

IN DEFENCE OF THE LEGEND THAT JESUS WAS NOT CRUCIFIED AND THAT IT WAS AN IMPOSTOR

The Church says that Jesus was put to death under Pontius Pilate by crucifixion. 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? If Jesus had not died it would have been easy for him to show up again after his alleged death.

AN IMPERSONATOR COULD HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED

When Jesus went into Jerusalem on a donkey people had to be told who he was. This does not sit well with the gospel claims about how popular and well-known he was.

Jesus said at the last supper that he would not drink the fruit of the vine again until the afterlife. Vinegar was considered the fruit of the vine according to Jones in Misquoting Truth. Jesus drank that on the cross. Or is it a hint that it was not Jesus who was on the cross?

Jesus was arrested in the garden and crucified not long after. Or was it really him?

The New Testament says the Temple Guard knew Jesus from his visiting the Temple but had problems believing the man they were arresting in the Garden was him. Perhaps the substitute was arrested in case Jesus would be lynched in the quiet garden and the real Jesus was tried before Pilate and the substitute pulled in for the crucifixion.

Judas supposedly had to identify Jesus by kissing him on the cheek.

The John Gospel says that Jesus told the cohort in the garden three times that he was the man they were looking for and each time they were not sure.

There is no Judas kiss mentioned in this gospel.

Elsewhere, Jesus tells them he does not understand why they didn't arrest him in the Temple (Matthew 26:55). This shows that he was not popular for he could not have thought that they could have arrested him with all the supporters about. But shows they knew him. They took some convincing that the man before them was the same man. They let the apostles go which is strange unless they hoped they could track them to the real Jesus if this was not him.

Pilate had Jesus scourged (Matthew 27:26) and he was beaten round the face and crowned with thorns. This would have made it harder to identify Jesus so this man could have been somebody else. Some would say that Jesus would still have been recognisable so that nobody could surmise that it was not Jesus who had been crucified. But nobody would have anticipated a faked death and they would not have looked that closely. The man probably was unrecognisable with a face beaten and bloody for we are told he had a crown of thorns on his head and was battered around the face. Even if we could not be sure of that nobody could be sure that Jesus or somebody else pretending to be Jesus died.

Isaiah 52 tells us that God's servant will be marred and unlike a human being. The text says that the servant will be exalted and as many were shocked by his marred appearance will be shocked at him when they see his glory. If this describes Jesus then Jesus had a terrible inhuman face when crucified. Most of the Isaiah prophecies with a bit of fantasy can be made to fit Jesus and the New Testament says they are about him. The New Testament is so fond of them which suggests that though this text was never said to have been about Jesus it is said to be by implication. It would say if Jesus had been recognisable and if that verse were not about him for undoubtedly, there would have been a rumour that the man on the cross was impersonating Jesus in the aftermath of the resurrection proclamation.

The impostor not sounding like Jesus would have been put down to fatigue and stress. Maybe he whispered so nobody would be any the wiser.

The man who was about to be nailed to the cross was first offered a drug which he refused (Mark 15:23). They wanted him doped in case he would give something away but he reassured them. Crucifixion was designed to be as painful as possible and there was no need to dope Jesus to hasten death for the Romans would break the legs to do that. What was Pilate up to?

The Bible says that the friends of Jesus were at a distance from the cross (Luke 23:49). John and Mary could have been as well though Jesus spoke briefly to them. Thus nothing amiss would have been noticed.

The real Jesus would have called out for the people to repent and love God instead of shouting that he had been forsaken by

God. His outburst would have fuelled the gossips who would say he was accusing God of not looking after him.

If Jesus had miracle powers then why could he not have turned somebody into his own likeness to get them crucified in his place like Judas was metamorphosed into Jesus and crucified as Jesus in the notorious Gospel of Barnabas? The answer depends on whether we can trust the gospel account of Jesus' perfection. We cannot because we are told very selective and repetitive stuff – and are in fact being told very little, people who know as much about their boyfriends or girlfriends would not trust them as far as we are asked to trust Jesus - about him and we have not a single independent witness to this sanctity but only that of his fans which is not the same thing. Though the fans might be telling the truth we do not know for all fans exaggerate and imagine the greatness of their idol. And Jesus himself only told the Jews that they could not prove he sinned not that he never was a sinner which weakens the fans estimate of his perfection and we cannot prove that any of them knew him well or knew enough about his disciples to entitle them to be sure that Jesus was sinless.

It was not the usual policy to bury executed people. If Pilate permitted the burial of Jesus as the gospels say, he may have desired to get the body of “Jesus” hidden from the world for if it were thrown on the dump like the rest it might be seen by somebody who noticed it was not Jesus. Letting Jesus have a proper burial would have brought disrepute and more unpopularity on Pilate so he must have had a good reason for allowing it. The reason was not bribery. The gospels say it was not bribery. That would have been discovered too easily for his behaviour was suspicious in any case. The alternative would have been to allow Jesus to be buried but make sure that nobody knew about the burial. Pilate had nothing to lose from letting it be thought that Jesus was on the dump unless the body was not of Jesus.

If Jesus was around after his death that is evidence that whoever died on the cross was not him.

It is by no means certain that Jesus was really crucified. It is possible that Jesus was a very useful informer and his death had to be faked for his own safety.

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