly portray the awe felt towards Jesus.

I must add here that much of the Infancy Gospel describes many healing miracles. There are numerous stories where just the presence of the infant or the scent of his bedding evoked healing.

Here is one example of many: as found in

**"Lost Books Of The Bible" by "World Bible Publishers" 1926 Chap. XII p50**

*"Again there was a leprous woman who went to the Lady St. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and said, "O my Lady, help me." St. Mary replied 'what help dost thou desire? Is it gold or silver, or that thy body be cured of its leprosy? "Who", says the woman, " can grant me this?' St. Mary replied to her, 'Wait a little while till I have washed my son Jesus, and put him to bed.'*

*The woman waited, as she was commanded; and Mary, when she had put Jesus in bed, giving her the water with which she had washed his body, said, ‘Take some of the water and pour it upon thy body; Which when she had done, she instantly became clean; and praised God and gave thanks to him.’*

Another story from the same source **Chap XV P52** gives accounts, corroborated in the Quran, of Jesus creating live sparrows out of clay.

*“ And when the Lord Jesus was even years of age, he was on a certain day with other boys, his companions about the same age. Who when they were at play made clay into several shapes; namely asses, oxen, birds and other figures, each boasting of his work and endeavoring to exceed the rest.*

*Then the Lord Jesus said to the boys,” I will command these figures I have made to walk. And immediately they moved, and when he commanded them to return, they returned. He had also made the figures of birds and sparrows, which, when he commanded them to fly, did fly; and when he commanded them to stand still, did stand still; and if he gave them meat and drink, they did eat and drink.*

*When at length the boys went away and related these things to their parents, their fathers said to them,” Take heed. Children, for the future of his company, for he is a sorcerer; shun and avoid him, and from henceforth never play with him.”*

Here is another story of interest:

*“ On a certain day also, when the Lord Jesus was playing with the boys and running about, he passed by a dyer’s shop, whose name was Salem. And there were in his shop many pieces of cloth belonging to the people of that city, which they designed to dye of several colors. Then the Lord Jesus going into the dyer’s shop, took all the clothes, and threw them into the furnace.*

*When Salem came home and saw the cloths spoiled, he began to make a great noise and to chide the Lord Jesus saying,” What hast thou done to me, O Son of Mary? Thou hast injured both me and my neighbors; and they all desired their clothes of a proper color; but thou hast come and spoiled them all.”*

*The Lord Jesus replied,” I will change the color of every cloth to what color thou desirest; And then he presently began to take the cloths out of the furnace, and they were all dyed of those same colors the dyer desired. And when the Jews saw this surprising miracle, they praised God.”*

**The Quran Sura 5 Verse 110** includes a references confirming Jesus as having remarkable abilities, even as an infant, allowing him to do such things as make living birds from inanimate clay, much as told in Chap 3 of the Infancy Gospel of Thomas:

*110” When Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour unto thee and unto thy mother; how I strengthened thee with the holy Spirit, so that thou spakest unto mankind in the cradle as in maturity; and how I taught thee the Scripture and Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and how thou didst shape of clay as it were the likeness of a bird by My permission, and didst blow upon it and it was a bird by My permission, and thou didst heal him who was born blind and the leper by My permission; and how thou didst raise the dead by My permission; and how I restrained the Children*

*of Israel from (harming) thee when thou camest unto them with clear proofs, and those of them who disbelieved exclaimed: This is naught else than mere magic.”*

Here are a few excerpts from  
**The Infancy Gospel of Thomas Greek Text B**  
**From "The Apocryphal New Testament"**  
**M.R. James-Translation and Notes**  
**Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924**

*II. 1 “On a certain day [when Jesus was five years old] when there had fallen a shower of rain he went forth of the house where his mother was and played upon the ground where the waters were running: and he made pools, and the waters flowed down, and the pools were filled with water. Then saith he: I will that ye become clean and wholesome waters. And straightway they did so. 2 But a certain son of Annas the scribe passed by bearing a branch of willow, and he overthrew the pools with the branch, and the waters were poured out. And Jesus turned about and said unto him: O ungodly and disobedient one, what hurt have the pools done thee that thou hast emptied them? Thou shalt not finish thy course, and thou shalt be withered up even as the branch, which thou hast in hand. 3 And he went on, and after a little he fell and gave up the ghost. And when the young children that played with him saw it, they marveled and departed and told the father of him that was dead. And he ran and found the child dead, and went and accused Joseph.*

*IV. 1 And after certain days, as Jesus passed through the midst of the city, a certain child cast a stone at him and smote his shoulder. And Jesus said unto him: Thou shalt not finish thy course. And straightway he also fell down and died. And they that were there were amazed, saying: From whence is this child, that every word, which he speaketh, becometh a perfect work? 2. But they also departed and accused Joseph, saying: Thou wilt not be able to dwell with us in this city: but if thou wilt, teach thy child to bless and not to curse: for verily he slayeth our children: and every thing that he saith becometh a perfect work.*

*V. And as Joseph sat upon his seat, the child stood before him; and he took hold upon his ear and pinched it sore. But Jesus looked upon him earnestly and said: It sufficeth thee.*

*VI. 1 And on the morrow he took him by the hand and led him to a certain teacher, Zacchaeus by name, and said unto him: Take this child, O master, and teach him letters. And the other said: Deliver him unto me, my brother, and I will teach him the scripture, and I will persuade him to bless all men and not to curse them. 2 And when Jesus heard that he laughed and said unto them: Ye speak that ye know, but I have knowledge more than you, for I am before the worlds. And I know when the fathers of your fathers were begotten, and I know how many are the years of your life. And every one that heard it was amazed. 3 And again saith Jesus unto them: Marvel ye because I said unto you that I know how many are the years of your life? Of a truth I know when the world was created. Behold, now ye believe me not: when ye shall see my cross then will ye believe that I speak truth. And they were astonished when they heard all these things.”*

*VII. 1 Now Zacchaeus wrote the alphabet in Hebrew, and saith unto him: Alpha. And the young child said: Alpha. And again the master said: Alpha, and the young child likewise. Then again the third time the master said: Alpha. Then Jesus looked upon the teacher and said: Thou that knowest not the*

*Alpha, how canst thou teach another the Beta? And the child beginning at the Alpha said of his own accord the two and twenty letters. 2 And thereafter saith he: Hear, O master the ordinance of the first letter, and know how many incomings and lines it hath, and marks, common, going apart, and coming together. And when Zacchaeus heard such designations of the one letter he was amazed and had nothing to answer; and turning about he said unto Joseph: My brother, this child is of a truth not earthly born: take him away therefore from me.*

*VIII. 1 and after these things one day Jesus was playing with other boys upon the top of a house of two stories. And one child was pushed down by another and thrown down to the ground and died. And the boys, which were playing with him, when they saw it, fled, and Jesus was left alone standing upon the roof whence the boy was thrown down. 2 And when the parents of the boy that was dead heard of it they ran weeping, and when they found the boy lying dead upon the earth and Jesus standing alone, they supposed that the boy had been thrown down by him, and they looked upon him and reviled him. 3 But Jesus, seeing that, leaped down straightway from the upper story and stood at the head of him that was dead and saith to him: Zeno, did I cast thee down? Arise and tell. For so was the boy called. And with the word the boy rose up and worshipped Jesus and said: Lord, thou didst not cast me down, but when I was dead thou didst make me alive.*

*IX. 1 And a few days after one of the neighbors was cleaving wood and did cut off the sole of his foot with the axe, and by loss of blood was at the point to die. 2 And much people ran together and Jesus came thither with them. 3 And he took hold on the foot of the young man that was smitten, and healed him forthwith, and saith unto him: Arise, cleave thy wood. And he arose and worshipped him, giving thanks, and cleft the wood. Likewise also all they that were there marveled and gave thanks unto him.*

*X. Now when he was six years old, Mary his mother sent him to fetch water from the spring: and as he went his pitcher was broken. And he went to the spring and spread out his upper garment and drew water out of the spring and filled it and took it and brought back the water to his mother. And when she saw it, was amazed and embraced him and kissed him.*

*XI. 1 And when he came to the eighth year of his age Joseph was required by a certain rich man to build him a bed, for he was a carpenter. And he went forth into the field to gather wood, and Jesus also went with him. And he cut two beams of wood and wrought them with the axe, and set one beside the other and measured and found it too short; and when he saw that he was vexed and sought to find another. 2 But Jesus seeing it saith unto him: Set these two together so that the ends of both are even. And Joseph, though he was perplexed concerning this, what the child should mean, did that which was commanded. And he saith again unto him: Take firm hold of the short beam. And Joseph took hold on it, marveling. Then Jesus also took hold of the other end and pulled the [other] end thereof and made it also equal to the other beam, and saith unto Joseph: Be no more vexed, but do thy work without hindrance. And he when he saw it was exceedingly amazed and said within himself: Blessed am I for that God hath given me such a son. 3 And when they departed into the city Joseph told it to Mary, and she when she heard and saw the wonderful mighty works of her son rejoiced, glorifying him with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and forever and world without end. Amen.”*

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Upon reading the Gospel of Thomas it becomes understandable why it was banned, and even classified as “forbidden”. Certainly it does not comfortably tie in with orthodox teachings. Jesus was not the “perfect sinless lamb of God”. Indeed, at five, it seems he was a problem child. In desperation, Jesus’ parents sent him to a tutor of learning hoping that Jesus’ behavior might be modified to the better! Yet, by the age of eight, Jesus is seen helping his father in more productive ways.

Would not this seem to illustrate the importance of growth? All beings must be born, develop (hopefully to their fullest capacity); acquiring knowledge, discernment and degrees of perfection. Why would this not include the boy Jesus as well?

As we return once again to the Biblical Gospels telling the story of the boy Jesus at the temple. It is apparent Jesus, even at twelve, was a problem for his parents (see **Luke2: 48 below**). Does this portray the behavior of a son who was “sinless”?

#### **Luke 2: 41-52**

*“Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast... After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. (V48) When his parents saw him they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” Jesus replied, “Why were you searching for me? Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he was trying to say to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them...and Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”*

At this point Luke also tells the story of Jesus being Baptized by John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus’ ministry.

Matthew’s story of Jesus’ Baptism seems more concise so I will switch Gospels for his narrative. 3:1-15)

(About John the Baptist.

#### **Mat: 3:1-15**

*“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. This is he who hath spoken through the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one calling in the desert,” ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him.’ ...People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by John in the Jordan River.*

*When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was Baptizing, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in*



*keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ' We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

**(The Baptism of Jesus.)**

*3: 13: Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him saying, " I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, " Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.*

*3: 16: As soon as Jesus was baptized he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, " This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

**Matthew 4: 1-11** details the Temptation of Christ and the beginning of his ministry.

*"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, " If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, " It is Written: 'Man does not live by bread alone, but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God."*

*Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, " throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, " It is also Written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test."*

*Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. " All this I will give you," he said, " if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, " Away from me Satan! For it is Written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."*

**Jesus begins to preach:**

*"When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum...From that time on Jesus began to preach." Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."*

**The calling of the first Disciples:**

*"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called to them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."*

## Jesus heals the sick:

*“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria”*-(There are many stories of Jesus healing the sick. People were amazed at his wisdom. Jesus’ drew such crowds it was difficult to even see him.

**Luke 8:19-21** tells of a time when his own mother and brothers were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, *” Your mother and brothers are standing outside, waiting to see you.”* *Jesus replied ‘ My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s Word and put it into practice.”* (From this, Jesus makes it clear, putting into practice and living God’s Word is essential.)

**Sura 3: 44-55** describes the life of Jesus in a slightly different manner. There are truths here which compliment what is found in the Bible.

*44 This is of the tidings of things hidden. We reveal it unto thee (Muhammad). Thou wast not present with them when they threw their pens (to know) which of them should be the guardian of Mary, nor wast thou present with them when they quarreled (thereupon). 45 (And remember) when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near (unto Allah). 46 He will speak unto mankind in his cradle and in his manhood, and he is of the righteous.*

*47 She said: My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal hath touched me? He said: So (it will be). Allah createth what He will. If He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! And it is. 48 And He will teach him the Scripture and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel, 49 And will make him a messenger unto the Children of Israel, (saying): Lo! I come unto you with a sign from your Lord. Lo! I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it and it is a bird, by Allah's leave. I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead, by Allah's leave. And I announce unto you what ye eat and what ye store up in your houses.*

*Lo! Herein verily is a portent for you, if ye are to be believers. 50 And (I come) confirming that which was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful some of that which was forbidden unto you. I come unto you with a sign from your Lord, so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. 51 Lo! Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is a straight path. 52 But when Jesus became conscious of their disbelief, he cried: Who will be my helpers in the cause of Allah? The disciples said: We will be Allah's helpers. We believe in Allah, and bear thou witness that we have surrendered (unto Him).*

*53 Our Lord! We believe in that which Thou hast revealed and we follow him whom Thou hast sent. Enroll us among those who witness (to the truth). 54 And they (the disbelievers) schemed, and Allah schemed (against them): and Allah is the best of schemers. 55 (And remember) when Allah said: O Jesus! Lo! I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto Me, and am cleansing thee of those who disbelieve and am setting those who follow thee above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then unto Me ye will (all) return, and I shall judge between you as to that wherein ye used to differ. 56 As for those who disbelieve I shall chastise them with a heavy chastisement in the world and the Hereafter; and they will have no helpers. 57 And as for those who believe and do good works, He will pay them their wages in full. Allah loveth not wrongdoers.*

**Sura 2:253 & Sura 5:11:** Extols the high station of Jesus. The Quran confirms he did perform many miracles and healed illnesses.

*252 "These are the portents of Allah which We recite unto thee (Muhammad) with truth, and lo! Thou art of the number of (Our) messengers; 253 Of those messengers, some of whom We have caused to excel others, and of whom there are some unto whom Allah spake, while some of them He exalted (above others) in degree; and We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs (of Allah's Sovereignty) and We supported him with the holy Spirit. And if Allah had so willed it, those who followed after them would not have fought one with another after the clear proofs had come unto them. But they differed, some of them believing and some disbelieving. And if Allah had so willed it, they would not have fought one with another; but Allah doeth what He will."*

**Sura 5:109-117:** speaks of the relationship between the messengers and God- Jesus given the power to perform miracles, and the sending down of the "bread of life". God also asks Jesus if he taught the believers to worship two gods other than Himself.

*109" In the day when Allah gathereth together the messengers, and saith: What was your response (from mankind)? They say: We have no knowledge. Lo! Thou, only Thou art the Knower of Things Hidden, 110 When Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour unto thee and unto thy mother; how I strengthened thee with the holy Spirit, so that thou spakest unto mankind in the cradle as in maturity; and how I taught thee the Scripture and Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and how thou didst shape of clay as it were the likeness of a bird by My permission, and didst blow upon it and it was a bird by My permission, and thou didst heal him who was born blind and the leper by My permission; and how thou didst raise the dead by My permission; and how I restrained the Children of Israel from (harming) thee when thou camest unto them with clear proofs, and those of them who disbelieved exclaimed: This is naught else than mere magic;*

*111 And when I inspired the disciples, (saying): Believe in Me and in My messenger, they said: We believe. Bear witness that we have surrendered (unto Thee) "we are Muslims". 112 When the disciples said: O Jesus, son of Mary! Is thy Lord able to send down for us a table spread with food from heaven? He said: Observe your duty to Allah, if ye are true believers. 113 (They said:) We wish to eat thereof, that we may satisfy our hearts and know that thou hast spoken truth to us, and that thereof we may be witnesses.*

*114 Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Allah, Lord of us! Send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, that it may be a feast for us, for the first of us and for the last of us, and a sign from Thee. Give us sustenance, for Thou art the Best of Sustainers. 115 Allah said: Lo! I send it down for you. And whoso disbelieveth of you afterward, him surely will I punish with a punishment wherewith I have not punished any of (My) creatures.*

*116 And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? He saith: Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then Thou knewest it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy Mind. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower of Things Hidden?*

*117-I spake unto them only that which Thou commandedst me, (saying): Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou tookest me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things”.*

### (The end of Jesus’ Ministry)

Jesus’ ministry lasted but three years when he was betrayed and crucified. The Bible clearly mentions the Roman opposition and Jewish misunderstandings leading to his horrendous end. Jesus was fearless when confronting the Roman rulers. It seems he truly wished to sacrifice his life as a ransom for the sins of the world. This is among the greatest mysteries of creation that those true followers, those truly intoxicated with the Creator; see it as the highest of honors to willingly give up their lives so that mankind may be freed from the bondage of sin.

**Baha’u’llah teaches,”** *The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the compassionate, the Most Merciful.”*

The Bible also provides evidence for a miraculous resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Many Christians take this literally and claim,” without this happening we would have no faith.” In other words their faith is based on a physical bodily rising up from the dead. (For more on the resurrection see **8. Basic Teachings”** below.)

## 6. Manner of Revelation:

**A white dove descended upon him.** *“Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John [the Baptist]. But John tried to deter him, saying,” I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? Jesus replied,” Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*

Matthew 3: 13-16 NIV

## 7. Revealed Book:

Primarily the he Gospels or “The Good News” (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John).  
“ Sermon on the Mount”.

## 8. Basic Teachings:

**The Greatest Commandment:** *“One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “ Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the*

*Lord your God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.*

**Mark 12: 28-31 NIV**

**Jesus teaches how to pray:** *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, And when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when we pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask Him. In this manner therefore pray ye:*

*Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy name.*

*Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

*For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen”.*

**Matthew 6: 5-13 KIJ21**

Jesus talks of his true reality that we are not to worship him but rather the true God who sent him.

*“Then Jesus cried out, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. ”As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”*

**John 12: 44-49**

**Sura 4 in the Quran admonishes:**

*171 O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three" - Cease! (It is) better for you! - Allah is only One God. Far is it removed from His Transcendent Majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender.*

**(The Qur'an (Pickthall tr), Sura 4 - Women)**

**Surah 5 in the Quran also says:**

*72 They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! whoso ascribeth partners unto*

*Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers. 73 They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the One God. If they desist not from so saying a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve. 74 Will they not rather turn unto Allah and seek forgiveness of Him? For Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. 75 The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger; messengers (the like of whom) had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. And they both used to eat (earthly) food. See how We make the revelations clear for them, and see how they are turned away!”*

*18 “The Jews and Christians say: We are sons of Allah and His loved ones. Say: Why then doth He chastise you for your sins? Nay, ye are but mortals of His creating. He forgiveth whom He will, and chastiseth whom He will. Allah’s is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and unto Him is the journeying. 19 O People of the Scripture! Now hath Our messenger come unto you to make things plain unto you after an interval (of cessation) of the messengers, lest ye should say: There came not unto us a messenger of cheer nor any warner. Now hath a messenger of cheer and a warner come unto you. Allah is Able to do all things.”*

**Clean & Unclean:** Jesus acknowledges the divine authority of Moses. He also abrogates Jewish law concerning unclean food and explains true uncleanliness, traditionally considered caused by demons, is truth from within you. In addition, Jesus refers to the Pharisees as “Hypocrites”.

*“ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with unclean hands?” He replied, “ Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written, ““these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men. You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men*

*.” And he said to them: “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘ anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother; ‘ Whatever help you may otherwise have received from me is Corban’ (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your own tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that. “*

*Again, Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean. “*

*After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. “ Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this Jesus declared all foods clean.)” He went on: “ What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.*

**Mark 7: 5-23NIV**

**Love Your Enemies:** *"But I tell you who hear me' Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others, as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners' expecting to be paid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."*

*LK. 6: 27-36NIV*

**The Beatitudes:** This scripture seems to contradict traditional temporal based logic but introduces us to a world of wisdom and grace. *"Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying; Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

*Mat. 5: 1-12NIV*

**John 6:25-65 Jesus the "bread of life".** This narrative covers a lot of popular Christian subjects and is the basis for much church doctrine. If the words are taken in context and verses referred back to each other it becomes clear Jesus is using the term "bread" as a metaphor for the everlasting sustenance that comes from the Word of God. (Verses 32,38, 45-48) The "eating of the "Body" and drinking the "blood" of Jesus is also used metaphorically. Jesus makes this all clear in verses 55-58, 63, *"The spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."* Is it possible this metaphor could also be applied to the Resurrection story? Could it have been a resurrection of the spirit, not the physical body?

*"When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him," Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered," I tell you the truth; you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Then they asked him," What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered," The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*

*So they asked him," what miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat." (v32) Jesus said to them," I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who has given you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "*

*Sir," they said," From now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared," I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. (v37) All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. (v38)*

*For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

*At this the Jews began to grumble...(v43) Jesus said," Stop grumbling among yourselves, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. (v45) It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. (v46) No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.*

*I tell you the truth; he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. (v49) Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. (v51) I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

*Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves," How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them," (v53) I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (v55) For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. (v57) Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. (v58) This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."*

*(Jesus said all this while teaching at in a synagogue. Many of the disciples thought the teaching was hard for many to accept.) (v61) aware that his disciples were grumbling...Jesus said," Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! (v63) The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe."*

*Jesus says he speaks figuratively now but in a later time He will speak plainly: "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said,' In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me? I tell you the truth; you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything.*



*I tell you the truth; my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”*

*John 16: 19-30 NIV*

## **The Resurrection:**

The resurrection is a very real cause of Christians believing they are the only ones who have knowledge of the complete truth of God. It is self evident this claim is also responsible for much misunderstanding between faiths and is also responsible for a certain “superiority complex” between Christianity and other Faiths. Both the Quran and Baha’i teachings clearly reveal to us the Resurrection is a phenomenon of Spirit. The stories in the Bible concerning his bodily appearance to the disciples are to be taken allegorically.

If we study the four Gospels point by point it is evident there are different accounts between them concerning what happened after Jesus’ Resurrection. Some appear more complete than others. None seem to be specific on the deity of Jesus.

### **a. The placement in the tomb and guarding of the entrance:**

**Matthew 27: 59-65,** *” Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb...He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance and left. Both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there”.* To paraphrase, the priests and Pharisees went to Pilate urging him to seal and guard the tomb. They told Pilate the Christians may steal the body and claim it was “resurrected” so the tomb was sealed and a guard posted.

**Mark 15:42- Comparison:** The other Gospels do not mention Jesus’ tomb being guarded. All seem to agree the body was given to Joseph who placed it in his own tomb. **John 20:41-42:** Adds this, *” At the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”*

### **b. The Resurrection:**

**Math: 28:1-20:** *“After the Sabbath at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.*

*The angel said to the women, "do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell the disciples he has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you."*

*So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," He said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid, go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."*

**Mark: 16:1-8: comparison:** *"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome brought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said, "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell the disciples and Peter. He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."*

This ending differs from Matthew. As seen below, The Biblical canonized ending to Mark may have been added later. Both Luke and John go into more detail of the meetings with the resurrected Jesus but the stories are different.

**Mark 16: 9-21** is not found in the earliest manuscripts nor is it supported by ancient witnesses. The Gospel probably ended at **16:8**.

**NIV Bible study notes:**

To paraphrase: 9-21 tells of the appearance of Jesus to his disciples after his resurrection. He tells the disciples to "spread the news to all creation. Jesus says, "*in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up snakes with their hands...they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well.*" *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere."*

**Luke 23: 30-24: 8:** The narrative of Jesus' Burial and Resurrection agrees very well with Matthew & Mark. After Jesus reappears the stories differ but seem to be complimentary.

**Luke 24:9-12:** *"When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened."*

**John 20:15-18:** Details the risen Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene after she discovers the body is missing. Jesus tells her he is returning to "my God and your God". This would seem to contradict doctrine that Jesus was or became God after the resurrection. *"Woman, he said, "Why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you*

*have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him. Jesus said to her," Mary." She turned toward him and cried out "teacher"! Jesus said," Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them,' I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."*

*Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: " I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

**Luke 24:13-24 On the road to Emmaus:** (This story is not in the other Gospels:)

To paraphrase: Now that same day two of them were going to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they were talking about the news of the day and voicing disappointment that Jesus was no longer with them, Jesus himself came up and walked among them but was not recognized. *"After Jesus heard what they were saying he said," How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. Jesus spent the night with them. As Jesus was breaking bread and giving thanks their eyes were opened and they recognized him. They asked each other," Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us? They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them saying," It is true! The Lord has risen and appeared to Simon." Whereupon the travelers told their story."*

**Jesus appears to the disciples:**

**Luke 24:36-48:** *"While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them," Peace be unto you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them," Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them," Do you have anything more to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence."*

This is similar to the "doubting Thomas" account in John.

*He said to them, " This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures. He told them," This is what is Written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."*

**John 20:19-20:** is in agreement with Luke as to how Jesus meets with the disciples but then in **21-23:** John makes clear the unique reality of the situation. *" Again Jesus said," Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said," Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

Then John tells the story of Thomas who, because he was not there to witness the events when Jesus came, doubted the truth of what the disciples experienced. A week later Jesus appears to Thomas and at that point, Thomas believes. Then Jesus, in 20:29 says, *“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* John continues, *“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book.”*

**From the above it seems evident the more important criteria for faith is a spiritual understanding. A realization that goes beyond mere literal proof, but rather, focuses on opening the inner eye to the light of Divine Truth.**

**Matthew:** After the initial meeting with the disciples where the risen Jesus tells them, *“(28:10)” not to be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; where they will see me.*” The narrative goes to “the guards report”, followed by **“The great Commission.”** **Mat. 28:16-20:** are the only verses dealing with what Jesus had to say to the disciples. Again, like John, no ascension is recorded. Matthew is recorded as saying, *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**Mark:** After mentioning in 16:8, *“Trembling and bewildered, the woman went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.”* The Gospel of Mark likely ends at this point. As mentioned earlier. The authenticity of the remaining verses is in serious doubt.

**(Question: If Jesus was so physically self evident, why did some doubt? Also, an “age” denotes a beginning and end. An age is not “ageless”.)**

#### **D. The Ascension:**

**Luke 24: 50-53:** *“When he had led them to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple praising God”.*

**Comparison:** The last story in the Gospel of John is about Jesus talking to Peter about his martyrdom. No reference is made to an “ascension”. No ascension is recorded in Matthew. But one is described in Mark 16: 19-20.; *“After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.”* Again, scholars question the source for this.

**In conclusion:** the Gospels all graphically portray an unbelievable miraculous event of a physically risen Savior however, the fact that they differ so much as to what Jesus said and did after his resurrection in contrast to the consistency surrounding the facts of his burial up to the reports of Mary finding an empty tomb, makes one wonder how this should be interpreted. What is written in the Gospels seems to support the idea that, somehow, Jesus’ main concern was the “opening of understanding” of the apostles enabling them to be illumined by the Holy Spirit. This, in turn, would transform them into fearless proclaimers of the Cause of God.

**(See Mat. 28:18-20, Luke 24:47, and John 20:21-23.)**

After this study, which indeed leaves a lot of unanswered questions, here is some advice by Abdul-Baha. He was a man of remarkable intellect and understanding, a sage who is still honored by many nearly a century after his death.

## THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

**Question. -- What is the meaning of Christ's resurrection after three days?**

*“Answer. -- The resurrections of the Divine Manifestations are not of the body. All Their states, Their conditions, Their acts, the things They have established, Their teachings, Their expressions, Their parables and Their instructions have a spiritual and divine signification, and have no connection with material things. For example, there is the subject of Christ's coming from heaven: it is clearly stated in many places in the Gospel that the Son of man came from heaven, He is in heaven, and He will go to heaven. So in chapter 6, verse 38, of the Gospel of John it is written: "For I came down from heaven"; and also in verse 42 we find: "And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?" Also in John, chapter 3, verse 13: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”*

*Observe that it is said, "The Son of man is in heaven," while at that time Christ was on earth. Notice also that it is said that Christ came from heaven, though He came from the womb of Mary, and His body was born of Mary. It is clear, then, that when it is said that the Son of man is come from heaven, this has not an outward but an inward signification; it is a spiritual, not a material, fact. The meaning is that though, apparently, Christ was born from the womb of Mary, in reality He came from heaven, from the center of the Sun of Reality, from the Divine World, and the Spiritual Kingdom. And as it has become evident that Christ came from the spiritual heaven of the Divine Kingdom, therefore, His disappearance under the earth for three days has an inner signification and is not an outward fact. In the same way, His resurrection from the interior of the earth is also symbolical; it is a spiritual and divine fact, and not material; and likewise His ascension to heaven is a spiritual and not material ascension.*

*Beside these explanations, it has been established and proved by science that the visible heaven is a limitless area, void and empty, where innumerable stars and planets revolve.*

*Therefore, we say that the meaning of Christ's resurrection is as follows: the disciples were troubled and agitated after the martyrdom of Christ. The Reality of Christ, which signifies His teachings, His bounties, His perfections and His spiritual power, was hidden and concealed for two or three days after His martyrdom, and was not resplendent and manifest. No, rather it was lost, for the believers were few in number and were troubled and agitated. The Cause of Christ was like a lifeless body; and when after three days the disciples became assured and steadfast, and began to serve the Cause of Christ, and resolved to spread the divine teachings, putting His counsels into practice, and arising to serve Him, the Reality of Christ became resplendent and His bounty appeared; His religion found life; His teachings and His admonitions became evident and visible. In other words, the Cause of Christ was like a lifeless body until the life and the bounty of the Holy Spirit surrounded it.*

*Such is the meaning of the resurrection of Christ, and this was a true resurrection. But as the clergy have neither understood the meaning of the Gospels nor comprehended the symbols, therefore, it has been said that religion is in contradiction to science, and science in opposition to religion, as, for example, this subject of the ascension of Christ with an elemental body to the visible heaven is contrary to the science of mathematics. But when the truth of this subject becomes clear, and the symbol is explained, science in no way contradicts it; but, on the contrary, science and the intelligence affirm it.*

(Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, p. 103-105)

## THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON THE APOSTLES

**Question. -- What is the manner, and what is the meaning, of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, as described in the Gospel?**

*“Answer. -- The descent of the Holy Spirit is not like the entrance of air into man; it is an expression and a simile, rather than an exact or a literal image. No, rather it is like the entrance of the image of the sun into the mirror -- that is to say, its splendor becomes apparent in it.*

*After the death of Christ the disciples were troubled, and their ideas and thoughts were discordant and contradictory; later they became firm and united, and at the feast of Pentecost they gathered together and detached themselves from the things of this world. Disregarding themselves, they renounced their comfort and worldly happiness, sacrificing their body and soul to the Beloved, abandoning their houses, and becoming wanderers and homeless, even forgetting their own existence. Then they received the help of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit became manifested; the spirituality of Christ triumphed, and the love of God reigned. They were given help at that time and dispersed in different directions, teaching the Cause of God, and giving forth proofs and evidences.*

*So the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles means their attraction by the Christ Spirit, whereby they acquired stability and firmness. Through the spirit of the love of God they gained a new life, and they saw Christ living, helping and protecting them. They were like drops, and they became seas; they were like feeble insects, and they became majestic eagles; they were weak and became powerful. They were like mirrors facing the sun; verily, some of the light became manifest in them.*

(Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, p. 106-107)

*“Some Christians claim that the Holy Ghost descended after the resurrection of the Christ and that Christ is alluding to this. But as the Holy Ghost was always with the Christ, is this logical? Again he says, "He will guide you unto truth," he will be better for you than I. He adds, "Until I go, he cannot come." Endeavor to understand the divine words, otherwise difficulties will arise. Had the Jews understood symbology, they would have understood the Christ. The holy books are full of significance and must never be taken literally. Elijah also was expected to come from heaven, and the Christ said, "Elijah is none other than John the Baptist." The reality of John was in the supreme concourse. It is essential to have divine perception in order to see the truth, to hear the call, and obey -- liberating the hearts from all earthly attachment.”*

(Abdu'l-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 38)

## **9. Role as civilizing agent:** **Byzantine Empire**

The Byzantine Empire or Eastern Roman Empire was at its apex around the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. At its greatest size Byzantine included parts of southern and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and northern Africa.

Roman emperor Constantine the Great moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Byzantium and renamed it Constantinople (Istanbul today), in 330 AD. This actually signals the end of the Roman era and is when the Byzantine Empire really began. It lasted over 1000 years, ending finally in 1453, when the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople and renamed it Istanbul.

Christianity had a strong influence on Byzantine art, music, and architecture. Since Constantinople was the political center of the Empire, it also was the educational center, where future government officials learned to read and write the language of ancient Greece. Thus this period produced remarkable works in history as well as fine poetry, and much religious prose. All the visual arts flourished, too. Most of the artists worked as servants of the court or belonged to religious orders, and they remained anonymous. Ivory carvings, Byzantine crosses, and "illuminations," or small manuscript paintings, attest to their skill. Almost all that survives of the Byzantine architecture are its churches, with their glorious frescoes and mosaics.

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Home Site: <http://onenessbecomesus.com>

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