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THE ONE AND ONLY

***“After six years given to the impartial investigation of Christianity . . .
I have come to the deliberate conclusion that Jesus Christ was the
Messiah of the Jews, the Saviour of the world and my personal Saviour.”***

—LEW WALLACE, 19TH CENTURY LAWYER AND U.S. GENERAL

CHECKING IT OUT

Place 100 quadrillion silver dollars—and 100 quadrillion is a one followed by seventeen zeros, for those who don’t plan to major in math!—two feet deep across Texas, and place a mark on one of them, then stir them up. Blindfold one man and ask him to pick up one silver dollar from anywhere in Texas, but he must pick up the marked silver dollar. The probability of his retrieving the exact one is the same likelihood that the prophets had of writing eight prophecies and having them all come true in one man from the day they wrote them until today. But they all came true in Jesus Christ.²

That probability was only for eight prophecies, but Jesus fulfilled at least 109 prophecies!

At the end of His earthly life Jesus said, “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” (Luke 24:44).

After reading the “silver dollar” illustration, are you more skeptical or more able to believe that the prophecies about Jesus were actually fulfilled?

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GETTING THE POINT

Read Luke 24:44 again. Was Jesus unique? The Old Testament prophecies convince us that He was. The Old Testament, Jesus Himself, and the New Testament writers all appeal to prophecy to show the uniqueness of Jesus the Messiah. (“Messiah” means “God’s anointed.”)

Prophecy separates Jesus from every other human being who has ever lived and identifies Him with the Messiah.

When Jesus said, “Everything must be fulfilled . . .” how much is “everything”? A few prophecies? Most of these prophecies? All of the prophecies?

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LOOKING INSIDE

Do you ever feel negatively unique because of divorced parents, rejection by a friend, being dumped by the person you date, or just having a bad day? The “positively unique Jesus, the One and Only” cares about you!

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).

What causes you to feel “negatively unique”?

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According to 1 John 4:9, how does the “positively unique” Jesus feel about you?

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TOTALLY UNIQUE — PART 1

*“Christ is the great central figure in the world’s history. . . .
All the lines of history converge upon him.”³*

— CHARLES SPURGEON, ENGLISH THEOLOGIAN

CHECKING IT OUT

My driver’s license number is 234560018. What’s yours? No one else in the world has that particular number but me. That number separates me from the 6 billion other people on Planet Earth.

Fulfilled prophecy separates Jesus from every other person who ever lived. The prophet Isaiah told us that God would give us a sign that would show how unique the Messiah would be:

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

Jesus is unique because of His virgin birth. What, in your view, is the “virgin birth”?

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GETTING THE POINT

Read over the information in this section to check out Jesus’ “driver’s license number.” Take your Bible and look up each one of these verses.

HE WAS BORN OF THE SEED OF A WOMAN.

- A virgin gave birth to a son (Isaiah 7:14).
- God sent His son, born of a woman (Galatians 4:4).

Jesus was the only one born of the seed of a woman. Everyone else has been born of the seed of a man and a woman.

HE WAS BORN OF NOAH.

- Noah’s sons who survived the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They would be blessed (**Genesis 9:18, 26**).
- Jesus was a descendant of Shem (**Luke 3:36**).

Since the Messiah would come from Shem’s descendants, two-thirds of the world’s population is eliminated here.

HE WAS BORN OF ABRAHAM.

- God promised Abraham that He would bless him and make him a great nation (**Genesis 12:2, 3**). Abraham’s son was Isaac.
- Abraham’s seed was “one seed,” not many seeds, meaning one person—and that when Abraham was one hundred years old. From him, one son came who was the Messiah (**Galatians 3:16**).

The Messiah can come from only one race, the Jews.

HE WAS BORN OF ISAAC.

- Through Isaac, not Ishmael, Abraham’s descendants will be named (**Genesis 21:12**).
- Jesus was a descendant of Isaac (**Luke 3:34**).

Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. All of Ishmael’s descendants are eliminated here.

HE WAS BORN OF JACOB.

- God showed Jacob that he would produce a nation and kings (**Genesis 35:9-12**). A ruler would come from Jacob (**Numbers 24:17**).
- God told Mary that her son would rule over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom would never end (**Luke 1:33**).

Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Here one-half of the descendants of Isaac are eliminated. Tomorrow we will look at the rest of Jesus’ totally unique “driver’s license number.”

As you reflect on these prophecies, how do they make Jesus unique in His birth?

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LOOKING INSIDE

Jesus was born uniquely as the “one and only” from His Father—totally different from any other birth. Although not Jesus, each of us is unique too—no one else in the whole world has the same exact fingerprints as you! You are not “a hunk of junk” or “a piece of trash”—you are unique in God’s eyes.

“For we are God’s workmanship [work of art], created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

What three qualities about yourself make you the wonderfully unique person you are?

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TOTALLY UNIQUE — PART 2

“The greatest and most momentous fact which the history of the world records is the fact of [Jesus’] birth.”⁴

— CHARLES SPURGEON, ENGLISH THEOLOGIAN

CHECKING IT OUT

Yesterday we said our driver’s license number makes us totally unique from everyone else. That number separates us from the 6 billion other people on earth. Fulfilled prophecy separates Jesus from every other person who ever lived. The Bible tells us that a child would be born uniquely, and His uniqueness would single Him out as the Messiah.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. . . . He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever” (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

What does Isaiah say this child will do when He is a man, and for how long?

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GETTING THE POINT

To continue to see how totally unique Jesus really is, finish checking out His “driver’s license number” that we started yesterday.

HE WAS BORN OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH.

- Judah will produce the one who will rule over Israel (**Genesis 49:10; Micah 5:2**).
- It is clear that Jesus descended from Judah (**Hebrews 7:14**).

Jacob had twelve sons, each a tribe of the Jewish nation. With this prophecy eleven of the twelve tribes of Jacob are eliminated.

HE WAS BORN OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID.

- From David will come a righteous Branch, a King, who will save Israel (**Jeremiah 23:5, 6**).
- Jesus is referred to as the “son of David” twelve times (**Luke 3:31**).
- Jesse, David’s father, had eight sons. The other seven are eliminated. (**See Isaiah 11:1, 10; Luke 3:32**).

HE WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN.

- From the descendants of David, the Messiah would be born of a virgin (**Isaiah 7:14**).
- The birth of Jesus came about when Mary married Joseph, but before they had a sexual relationship. Mary was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 1:18**).

Only one person in all of history has qualified to be the Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is totally unique!

As the identity of the Messiah is narrowed down to one person, Jesus, how does that make Him unique from all other leaders?

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LOOKING INSIDE

Jesus’ uniqueness makes us unique because we belong to Him! When we feel disappointed because we never measure up to what other people expect, we can remember that we belong to Jesus, the most totally unique person who ever lived!

“For consider what he has done—before the foundation of the world he chose us to become, in Christ, his holy and blameless children living within his constant care” (Ephesians 1:4, Phillips).

In what ways do you feel like you don’t measure up to other people’s expectations? According to Ephesians 1:4, what four actions has Jesus taken for you so that you won’t disappoint Him?

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PERSONALITY PLUS

“More than 1,900 years later an historian like myself, who doesn’t even call himself a Christian, finds the picture centering irresistibly around the life and character of this most significant man. . . . Jesus stands first.”⁵

—H. G. WELLS, HISTORIAN

CHECKING IT OUT

The movie *La Dolce Vita* opens with a shot of a helicopter carrying a giant statue of Jesus to Rome. Arms outstretched, Jesus hangs in a sling. As the helicopter passes over, people begin to recognize him. “Hey, it’s Jesus,” shouts an old farmer, hopping off his tractor and racing across the field. Nearer Rome, bikini-clad girls sunbathing around a pool wave with a friendly greeting and the helicopter pilot swoops in for a closer look, taking Jesus with him. Silent, expressionless, exuding no personality, Jesus hovers over the scene.⁶

What an inaccurate and unflattering picture of Jesus! Even the prophecies from the Old Testament show us what a dynamic personality He has.

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:1, 2).

From Isaiah 11:1-2, what seven dynamic personality traits does the Messiah have that will not allow people to blow Him off?

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GETTING THE POINT

Talk about personality! Jesus had it. Isaiah tells us that the Messiah actually would have seven significant aspects to His personality. Here's a quick tour of those attributes:

1. He will be full of God's Spirit. The Spirit will communicate all of who God is through the personality of the Messiah.
2. He will be wise. Through the Spirit, the Messiah will have God's intelligence and perspective on everything.
3. He will be understanding. The Spirit will give the Messiah a practical understanding of how to do things (like be a carpenter, for example) and how to perceive people.
4. He will be a counselor. Through the Spirit, the Messiah will be able to read any situation and reach the right decision on what to do.
5. He will have power. The Holy Spirit will give Him the ability and energy to carry out these decisions.
6. He will have knowledge. This is intimate knowledge. The Messiah will have a total knowledge of who God is and what He wants Him to do.
7. He will have the fear of the Lord. The Messiah will have a reverence for God that holds Him in awe.

The Holy Spirit descended on the Messiah and gave Him these seven attributes. Jesus has the personality of God Himself. Isn't that awesome?!⁷

Jesus was the Messiah!

"The Word [Jesus] became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

From John 1:14, what five conclusions can we reach about Jesus' personality?

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LOOKING INSIDE

The Messiah had the most dynamic personality ever. But you may not feel like yours is much. No talent (the only instrument you play is the radio), no brains (“I have an IQ just above plant life”), no fun, no friends. All of us feel this way at times. The great news is that the same Spirit that lived in the Messiah lives in you, if you are a believer in Jesus.

Jesus said, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. . . . But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:16, 17).

Since the Spirit of Jesus lives in all believers, what seven personality traits of the Messiah in Isaiah 11:1-2 do you have? How does that change the way you see your personality?

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And that changes me by . . .

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J U S T D O I T

“If Jesus had never lived, we would not have been able to invent him.”⁸

— WALTER WINK

CHECKING IT OUT

When I tie the strings on my Nike shoes before I go out to run, I mutter, almost subconsciously under my breath: “Just do it.” Nike has influenced my thoughts, my words, and my pocketbook with that phrase—a saying that is recognized everywhere around the world. And I’ll bet you own something with Nike on it.

Jesus had far greater influence than Nike when He lived on Earth. People were amazed at what He did. Jesus certainly would have worn Nike because every day He went out to “just do it.” What was “it”? What did He do? See if you can find out from this prophecy about the Messiah in the Old Testament:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Isaiah 61:1, 2).

The “it” that the Messiah does is minister to people. What three primary ministries did Jesus do?

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GETTING THE POINT

For sure, Jesus was the Messiah (“God’s anointed”). What was prophesied that the Messiah would do, Jesus did. Isaiah 61:1, 2 says the Messiah will do three things:

- Preach good news to the poor.
- Bind up (heal) the brokenhearted.
- Release the captives and prisoners.

Jesus walked into the Jewish synagogue in Nazareth where He grew up and gave His first sermon. It was short. He unrolled the scroll and read: ***“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”*** (Luke 4:18, 19).

Then He rolled up the scroll and sat down. Every person had his eyes glued on Him. Then Jesus gave His sermon—short and sweet:

“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

Take your Bible and pick any ten pages in the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John). On those pages, write down the times you find Jesus preaching the good news, healing hurts, or setting people free from the bondage of Satan. (Write the reference with it.)

Isaiah said the Messiah would “just do it.” Jesus did “just do it”!

LOOKING INSIDE

So what about you? Can you “just do it” too? Maybe you feel that the Christian life is dull and boring. Nothing could be further from the truth. Following Jesus is not about sitting in church twiddling your fingers; it’s about taking Jesus to the streets. Is it possible you can do the same things He did?

His disciples got to “just do it.” Notice the three things they did: ***“They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them”*** (Mark 6:12, 13).

Jesus, the Messiah, made an incredible promise to you. Because the Spirit of Jesus lives in you, you too can “just do it.”

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me [does that include you?] will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12, question from the author).

That promise is for you, straight from the Messiah Himself. Just do it!

If the promise in John 14:12 is true that you “will do what I have been doing,” then what three things does Jesus want you to do? Write down one way you can do one of those three things today.

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THAT'S INCREDIBLE!

“The might of the world, the most sophisticated religious system of its time allied with the most powerful political empire, arrays itself against a solitary figure, the only perfect man who ever lived.”⁹

— PHILIP YANCEY

CHECKING IT OUT

When President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed on November 22, 1963, the entire world watched on television. Even though the world watched, to this day no firm conclusion has been reached on exactly what happened, who killed him, or why. The evidence doesn't agree. By comparison, that makes the death of Jesus absolutely incredible. What makes it incredible is its credibility! The prophecies concerning the cross are overwhelming in their number and accuracy. Check this out:

An electron is the smallest known object. If you had to count one inch of electrons, counting 250 each minute day and night, you could count them in 19 million years! To count a cubic inch of electrons, it would take you 19 x 19 x 19 million years. If you marked one of those electrons, stirred them up, and then had a blindfolded person pick one, that is about the probability it would take for the twenty-five prophecies about the cross to be fulfilled in one person.

The Old Testament predicts exactly what will take place seven hundred years before it happens! (Remember that the founding of the United States happened only about 230 years ago.)

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

How is President Kennedy's assassination and the prophecy of Jesus' death in Isaiah 53:5 similar/not similar?

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GETTING THE POINT

Isaiah 53:5 is only one of twenty-five specific prophecies about the death of Jesus on the cross. Check out these facts. Look up some or all of the verses to see how detailed God was in foretelling the death of His Son.

Prophecies about the Cross:

1. Betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 26:49, 50)
2. Forsaken by His disciples (Zechariah 13:7; Matthew 26:31, 56)
3. Accused by false witnesses (Psalm 35:11; Matthew 26:59-61)
4. Quiet before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12-14)
5. Wounded and bruised (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 27:26)
6. Beaten and spit on (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67)
7. Mocked (Psalm 22:7, 8; Matthew 27:39, 44)
8. Fell under the cross (Psalm 109:22-25; Luke 23:26)
9. Hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:14-16; Luke 23:33)
10. Crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38)
11. Prayed for persecutors (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34)
12. Rejected by His own people (Psalm 118:22, 23; Matthew 21:42)
13. Hated without a cause (Psalm 69:4; John 15:25)
14. His friends stood far off (Psalm 38:11; Matthew 27:55, 56)
15. People shook their heads (Psalm 109:25; Matthew 27:39, 40)
16. Stared upon (Psalm 22:17; Luke 23:35)
17. Garments divided and lots cast (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23, 24)
18. He would be thirsty (Psalm 69:21; John 19:28, 29)
19. Cried out when forsaken (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46)

- 20. Committed Himself to God (Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46)
- 21. Bones not broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33, 36)
- 22. His heart would be broken (burst) (Psalm 22:14; John 19:34)
- 23. His side would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34)
- 24. Darkness over the whole land (Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45)
- 25. Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60)

Could Jesus have deliberately read the Old Testament and then forced all these things to come true? It would have been tough from the cross to tell the soldiers, “Stick the sword in my side. It’s one of the prophecies, you know.” No. Almost all of the fulfilled prophecies were beyond His control.

It’s almost unthinkable that this amount of information could have been prophesied about one person—hundreds of years before his life—and come true!

As the prophecies of Jesus impact you, how has the way you see Jesus now changed from the way you saw Him before?

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LOOKING INSIDE

To express His love to us, God designed the cross with painstaking detail. From the beginning of time, God the Father and God the Son had it all planned. They knew Jesus would need to sacrifice His life to forgive our sins and bring us back into a relationship with God. The twenty-five fulfilled prophecies show what Jesus voluntarily went through for us. It’s incredible! It’s simple and clear: God loves you!

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”
(Romans 5:8).

When you read Romans 5:8 and then think about the incredible detail God used to predict the cross and the detail He went to in order to carry out these predictions, how much do you think He loves you?

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B E Y O N D S T A R W A R S

“The resurrection of Jesus Christ ranks as history’s most revolutionary event.”¹⁰

— BILL BRIGHT

CHECKING IT OUT

“The force be with you.”

In the movie *Star Wars: A New Hope*, when Obi-Wan Kenobi completes Luke Skywalker’s training to defeat Darth Vader, the cosmic battle of good versus evil is on. With that statement, Luke had a new, supernatural power that took him beyond his own ability. From that point, it was clear that, in the battles and struggles he encountered, good would win—Darth Vader and the forces of evil would be defeated.

But that was only a movie—or six of them now, in total! But what about reality? Is there a real Force that will be with us? Yes, but it is a far different Force than what is portrayed in the *Star Wars* series. The real Force is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rooted in history, proven fact and reality, it is the dynamic spiritual force that changes people’s lives, changes the world and, ultimately, will cause God to win over evil.

Without it, people just exist. With it, they can really live!

Without it, the apostle Paul says,

“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. . . . If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:14, 19-20).

But with it:

“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Why do you think the resurrection is important?

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GETTING THE POINT

What an important event! Did it really happen? Before you finish this journal, you will have all kinds of information to answer that question. But right now, let's see if the Old Testament prophets thought it would happen. They viewed the resurrection of the Messiah from four different angles. All of them together form a beautiful picture of what would take place when Jesus rose from the dead.

HIS RESURRECTION

The resurrection means the event when Jesus was raised from the dead.

“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay” (Psalm 16:9, 10).

“After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence” (Hosea 6:2).

Other verses on the resurrection of the Messiah include Psalm 30:3; 41:10; 118:17.

HIS ASCENSION

The ascension means the event when Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after the resurrection.

“When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious—that you, O Lord God, might dwell there” (Psalm 68:18).

Other verses on the ascension of the Messiah include Psalm 16:11; 24:7; 110:1; 118:19.

HIS SECOND COMING (SECOND ADVENT)

The “second coming” means the event when Jesus will come back to earth and judge it.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. . . . He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

Other verses on the second coming of the Messiah are Psalm 50:3-6; Isaiah 66:18; Zechariah 14:4-9.

HIS REIGN

The reign of the Messiah means that period after the second coming when He will rule over the earth and then reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords throughout eternity.

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His

dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13, 14).

Other verses on the reign of the Messiah include 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Psalm 2:6-8; 8:6; 45:6, 7; 72:8; 110:1-3.

In these four ways the prophets foretold what would happen at Jesus’ resurrection and beyond. That’s way beyond Star Wars!

How do these prophecies separate Jesus even further from all other people and religious leaders?

His resurrection:

His ascension:

His second coming:

His reign:

LOOKING INSIDE

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then He has no validity or reality for us today (1 **Corinthians 15:14, 19-20**). He would simply be a dead Jew who left a nice religion. But if He did rise, then it is the most amazing event in all of history. And it offers us the answers to life’s most searching issues: Who am I? Where am I going? How am I going to get there?

Then we know that God exists, what He is like and how we may know Him in our personal experience. Our lives take on meaning and purpose.¹¹

Beyond that, we have the personal power to live the Christian life because we have the resurrection power of Jesus in us through the Holy Spirit. That is extremely real for us today!

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25, 26).

Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

In light of the fact that the prophesies about the resurrection and Jesus’ fulfillment of them are true, answer these three questions in one or two sentences.

Who am I?

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Where am I going?

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How am I going to get there?

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