

Artifact #2 (discovered in 1961)

The Pontius Pilate Inscription

Pontius Pilate sentenced Jesus to die on the cross as recorded by non-Christian authors Josephus (37 – 100 AD), Tacitus (55 – 115 AD), and five New Testament authors.



Artifact #3 (discovered in 1990)



This richly ornate ossuary is inscribed 2-times with the name "Joseph of the family of Caiaphas"⁶

Josephus matched the inscribed name, "Joseph, who was also called Caiaphas, of the high priesthood" [Antiquities 18.4.3]. Caiaphas looked into Jesus' eyes on the day he died on the cross.

Artifact #4 (discovered in 1941 - not shown)

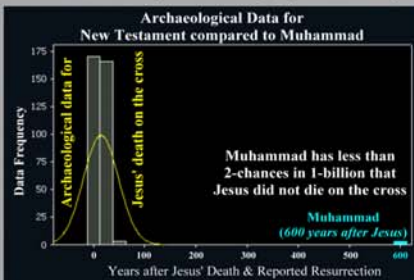
The ossuary of Alexander, son of Simon of Cyrene, found in a cave sealed up before AD 70. Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus' cross (Mark 15:21). This artifact appears authentic due to probability calculations in the London Sunday Times, March 31, 1996. (Google for: Tom Powers essay: Treasures in the Storeroom).

Based on ancient artifacts and the 3 guidelines, laws of probability support that Jesus was nailed to the cross at the 99.9999998% confidence level. (2 chances in 1 billion of being wrong due to random error).²

Understanding 2 Chances in 1-Billion

Imagine a football field completely covered with white soccer balls (about 117,000 balls). To place 1 billion balls on a soccer field would require constructing walls like a building to a height of 2 kilometers (about 4 times the height of the twin towers). Only 2 of the balls would be colored red and randomly mixed with all the balls. You get 1 try only to tell others where 1 of the red balls is located. Your chances are only 2 in a billion or extremely unlikely.

Muhammad lived 600 years after Jesus (no contextual reliability) and is the only person to make a unique claim of Jesus not dying on the cross. On the graph below, the extensive archaeological data supporting Jesus' death on the cross is contrasted with the lone voice of Muhammad 600 years later. (See Muhammad's claim on the bottom right of the chart. To date, no artifacts have been uncovered to support Muhammad's view of Jesus NOT dying on the cross).



Muhammad said the Christians based their belief in Jesus' death on conjecture. However, artifacts dug up in the 20th century support the conjecture being with Muhammad (at the 99.9999998%

confidence level). The decision to follow Muhammad requires blind faith with only 2 chances in 1 billion of being correct about Jesus. What about other Muslim beliefs?

What is the Greatest Sin?

In Islam, God is thought of as absolutely separate from the creation. For that reason, the greatest sin in Islam (called *shirk*) is to associate God with a human being. "They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God" (Qur'an 5:75 - 76).

In contrast, the Christian faith describes the greatest sin as denying that God became a divine human being in Jesus. "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:17-18).

Again, Islam and Christianity are directly opposite to each other. The belief related to God's ability to take on human form depends on whether the Qur'an or the Bible is true. The artifacts related to Jesus' death support the biblical texts are credible.

Even so, modern scholars theorize that the Christian view of Jesus as a divine person came about due to pagan influence. If this view is correct, then we would expect to find no Old Testament verses supporting the Messiah as a divine personality. However, both the Old Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls that predate Jesus' birth are the source of the divine Messiah belief. For example:

Isaiah writes of Messiah who "...will be called ... Mighty God (deity), Everlasting (eternal) Father" (Isaiah 9:6).

Jeremiah links Messiah to the name Jehovah (YHWH), which religious Jews do not speak since it is God's name. "... he will be called: The LORD (YHWH) Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6).

Micah writes of Messiah, "...whose origins are from of old, from the days of Eternity" (Micah 5:2).

David writes of a YHWH - Son relationship for Messiah, "...Anointed One... 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'" (Psalm 2:2, 7).

Even the earliest Christian authors (Paul and Mark) wrote of Jesus as a divine human being.²

Since we would expect zero Old Testament verses (or Mark & Paul) to write of a divine Messiah, the theory above appears to be false at the 99.9998% confidence level.^{2 & 7}

Can People Know God in a Personal Way?

Muslims believe that God is absolutely separate from the creation. For this reason, God does not speak directly to humans or have relationships with humans. (Muhammad claimed to hear only from the Archangel Gabriel, the messenger of Allah). So Islam teaches that humans cannot have a personal relationship with God.

In contrast, the Bible teaches that Christians can have a deep, personal relationship with God. Paul wrote to Christians, "...the Spirit

of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom 8:9). And in another verse, "...you are God's temple... God's Spirit lives in you" (1 Cor 3:16).

Again, Islam and Christianity are shown to be directly opposite to each other. Are Islam and Christianity diametrical opposites due to different spiritual sources? It appears certain Muhammad received spiritual guidance. But the guidance Muhammad received was from a spirit that came and went based on the following eyewitness account.

"Ayesha [Muhammad's favorite wife] reported "I saw him [Muhammad] while the revelation descended upon him on an intensely cold day; then it left him while his brow steamed with sweat" (Miskat IV).

Muhammad's spiritual experience came from a being that claimed to be the Archangel Gabriel. This being is the source that claimed Jesus did not die on the cross, Jesus is not the Son of God, and people cannot know God personally.

Now consider that Jesus compared John the Baptist to Christians. "Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven (authentic Christian) is greater than John the Baptist" (Matt 11:11).

Based on this verse, Christians who receive the Holy Spirit are greater than John the Baptist because the Spirit of God dwells with them (as compared to periodic control as Muhammad experienced). And God's presence brings "...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The verse above promises peace with God. I have experienced this for many years. You can too. To begin this personal walk with God, take time to pray with your heart and mind using this verse as a guide. "...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Rom 10:9-10). Believe the words with all your heart and mind and ask the Lord Jesus to come into your life. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Lord Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive you as Savior and Lord. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Amen.

Bibliography:

- 1: Hemer, Colin J. (classic scholar), *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*; edited by Conrad H. Gempf. ©1989; data taken from "Specific Local Knowledge" pages 109 - 158.
- 1: White, Jefferson, *Evidence and Paul's Journeys*
- 2: www.harvardhouse.com/muslim-christ.htm for data & analysis.
- 3: Only 4 chances in 10 billion, billion, billion, billion based on Chi-square test of Independence supports ancient events were accurately recorded. In contrast, the book of Mormon comes from imagination since no archaeological discovery has yet been uncovered.²
- 4: "External Expert Opinion on Three Stone Items" composed by Prof. Dr. Dr. hc. mult. Wolfgang E. Krumben and Carl von Ossietzky, University of Oldenburg, Germany, dated September 2005.
- 5: Mark 6:3-5 (*Matthew & John*) refer to these 4 brothers as skeptics.
- 6: Shanks, Hershel, *In the temple of Solomon and the Tomb of Caiaphas*, p#44, © 1993 Biblical Archaeological Society. "Joseph of the family of Caiaphas" offers the best modern understanding of the inscription since there were no last names used at the time of Jesus. The inscription literally reads "Joseph son of Caiaphas," but this does not mean "the son of biologically" since "son of..." is used in the sense of belonging to the same group or family.
- 7: www.harvardhouse.com/muslim-christ.htm (reference 8 at website).

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