

## THE IMPERSONATION THEORY - THE RISEN "JESUS" WAS AN IMPOSTOR?

The Church says that Jesus was put to death under Pontius Pilate by crucifixion and rose again. The gospels however leave room for doubt. This study analyses the data and gives possible explanations. Let us take the dubious data of the gospels at face value in light of the question: Could someone pretending to be Jesus have started off the resurrection hoax?

Was the risen Jesus an impostor and not Jesus?

We do not know. But we do know that the early Church was saying Jesus had a change in appearance following the resurrection. If the gospels are reliable, then he probably did change and perhaps more than once. The gospels it seems would not have made that up in case people would say that "it was all a case of mistaken identity unless they were having hallucinations".

Who was it that said that many would come in his name, meaning using the name Jesus and pretending to be him? Who was it that said they would come before the temple was destroyed? See Luke 21. Jesus. He said elsewhere that these fake Jesuses could deceive even the saints. Yet the only candidates for fulfilling this prophecy were the guys who seem to have been masquerading as Jesus after Jesus died. Also, Jesus was saying they would be very convincing. They would not be unless they assented to his teaching but added new elements to it. A new Jesus cannot afford to contradict the old one. What Jesus said then lays an obligation on the gossellers to be totally convincing that the man who claimed to be the risen Jesus was really him but they are not.

When the gospels say that people met the risen Jesus and paid him homage we are not told that they instantly recognised him or that they were totally sure it was him.

Jesus' appearances describe an entity that didn't say much and which tended to vanish as soon as he was recognised. That is exactly what you would expect if somebody was pretending to be the risen Jesus. I would not read the idea of dissolving into thin air into the vanishing reports. Acts 8:39 speaking of a non resurrected man says "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." We might have a figure of speech there - it may be a metaphor for Philip vacating rapidly. Don't read a miracle into it. If it is a miracle then it is a silly one and we have to ask how qualified were apostles like Philip to judge that Jesus rose from the dead.

Mark 16 tells us that Jesus appeared in another form to two disciples. The problem with most of Mark 16 is that all scholars agree these days that it was not part of the original text and that Mark must have ended with no reference to the appearance of Jesus (page 25, The Metaphor of God Incarnate). But it still reflects the early Church belief that Jesus didn't appear recognisable after his death.

The time the men walked with a man to Emmaus and then decided it was Jesus is interesting for it means they walked with him for perhaps hours and still did not realise it was Jesus. See Luke 24. Perhaps the man had his face well covered up while he walked with two followers to Emmaus. The men could have thought he was like Jesus and sounded like him which would not amount to recognising him and he might have looked the same. But when they did not recognise him until he broke the bread it is clear that he was facially different. At that moment they decided it was Jesus in a new form. It could be that they realised that the man was claiming to be Jesus risen when he had gone to the trouble of convincing them that Jesus rose. Mark was probably on about the same event when he alluded to Jesus having a different form when he appeared to two men.

The Bible accidentally informs us that the man was not Jesus for he lied and the risen Jesus did not lie (1 Peter 2:22). He talked to the two men about Jesus as if he were not Jesus and he said that Jesus must rise again according to the Old Testament though it never says that at all.

Magdalene failed to recognise Jesus according to John 20 and thought he was the gardener. Perhaps she did not look properly or was not thinking straight. But the man said he was not Jesus when he asked her who she was crying for as if he were not Jesus and did not know her. The Bible says that Jesus never told lies. Perhaps the man decided to play the role of Jesus after that. He told her not to touch him for he had not ascended yet to God. This is a laughable reason. The original Greek shows that she was touching him a lot (note for John 20:17, NAB, New Testament, page 122). If he was too sacred to touch then he would not have let her touch him at all. Now he wanted her to stop. Perhaps if this man was Jesus who survived crucifixion she was hurting him and he was saying he would ascend to God to be safe from suffering forever. Perhaps the impostor if that was what he was did not want her to touch him and discover that he had no crucifixion marks or that he had only superficial marks of crucifixion that he made himself. He said to her to tell his disciples that he was ascending to their God and his God as if he believed he would never see them again. It looks as if he meant he was dying.

However, she and Christianity since have taken a totally wrong meaning of his words.

The disciples did not know Jesus when he stood on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias even though he was close enough to converse with them (John 21:4-9). But the voice was different and he must have had a long chat before he would have succeeded in persuading them to put their net over the other side of the boat which seemed ridiculous to them when they had caught nothing. So they still did not know him after all that. Then when they caught the fish they thought the stranger was the Lord. When they stepped on shore the Lord had fish cooked for them on a fire. A resurrected being does not need to cook with a fire. The idea that since all this took place at daybreak they did not know Jesus for it was darkish is wrong because they had seen Jesus lots of times in similar conditions and because they had a chat with him. What makes it more odd is that this was not the first time they had seen the risen Jesus so it looks like they just assumed that the stranger was Jesus and perhaps he played along. Christians cannot prove that it was not a case of mistaken identity fuelled by wishful thinking so they cannot prove that the account is evidence for the resurrection.

Perhaps when some doubted in Matthew that Jesus rose though he was in front of them it was because he did not look the same.

The Bible tells us three times that Jesus looked like he had had radical plastic surgery. It never tells us that he looked the same as before on any occasion after his death.

Jesus did not need to hide his identity among friends. An impostor would for he would be testing the water first. Jesus did not need to alter his face. It scared them and was not very sensitive for they wanted the Jesus they knew.

The gospels show that the witnesses could have been taken in by a man impersonating Jesus for they were gullible and fanatical enough. And the fact that they never unmistakably say the new Jesus had supernatural powers makes it worse.

Isaiah 53 allegedly predicts that that Jesus would be facially disfigured and unrecognisable.

Perhaps the impostor used this text to explain why Jesus would seem to have come back with a head and body transplant. The early Church might not have been so keen to apply the prediction to Jesus unless Jesus really had come back all changed.

The risen Jesus was a man and not a supernatural being when he ate fish. He had no need to prove he was flesh and blood to his friends when they had already felt him. He really was hungry.

The gospels claim that the Jews were desperate to scupper the resurrection story. If so, then why didn't the Jews get a Jesus look-alike and lie saying he was the cause of the resurrection rumours and had admitted it? They would have done this if the gospels are right about their conniving and dastardly ways. The Christians who were suspicious wouldn't have mentioned this in case drawing attention to it would make evidence for an impostor surface. Why didn't the Jews and Romans send out a warrant for a man pretending to be Jesus and claiming in effect to be the new Messiah? The impostor must have told the deceived to say nothing until he went back to Heaven. He was very afraid for a man able to return from the dead.

If Jesus planned to die and then make a comeback then it is plausible that he would have hired somebody to masquerade as him after his death. He liked to engage in supernatural hoaxes like riding into Jerusalem on a donkey to fulfil an ancient prophecy that anybody could fulfil.

The new Jesus did not dare show himself in public for he was not the real Jesus.

We read in the John Gospel, chapter 16 that Jesus told the apostles that it was best if he went away because unless he goes the comforter will not come. The comforter is the spirit of truth.

The John gospel speaks of the Spirit being in people long before Jesus died. The Spirit could still come without Jesus going away. Jesus could die and rise again immediately so that he dies but doesn't actually go away if his death is necessary for the coming of the Spirit. The Spirit knows that Jesus is going to die anyway so he doesn't need to wait until it actually happens.

Scholars tell us that the Spirit is another counsellor meaning another of the same kind as Jesus. The original Greek of Jesus' promise to send the Spirit in John infers that this messenger is another of the same kind as himself (page 57, 398, *The New Cults*). He used the Greek word *allos* for another which means another of the same nature. Christians base an argument for the deity and personality of the Spirit on this. But Jesus is talking about a messenger and a comforter. He would have meant that the Spirit would have been like him in these respects exclusively. When somebody says, "He is the same as me," the meaning of this depends on the context. And since the context does not mention the deity of Jesus it is no proof for the

deity of the Holy Spirit. Some say that Jesus did mean the Spirit was divine and personal for Jesus was not a messenger or comforter so it was the nature he was referring to and not the roles. He was a comforter for his message was the gospel or good news and he sought to heal. And he was a messenger of God. Jesus was not referring to the nature for the Spirit was unlike him in that it did not come in human form.

So Christians take allos to mean that since Jesus is God, the Holy Spirit will be God too. The passage makes more sense when taken as meaning that Jesus will vanish forever and a Spirit will start appearing to people after he dies. The Spirit cannot come until Jesus goes for there is no need for him as long as Jesus is here and having the two at the one time would confuse the bewildered disciples. From this it would follow that the gospels were wrong to take the visions following the death of Jesus as being appearances of Jesus himself. They had visions but over time they embellished them and convinced themselves it was Jesus they saw.

Another of the same kind cannot be taken to be saying that the Spirit is God. The context is about how Jesus is messenger and comforter. The spirit is comforter and messenger of God. He would have to carry out this mission in the same way as Jesus did by being visible and speaking to people which is how he manages to be another of the same kind. Jesus says that when the spirit comes he will convince the world about righteousness for Jesus will be with the Father and seen no more. The Spirit is a total replacement for Jesus and teach the Church. He will remind the Church what Jesus taught and explain it and add to it (verses 13-15).

No wonder most scholars believe the Church not the eyewitnesses of Jesus created the gospels.

Later in the chapter Jesus says he will go for a little while and cause much sadness but he will be back again. He says that when he comes back the veiled talk will stop and he will speak plainly (16:25). Again this to many, supports the notion of the Church developing the teaching ascribed to Jesus not Jesus. The saying is best understood as referring to Jesus dying and meeting his apostles again in Heaven. Evidence for this interpretation comes from 16:26 where Jesus says that at that time they won't even need him to pray to God for them for they will do it directly. He implies that he won't be necessary to them anymore except as friend. Jesus says that the stuff in the chapter he has been saying including that about going away and coming back is in parable but despite that the apostles say they understand him and are delighted he speaks plainly at last (16:29). They do not interpret the going away and coming back as referring to Jesus' death and resurrection. The Church ignores this and pushes the death and resurrection interpretation forward.

There is evidence in the gospels that some people in the times of the early Christians who believed that somebody else took Jesus' place after his death.

Their garbled traditions ended up in the New Testament.

Do not forget that alleged prophecy is a core matter for the New Testament. It structures itself and its claims around predictions God gave in the Old Testament and refers to them continually and even has them the rest of the time at the back of its mind. The gospel says that the Old Testament prediction that Elijah would return is not fulfilled literally. It was fulfilled figuratively when John the Baptist came preaching and baptizing. Yet there was no similarity between the two. Elijah did not live in rags like John did. The Old Testament said Elijah rose to Heaven meaning that when it says he would come back it means it. The figurative thing is very lame - like a Nostradamus thing. But it is possible that it was not a cop-out but the writers seriously thought figurative is fine. If so they were advocating a kind of mythology like the pagans. Whatever the case, the Baptist thing weakens the resurrection accounts as well for John is regarded as second in importance to Jesus. Did Jesus really die and did somebody else who the apostles knew was not him but who they considered to be Jesus figuratively risen from the dead organise the Church? Was the resurrection story a symbol? You can say it was and still be a fundamentalist believer in the infallibility of the Bible.

Jesus seems clear enough when he told his people he would be killed and rise from the dead. The gospels which tell us Jesus often used secret meanings that could be misleading. The rising from the dead seems plain. But we read the apostles and others had not a clue what he meant! That only makes sense if they had been told not to take it too literally.

## Conclusion

The New Testament just assumes far too much about the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is an unbiased and unscientific and shows that the writers and the apostles didn't have a clue about giving testimony. One would expect them to be excellent witnesses if they had really had loads of experience in defending their testimony. The evidence indicates that the gopellers were making up what they wrote and in fairness the alleged apostolic testimony that became the New Testament may never have been available to the gopellers. They never claimed that it was available.