

THE QUESTION

INTRO:

A. Jesus is the “Word” the Son of God.

1. This is the claim of the Prologue. This poses the question:
 - a. Does the available evidence sustain the claims?
 - b. As John presents the testimony, reason must weigh it and determine the answer.
2. For a possible conclusion we are left with five alternatives:

I. JESUS NEVER LIVED.

1. But was the product of the human mind.
2. A figment of the imagination of John and other evangelists who have left records of His life and activities.
3. However, since we are considering John’s presentation of Jesus, the evidence offered by John is a product of his fervid imagination; and both the claims he made for Jesus and the evidence he offers are the product of his own unfounded fancy. OR,

II. JESUS LIVED....

1. But was merely a good man, a great teacher, and a great philosopher and moralists who possessed a greater and deeper concept of God as Spirit than any who had lived before Him or after Him.
2. Jesus was able by His own greatness and goodness to beget and develop in the minds of His disciples such a concept of Himself as presented by John. OR,

III. JESUS WAS NOT THE MESSIAH...

1. But as a deeply religious Jew of northern Palestine, He believed that He was.
2. In this confidence and His thorough knowledge of the Old Covenant, He was able so to impress the naive and gullible peasants and village folk of Galilee that they, too, came to believe that he was the Christ. OR,

IV. JESUS WAS A SHREWD AND CUNNING IMPOSTOR.

1. Able to deceive John and others whom He convinced that He was the Messiah of their expectations.
2. He becomes the arch-deceiver of history, for He so completely deceived them that millions since have been deceived and deluded by His imposture. OR,

V. JESUS WAS WHAT JOHN CLAIMED FOR HIM.

1. And what He claimed for Himself:
2. The Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah of prophecy.

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ANSWER TO THE FIVE ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

II. THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED.

1. Was John great enough to create such a character for whom he could make such claims.
2. Was he able to create out of his own imagination the teaching which he ascribed to Jesus.
3. Was he able to create characters such as live in his Gospel and to array their testimony in such a way as to make his book live through the centuries.
4. Plainly stated - which is the greater wonder: Jesus and the evidence of facts as John presented them, or the creation of such a character as Jesus and the evidence from the imagination of a Galilean fisherman? Reason must determine the answer.

II. THE SECOND ALTERNATIVE IS RULED OUT...

1. On the ground of Jesus' claims.
2. His claims are such that either He was the Christ or He was not a good man.
3. Unless He was who He claimed to be, He was an impostor, a blasphemer, a hypocrite, a deceiver, and a liar.
4. He could not falsely claim what He claimed for Himself and at the same time be a good man.

III. THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE DOES NOT EXPLAIN....

1. The empty tomb.
2. The conversion and work of Saul of Tarsus,
3. Or the impression of Jesus upon the Gentile world and upon history.

IV. THE FOURTH ALTERNATIVE LEAVES US

1. With the problem of accepting the greatest concept of God and the greatest system of ethics and morals known to man as the offspring of the world's greatest fraud, deceiver, and liar.
2. This is an absurdity, for it is an axiom accepted by all that a tree bears after its kind.
3. Such an evil tree could not have produced such good fruit.

V. WITH ARE LEFT WITH THE FIFTH ALTERNATIVE AS ONE THAT CAN BE ACCEPTED.

1. If it can be shown that Jesus was a good man, that He did reveal the loftiest concept of God that the world has had, and that the system of ethics and morals taught by Him are without flaw.
2. As the evidence is presented by John and reason weighs it, the reader must determine what he shall do with Jesus.

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3. The book is here; what is in it, is in it; and it is fact or fiction.
4. If fact, then Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world.
5. If fiction, then John has perpetrated upon mankind a fraud of gigantic proportions with no known motive for his fraud.

FROM: "That You May Believe" by, Homer Hailey. pp.24, 25