

A key part of my book on “How Jesus Became God” will involve a discussion of Jesus’ resurrection. One can make the case, rather easily, that apart from the Christian belief that God raised Jesus from the dead not only would no one ever have thought of him as God (since, as I will be arguing, no one thought of him as God while he was living - he himself almost certainly did not!) but that Christianity itself would not exist apart from the belief in the resurrection.

One can’t argue that Christianity started with the life and teachings of Jesus, per se, since what he taught (I’m speaking about the historical man Jesus, not the Jesus who is portrayed in the Gospels - especially the Gospel of John) is not what Christians teach. That sounds weird, but it’s true.

In a nut shell, Jesus taught that the end of the age was imminent, that God was soon to send from heaven the son of man in judgment to destroy the forces of evil and all who sided with them, but to save those who were obedient to God and who did his will; these would be given the kingdom of God, a utopian place where there would be no more sin, pain, misery, or suffering. The way to enter that kingdom was to keep the Torah of God as interpreted by Jesus, and as summed up in the Torah’s two greatest laws: love God with all your being (Deuteronomy 6:4-6) and love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). Those who did so (better than the scribes and Pharisees) would enter into the kingdom. And who would these be? The outcasts and sinners rejected by the religious leadership (not the religious people).

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