

While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

Luke 24:4-7

**IMPOSSIBLE**

But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.

Luke 24:11

*Let me see if I have this correct: Jesus of Nazareth was arrested, executed by suffocation on a Roman cross then speared in the side, permanently entombed in rock, then rose back to breathing, speaking, eating life.*

*Yeah, right.*

*What utter nonsense.*

**NOT JUST THE MAJORITY OF UNBELIEVERS**, but more than a few who call themselves "Christians" could recite the foregoing with a straight face before a judge. And why not; if anyone should have believed, certainly the Lord's disciples would have been at the top of the list. After all, for three years they not only had sat under His teaching, but had walked alongside Him down the dusty roads of Palestine, shared meals together, smelled each other's sweat, slept side by side, laughed and cried together. Peter had declared, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." On more than one occasion Jesus had told them explicitly that He would be arrested and killed.

And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were deeply grieved.

Matthew 17:22-23

Yet when it actually happened just as He said, the words of the report "appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them."

After all they had been told, after all they had seen with their eyes, when it actually came to pass their response was a cynical, *yeah, right*.

### **A SMALL GOD**

It is too easy to draw the line of demarcation between believers and unbelievers, the regenerate and unregenerate, for both shrugging doubt and active disbelief about Christ's resurrection exist in both kingdoms. The consensus is: *Impossible*.

Many believers still worship a small God.

The fundamentalist paradigm of an inerrant and literally true Bible is an American phenomenon developed over the last two centuries. The concept is out of step with the intellectual and spiritual growth of Western religion.

Ivan T. Webber, former attorney

Modern man is so single-mindedly intent on designing his own reality, that he simply cannot fathom the concept of a God who need not play by his rules. Then from this foundation of sand he proceeds to teach his children.

They need to create a comfortable pocket of religion and work from there to create a notion of God.

Orthodox Rabbi Kenneth Brander on children's idea of God

Ah yes, how better to describe the purpose and desires of many in Christendom than that they seek only a “comfortable pocket of religion.” A comforting balm; a gentle, insipid Savior feeding the poor and weak; a loving, but impotent Father who gasps in surprise when calamity strikes; and sermons where platitudes and pleasant anecdotes tickle the ears without undue injury. These are the trembling pillars upon which today’s church would build itself.

To borrow their own retort: nonsense.  
Twaddle.

## A GOD WITHOUT LIMITATIONS

On my biennial reading of the Bible in chronological order, I am reminded—especially in its first five books—how utterly inconvenient God can be. There He chronicles the cost of His holiness: to draw near to him, blood must be shed—buckets of it. The untouchable purity of His presence and forgiveness required rivers of sacrificial blood to flow from the temple precincts. More than that, when Israel came into the land God promised them, He instructed them to wipe out the inhabitants with merciless finality. Men, women, children, and livestock were to be slaughtered—all in the name of sanctification and purity. And when Israel disobeyed by sparing a few individuals for slaves, or some of the livestock for food—or even holy sacrifice—God’s punishment of their disobedience was swift and unyielding.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’”

So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt. He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. But Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

Then Samuel said, “Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites.” And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” But Samuel said, “As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.” And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal.

1 Samuel 15: 2-3, 7-9, 26, 32-33

A holy and uncompromising God required obedience or blood. One could either walk in His law, blameless, or shed the blood of an animal substitute to atone. And since man could *not* keep the law, rivers of blood flowed.

Later this year, however, I will be reading that God loved man too much to continue this futile regimen of repeated sacrifices. He would choose communion with His creation over the blood and wrath of the law.

And so He would send His Son as a once and final blood sacrifice.

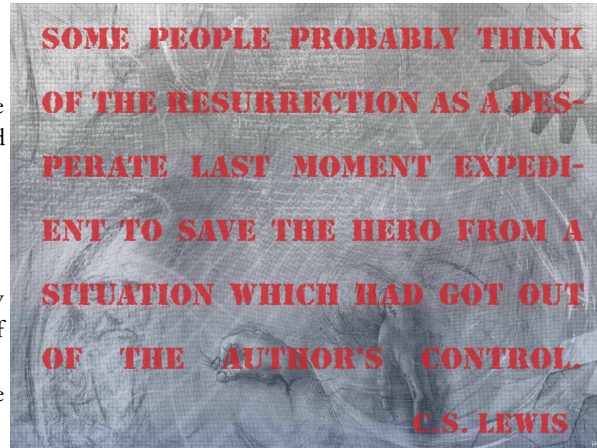
This Son would retain His deity, but would be born in the image of man. He would pass through the early stages of man—babe, child, teen, youth, and early adulthood—and would learn what it is like for common flesh to do the same. Yet He would do it without sin; He would experience the weakness of flesh without offending His Father.

And thus He would present Himself to the authorities who were bent on His destruction. Their unholy purpose was not to rid their people of a blasphemous pretender—their public story—but to rid themselves of an inconvenient competitor. And they did—for a while. They “tried” and crucified Him. He suffered the physical agonies

of the cross, and the heart-rending agonies of alienation from the Father. Then He died. Jesus died. Really dead.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Hebrews 2:14-15



Jesus was wrapped in the cloths of burial and placed in a rock-hewn tomb. Then the entrance to the tomb was sealed by a stone that could not be easily moved aside—if at all—and certainly not from the inside. But on “the third day” that’s what happened. The tomb was miraculously opened—not to release the risen Christ, but to permit entrance to those who would become witnesses to His resurrection.

Nonsense?

No, the supernatural act of a very large God. A God who loves people more than blood sacrifice. A God who loves life more than death.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

1 Corinthians 15:3-5

And herein lies our hope—our promise. We believe in a large God who is not confined by our own small-minded rules. He dwells outside of them. We believe in a God who does not change by the whims and vagaries of man. He is who He is, and laughs at those who would presume to redefine Him. We believe in a God whose power is not limited by even the vaulted imagination of man. He does as He wills, with no limitations. That which is impossible for man even to imagine is simple for Him.

We believe in a God who can raise the dead.

Nonsense?

No. Truth. (d)