

Jesus as Messiah - Fact or Fiction

Did you know that it is believed that the original version of Mark's Gospel account ended with the verses that we just heard? That the women who saw the empty tomb went away terrified and did not say anything to anybody? This raises some serious questions. Like did this author make up the whole story of Jesus, is this a work of fiction, a fairy tale? If the story was based on a real person, was this person actually the Messiah or did the author decide to make him the Messiah? If so, what would be their motivation and what would they gain out of making someone else to be important?

There are people who not only do believe that Jesus is not the Son of God and our Messiah, but there are those who also believe that Jesus never really existed. That Jesus is just a work of fiction to trick people into joining a new cult. Have you heard the saying: "One can fool some men, or fool all men in some places and times, but one cannot fool all men in all places and ages?" You may have heard it said as "You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time." In other words, if making Jesus to be the Messiah when He wasn't would a be hoax of tremendous proportion that it could not have lasted for nearly 2000 years. Also, what other work of fiction has spawned so much related literature and has lasted as long as it has throughout history? Just because something is possible, it does not mean that it is probable. Based on the evidence not only in the Bible but also in public records of that time, there is a mention of Jesus of Nazareth and that He was crucified. How do the Jesus deniers reconcile this with their belief that Jesus is not the Messiah?

If Jesus is the *Messiah* and the story really happened, then how did the word get out if these women had not told anyone? If the women had not told anyone about the empty tomb, then how could Mark have written about it some 20 to 30 years afterward? The first hearers of *Mark's Gospel* account knew that even though the women were too afraid to say anything about the Resurrection, the word did get out. The story of the empty tomb was told and retold over and over.

This is a story that not only has an end, but it was also the beginning of a new story. A story where *God* involved all of the early believers in proclaiming the *Good News*; a story that they were living. They would have seen that *God* was still at work in the world. The good news of the Resurrection was proclaimed even if those first witnesses were too afraid to talk. *God* made sure that the story of the empty tomb was told, somehow, someway.

Just as the first century Christians who heard *Mark's Gospel* for the first time were a part of the story, this is a story of which we are also a part, a story beginning with the empty grave and continuing today. Actually, the story begins at creation where, out of *God's* love, the world and all that is in it was made. It continues all through the Bible where we learn of how *God* has tried to reconnect with His estranged creation of humanity. If you will recall, humanity became estranged from *God* when the serpent tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, turned its collective back to *God* and in sinning, tried to be like *God*.

You see, we still live in Biblical times and will do so until the *Second Coming* of Jesus. This story gives us more than just hope in eternal life, telling us that because Jesus defeated death, then sin does not claim us at death; so that we can focus on the perfect afterlife. It is a story for now, telling us how we should and can have a proper relationship with *God* and others now. It is a story that tells us

of God's love for us and God's desire to perfect His creation, restoring it and us to the way God intended it to be. It is a story that is the ultimate love story, a story that never ends. It is a story where love meets evil head-on at the cross and defeats evil, giving us a glimpse of how the story will turn out. So, even if the Gospel of Mark ends with the women saying nothing because they were afraid, we know that this Good News of the Resurrection was proclaimed because we live in the glow of its glory. A glory that because of the Risen Lord, we can boldly and proudly proclaim to the world the love that God has for the world.

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