

Is Jesus Enough?

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The Faithful Witness, Firstborn from the Dead, Ruler of the Kings of the earth. Three titles that raise three questions: Is Jesus reliable? Is Jesus essential? Is Jesus just?

Is Jesus Reliable?

Is Jesus reliable? Is he credible? Can we really count on him? Take the first claim **the faithful witness**. A faithful witness tells the truth, not how you want it to be, but how it is. Say you're in a car accident; it's not your fault. You want a faithful witness. You want the truth to be told. Now let's say it's not a matter of a few thousand dollars, but a matter of life or death: judgment day. You want to be standing the truth. And here's where the Faithful Witness comes in. On trial before Pilate the Roman governor, he says, *You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth*" (Jn 18:37). What truth? I am the way, the truth, and the life, *no one* comes to the Father apart from me. Life or death. Is Jesus the faithful witness? You say, well, I like his teaching love your neighbor, let him who is without sin cast the first stone—his morals—but *the way, the truth, the King*? He gets it right on morals, not so much on transcendentals. Maybe he's just a little unreliable. Literature and film wrestle with the question of

reliability using a device known as an *unreliable narrator*. An unreliable narrator is a narrator whose telling of events *can't* be trusted, which creates intrigue. Why can't they be trusted? Often because of some impairment: Memento (amnesia), Catcher in the Rye (compulsive liar), and Fight Club. In the film adaptation of Fight Club, Edward Norton works an unremarkable desk job, but by night hangs out with an edgy, rebellious guy played by Brad Pitt. In the evenings they go toe to toe, bare-chested and white-knuckled in basements. But eventually you realize Norton is *not* a reliable narrator. Why? Norton and Pitt are not two different people; they are one in the same. Norton is delusional—ordinary by day, extraordinary by night. But he's just crazy! His interpretation of events is totally unreliable. Is Jesus an unreliable narrator? Is it possible that, although very nice person, was a bit delusional? After all, he's making huge claims: *The Faithful Witness, Firstborn from the Dead, Ruler of the Kings of the earth*. Megalomania? Jesus doesn't stand up well next to the certifiably insane. Charles Manson took life; Jesus gave life. Hitler was self-obsessed and power hungry. Jesus: self-denying and humble. As insanity goes, Jesus is an awful example. If he's not mentally impaired, what is he? He says, "[I am the truth](#)" (Jn 14:6). He doesn't just say, I tell the truth; he says, I am the truth. In other words, there's no integrity gap *between what I say and who I am*. I'm not 50% human, prone to error, and 50% divine. I

am 100% true: fully God, fully human. Now, if that's not the case, you shouldn't even be here. Because he's delusional. But we already saw he doesn't fit the criteria. Where does that leave us? Jesus tells the truth because he is the truth. He is, not a faithful witness, but *the* faithful witness, *the one, true reliable narrator*. So, we have a **choice**. We can believe Jesus and disbelieve ourselves or we can disbelieve Jesus and believe ourselves. But to believe ourselves is a dangerous proposition. Why? Because we're *unreliable* narrators. ever called someone out, only to discover *you were wrong*? Scolded a child, only to find out they were innocent? Snap judgment? If we keep on living under our unreliable narration—our truth—we'll end up crazy or worse. But if Jesus is the truth, then we've got life not death, sanity not insanity.

Is Jesus Essential?

What is this truth, that is so essential, Jesus would die for it?

Firstborn from the dead. Take it in two parts. From the dead. Why a death, isn't a bit morbid? Well, if we break something, there's always a cost. If I knock your iphone out of your hand, and it shatters, either you pay to replace it, Apple pays, or I pay. But either way, someone has to absorb the cost. When we sin against the most loving, most awesome, most just being of the universe, somebody has to pay the cost. And it's more than an iphone. It's sin against an infinite being—deserving of infinite punishment. Death, and hell

with it. But, it is possible for that infinite being, out of his boundless mercy and love, to absorb the cost on our behalf. The sin of the world to be heaped upon his body, to be crushed, in our place. Firstborn from the dead—without that—we die and suffer eternally, in an act of cosmic justice. But with firstborn from the dead, we get life and joy eternally, a mercy of infinite proportions. But it doesn't stop there! Jesus is *firstborn* from the dead. He doesn't stay dead! No, Jesus rises from the dead on the third day, shimmering in glory, so transformed he is not immediately recognizable to those who know him. He walks out of the tomb without a hint of decay to become *the first of a whole new humanity*. Firstborn means first of a kind. Jesus is the first to conquer death, disease, sin, and hell. Never to die again, and he is a trailer of things to come, a preview of, not only a new humanity, but a renewed heavens and earth. A new land and a new people. 1 Corinthians 15 tells us if we believe in Christ the perishable will put on the imperishable, the mortal put on the immortality! In the words of Rev. James Cleveland Moore, "[Tis a land where we never grow old. Built by Jesus on high, where we never shall die.](#)" Are you weary? Are you breakin down? Are you unreliable? Are you guilty? Look to Christ, in whom, you will never die, you will never break down, you will never grow old, and you will never be punished. Jesus is the resurrection and the life! Firstborn from the dead. *Jesus liberates us from death because he is*

the life. *Jesus tells us the truth because he is the truth*. Now, that's not just essential; that's satisfying; that's not just satisfying; that's stunning; that's not just stunning, that is *everything*. Is Jesus essential? How could he not be? *Total renewal!* A Christian friend of mine recently texted me to ask if I would pray for a meeting he was having with a Muslim acquaintance. When I followed up to see how it went, he said his Muslim friend told him the reason he wanted to meet was *because he noticed my friend has so much peace*. He wanted to know how he could get it. My friend was a preview of things to come. If you're in Christ, how can you not be when you've got the resurrection and the life: the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and a whole new humanity and cosmos coming your way?! We should all be trailers! Friends, the nail-scarred hands of Christ are no threat; they are life, hope, and peace. Take him by the hand; enjoy a whole new humanity.

Is Jesus Just?

Is Jesus reliable? Faithful witness: *He tells the truth because he is the truth*, Is Jesus essential? Firstborn from the dead: *He liberates us from death because he is the life*. Finally, Is Jesus Just? He's enough for body and soul, but what about the world? His final title is **ruler of the kings of the earth**. This is an important question if you consider what kind of people often get into power. There are many

tyrants, dictators, and megalomaniacs. People who use their power to oppress. In Revelation, “the kings of the earth” are typically these kinds of people, enemies of God who seek to oppress, kill, and destroy. But Jesus promises their evil will be put down, *They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful* (Re 17:14). The kings of the earth will not just be held to account but *conquered*, once for all. *Jesus secures justice because he is Justice*. The Lamb is also a Lion. His rule will establish a new heavens and earth, where righteousness will dwell. There, where we will not grow old; there the new humanity will flourish; there there is no injustice only peace. Is Jesus just? Yes he is, but he’s more than that; he is merciful: *the Faithful Witness, Firstborn from the Dead, Ruler of the Kings of the earth*.