

Why did Jesus come to earth?

I came across a message board on the Internet that tried to answer why Jesus came to the earth. Here were some of the more interesting answers:

To get ready to go to space and fight Uber-Jason and the Cyclons

He was looking for Endor but he made a wrong turn at Albuquerque.

I thought he was searching for signs of intelligent life??

He came to Earth to fight for truth, justice and the amer.....oh, wrong guy.

He got lost, and he turned right when he should have turned left....and he ended up here

to get to the other side!

I'm pretty certain that these are all incorrect. So, then why did Jesus come to Earth? The question actually has an underlying assumption. For instance, let's pretend that aliens just invaded Earth. If I were to ask you why the aliens came to earth, you might have a bunch of reasons, but the foundation of the question is that there are aliens and that they existed somewhere in the universe before they came to Earth. In the same way, our question today implies that there is a Jesus and that he existed before he came. Is that assumption correct?

John 1:1-3 tells us that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

John 1:14 "The Word 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."

We see that the Bible tells us that the Word, who is Jesus, not only existed before he came to Earth, but was "In the Beginning", and was "with God" and actually "was God"! That God, the Word, became flesh (or in other words, human), and lived on the Earth. The way John explains it, he says that there were those who were alive at that time who had "seen his glory", the glory of God.

There are those who would tell us that these men were liars, that they were deceived, that the whole story is made up. I think it takes a lot more faith to believe that than to believe what they said. Why? Because for that to be true, there are many things that had to happen throughout history. All the people who had met or known Jesus would have to agree to this story. If even one person decided they weren't going to play along, then the truth would have been made known, written about and proven. Additionally, it didn't gain these men anything – they didn't get rich or famous, they didn't get what they wanted, they didn't live wonderful lives. In fact most of them were killed, tortured and

persecuted. If they didn't really see or believe what they saw, it would have taken just one of them to say something, but all of them kept with their story to the end. I know there are people who would lie to save their lives. But lie to die? All of them? Remember, we read the testimonies of the apostles in the Bible, but there were also many testimonies that aren't in the Bible written by other people. Only one needed to tell what really happened and who Jesus really was. But the silence is deafening.

The saying goes, "keep it simple, stupid". If we keep it simple, we recognize that if hundreds of eyewitnesses all say the same thing, we can pretty much agree that this is what must have happened. So we now know that Jesus existed before he was born. So why did he come to Earth?

Luke 19:1-10 tells us:

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (NIV)

Jesus came to Earth to save what was lost. He tells us this after we read how he treated Zacchaeus. The obvious meaning is that Zacchaeus was one of these lost ones. Why? The story tells us that he was a sinner. He was a tax collector. In those days, that's like saying he was part of the mafia, except the mafia was protected by the Roman Government. So these tax collectors were despised because they typically were part of the local community, so they were seen as traitors and they took what wasn't theirs by forcing the community to pay more than they were even supposed to and keeping the extra for themselves. It made for a very lucrative, though illegal and dishonest, career. Most of these tax collectors would be pretty wealthy and Zacchaeus was one of these.

The people who were crowded around Jesus reacted to Jesus choosing to stay at Zacchaeus' house. Here are people who were following Jesus. Most of them would have been open to his teaching, listening to what he was saying. They were obviously following him around to hear his words. Yet when Jesus speaks to Zacchaeus, their response is "He's going to be the guest of a sinner."

And here we see the three viewpoints regarding Jesus. There is Zacchaeus' point of view, everyone else's point of view and Jesus' point of view.

The people don't understand. Why is Jesus going to that evil man's house? Why does he want to stay with him? That's like rewarding the big mafia godfather. If we saw that today, we would ask the same question: "Why is Jesus going with him?" Why are we like that? Why is it that we constantly question what God is doing and why He does those things? God has shown us in His Word, the Bible, what He does and how He does it. If there is something that happens that cannot be explained by the words of the Bible, then God did not mean for us to know. Can we be humble enough to let God be in charge and do what He knows is best? Or do we have to have some of that control and knowledge and without that, we don't trust God? Why couldn't our response be "God is working here, let's work with Him?" Imagine if every Christian saw what God was doing around them and joined God in that. Hunger would become non-existent, crime would go down, love would be the rule. Instead, the world continues down its eventual path of destruction and we sit by and say "Why is God doing this?" It isn't God who is doing this, it is us.

Then there is Jesus' point of view. He sees the big picture. He knows what needs to happen to make things right. So he brings the opportunity for salvation. It is the reason that Jesus came to the Earth. He came "to seek and save what was lost". Specifically, what is lost to eternal and spiritual death, but also what is lost in this life here on Earth. We are all spiritually dead. We are always looking for something to bring us to spiritual life. Some of us try religion, some of us try happiness, some of us try to leave something that will last after we are gone. But in all these things, and every other thing as well, we find that we still have a spiritual hole that doesn't seem to get filled. We still long for something more. Why is that? Why can't we seem to fill this? Because that is how we are made. When God made us in His image, what that meant is that He made us Spiritual beings, like He is Spiritual. All the rest of creation, He made with His words, with His hands, with His thoughts. But only man did He make with His breath. Only man did He take something of Himself and place into what He created. It is this part that is in need of fulfillment. We will go through our whole lives always in search of fulfilling that need. Some of us don't realize that is what we are doing. We think we're trying to be happy, trying to be good, trying to leave a legacy for people to remember us by when we die. But what all of these are, are attempts at fulfilling that need – the need to rejoin with the God who made us, who breathed into us. Jesus knows this and He came to Zacchaeus and brought salvation to him on that day. He also knew that every man and woman would need that same salvation. But he also knew that there was no way that he could give that to people by walking around the earth and touching each person, so he instead went to the Cross, so that he could bring that salvation to everyone. His death on the cross gave every person the ability to fulfill that spiritual need that we all have and to find salvation from eternal death.

Finally, there is Zacchaeus' point of view. He had that need. He tried money. He tried power and fame. He tried leaving a legacy. None of these things fulfilled this need he had. Then he heard that this guy Jesus was coming. This Jesus who had claimed to have the answer, have the power of God, have living water that will quench permanently. Zacchaeus had to see this, to experience it. So he goes to where Jesus is going to pass and when Jesus gets there, the Son of God knows what Zacchaeus needs, what he wants.

And so Jesus offers it. All the people following him. All the people who needed Jesus' help. And he chooses the little guy sitting up in a tree, so despised by his community that they won't help him out, probably laughing at him as he is forced to climb up the tree just to see what is going on. The people are thinking, "Why him? What is he thinking?" Jesus is thinking "Here is the one who needs me today. Here is the one who needs salvation." Zacchaeus is thinking, "Why would he choose me? I am so unworthy. I have sinned against my community, my family, my God. Why would Jesus even look at me, let alone offer me anything? I do not deserve this." But the love of Jesus is too much to bear. It is too much to ignore. Zacchaeus thinks, "If Jesus is willing to come to me, if he is willing to risk being mocked and yelled at by all these people, if he really loves me as much as his actions say he does, then who am I to go against him?" And Zacchaeus becomes a changed man. He immediately turns 180-degrees, returns the money he has stolen, vows to make amends to anyone who he has hurt. Most importantly, he accepts Jesus' offer. Are you ready to accept Jesus' gift to you? Are you too busy thinking about the gifts you have to give to others or the gifts that you will get from them? Those are good, but there is a gift that is better and more important. See what Jesus has done for you. See how God has become a child for you. See how Jesus loved for you. See how Jesus died for you. Will you leave him there, all his efforts for you wasted? Or will you accept his gift?

So as we sit here 2000 years later, looking at the nativity scene in front of us and we ask our selves, "Why did Jesus have to come to Earth?" we need to recognize he did that because he loved us so much that he didn't want to see anyone lost. He came to seek us out and to save us. This includes Zacchaeus and it includes you and me. Jesus' birth was the way God decided to come to this Earth to save us. IF he had chosen to come in another way, say in a cloud, we would say, "that's good, but if God can do anything, why wouldn't He come down to Earth as a man so he can experience what we feel and know what it is like to be a human." Of course, we would then say, "Well that wouldn't make sense, then he would have to be born and grow up and die. And it's hard to imagine God going through all that." And this is why Jesus was born, so we could know that there is nothing that is too hard for God, nothing impossible for Him to do and that He truly understands everything that we ourselves are going through.