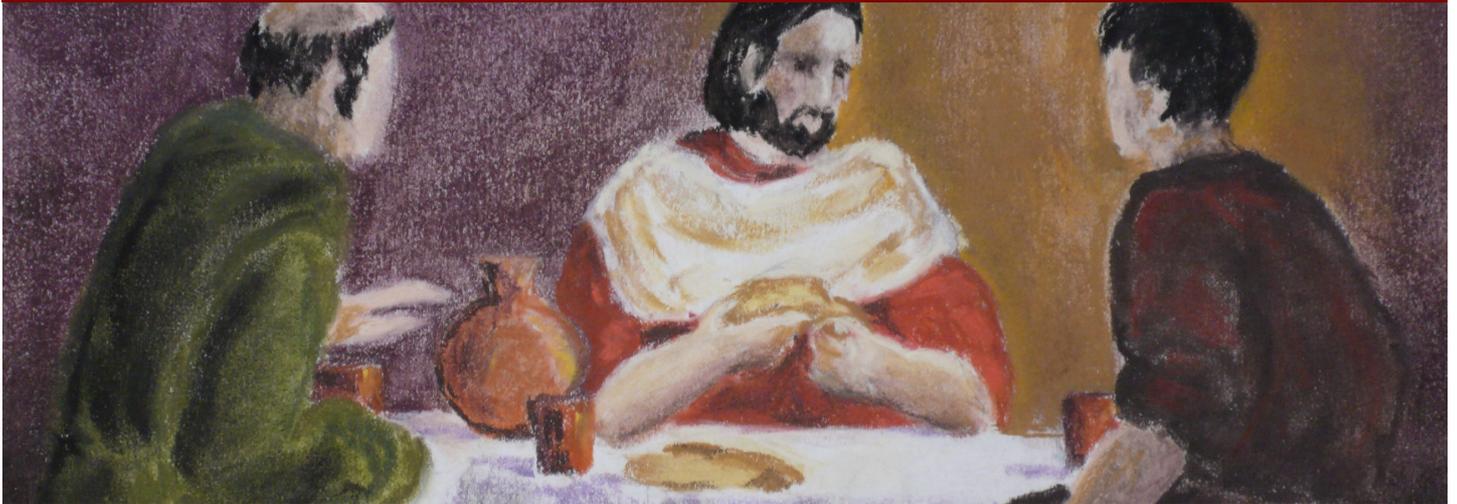


Y5&6 Script and Background Information



A discussion of whether or not Jesus was/is God is a very large debate. Since it is Easter time, the day is deliberately focussed around 'evidence' from the Easter Story. Discussion of Jesus' teachings and miracles is not included. Instead, the focus has been kept tightly on the Easter story. You might wish after this day to do some subsequent work on other aspects of Jesus' life.

Revising the Easter story:

(Slide 1) Introduce the purpose of the day

(Slide 2) This is to allow the class the opportunity to critically engage with the Easter story.

SCRIPT for telling the Easter story; to accompany pictures on Powerpoint slides (adapted from the Lion Children's Bible Extract taken from The Lion Children's Bible in 365 Stories by Mary Batchelor. Published by Lion Hudson plc, 1985. Copyright © 1985 Mary Batchelor. Used with permission of Lion Hudson plc.)

Script words are in italics. In the boxes are recorded some thoughts to help provide extra information to the teacher. These notes deliberately go beyond what the pupils will offer.

(Slide 3) We pick up the story after Jesus' arrest and initial trial. The Jewish leaders have tried Jesus themselves at night and have now brought him to Pilate, the local Roman Governor. He gave in to the wishes of the crowds and their Jewish leaders. They were calling for the release of Barrabas and not Jesus. He would give them what they wanted. He ordered his soldiers to whip Jesus before taking him to be crucified. Roman whips were made from leather strips weighted with pieces of metal and prisoners sometimes died from the injuries that they caused.

(Slide 4) After they had whipped Jesus, the Roman soldiers teased him cruelly. He was supposed to be a king, was he? They dressed him up in a robe dyed royal purple. One of them quickly put together an imitation crown from sharp-speared thorn twigs and rammed it down on his head. Then they knelt to him in mock worship, proclaiming “Long live the king!” before spitting in his face.

(Slide 5) Soon it was time to take the prisoner, Jesus, to the place of execution. By Jewish law, this had to be outside the city gates. The little procession set off down the hill towards Golgotha. A mocking, shouting crowd followed and a few women went too, crying to see the brave teacher being led off to die.

Prisoners were expected to carry the rough, wooden cross-bar on which they would be executed and the soldiers had already laid the heavy beam on Jesus’ shoulders. But Jesus was weak from the long interrogations and the whipping. He could scarcely walk upright beneath its weight so the soldiers made a man nearby carry it for him.

(Slide 6) The Romans crucified troublesome slaves and desperate criminals. Roman citizens were spared such a cruel death. Large nails were driven through the victim’s feet and outstretched hands, in order to fix him to the cross-beams of wood. The cross was set in a socket in the ground and then lifted up, so that the criminal was suspended, left to die from heat and thirst, struggling to breathe as they hung there.

(Slide 7) There were three prisoners to be crucified that day and the execution squad set to work. By nine o’clock the three crosses were lifted into position. Jesus was on the centre one. Then the soldiers settled down to wait, gambling with dice to while away the time. They even gambled over who would have the last share of Jesus’ clothes once he had died. Jesus looked down at them and the people who stood nearby. The Jewish leaders had arrived to gloat and jeer. “You saved others,” they said mockingly; “but you can’t save yourself!”

Jesus looked down at them all with pity: “Forgive them, Father,” he prayed. “They don’t know what they are doing.”

Discuss the Jewish leaders (Slide 8)

(See table below for additional information)

(Slide 9) One of the criminals hanging on the next cross muttered hoarsely; “Aren’t you supposed to be the Messiah? Why don’t you save us all?”

But the other criminal said, “You be quiet! We deserve to die, but this man is innocent.” Then he begged Jesus, “When you come as king, please remember me.”

“You don’t have to wait till then,” Jesus replied. “You will be with me in paradise this very day.”

Witness	Reasons <u>against</u> Jesus being viewed as God	Reasons <u>for</u> Jesus being viewed as God
<p>Jewish Leaders</p> <p>Throughout the gospels one reads of how some elements of the Jewish religious authorities struggled with Jesus his actions and what he preached throughout his 3 year public ministry. It was these people who encouraged and facilitated his arrest and trial by the Romans. They wanted Jesus off the scene. When the disciples started talking about Jesus' resurrection publicly these Jews persecuted the early Christians, often killing them.</p>	<p>See the points for the Roman soldiers (in next table).</p> <p>The Jewish chief priests and teachers of the law also mocked Jesus at his death, showing that they were not convinced by his claims to be God.</p>	<p>See the points for the Roman soldiers (in next table).</p> <p><u>What happened to the body?</u></p> <p>The Jewish leaders were keen to have it guarded (if they had known what happened to it, they would have produced the rotting body to discredit the disciples' claim that Jesus rose from the dead).</p>

(Slide 10) At noon, when the sun should have been brightest, thick darkness fell. For three hours Jesus suffered all alone. Then at three o'clock he called out, "It is finished!" and breathed his last.

(Slide 11) Because it was a very special Sabbath the next day; the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses so they asked Pilate to have them taken down. The soldier who took down Jesus' body dug his spear deep into Jesus' side and watched as blood and water flowed out separately.

Discuss the soldiers (Slide 12)

See table below.

Witness	Reasons <u>against</u> Jesus being viewed as God	Reasons <u>for</u> Jesus being viewed as God
<p>Roman Soldiers</p> <p>These men were Roman soldiers who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - arrested Jesus - flogged him - crucified him - guarded his tomb <p>They were not Jewish, and would not necessarily have been religious. They were enemies occupying the Jewish land people from whom the Jews wanted freedom. They were interested in maintaining the peace. Consequently, the Roman authorities were worried by all the unrest within the local Jewish population that Jesus had seemingly caused.</p>	<p>They did not treat Jesus with respect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they openly mocked him when he was in their custody (Luke 22:63-65 and Mark 15:16-20) - They continued to mock him on the cross, along with other passers-by and the chief priests and teachers of the law (Mark 25-32) - they gambled over his clothes (Mark 15:24) <p>This lack of respect shows that they did not believe his claims to be God.</p>	<p><u>Jesus' death:</u></p> <p>Roman soldiers were professional executioners. There has never been a recorded instance of anyone surviving a Roman crucifixion. The Roman soldier who removed Jesus from the cross put a spear in his side and out flowed blood and water (John 19:34) modern science tells us that this separation only happens after death.</p> <p>One Roman Centurion at Jesus' death, did see something different about it and commented: "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15v39)</p> <p><u>What happened to the body?</u></p> <p>Roman Soldiers were given to guard the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66) at the request of the Jewish authorities. Roman soldiers who did not do their jobs properly were severely punished (often killed by their seniors). Anyone trying to steal the body (e.g. the disciples or grave robbers) would have had to have got past the Roman guard and moved the heavy stone seal.</p>

(Slide13) Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy Jew who disagreed with how Jesus had been treated by his countrymen, asked Pilate's permission to give Jesus a proper burial. Nicodemus, who had visited Jesus at night, came to help him. Gently the two men washed the body and wrapped it in clean strips of linen and laid it on a stone ledge in a new tomb.

Some of the women who had been at Golgotha followed to see where Jesus was buried. Then, worn out with sadness and crying, they went away. It was Friday evening when Jesus' body was laid in the garden tomb. The next day was the Sabbath, when no Jews may work. The long hours passed slowly for Jesus' heartbroken friends. They could not believe that the master they loved so much lay cold in the tomb. "Once the Sabbath is over, we'll take sweet-smelling spices to put on his body;" the women agreed.

(Slide 14) *The women could not sleep and so very early the next morning they set off for the tomb. As they drew closer, they saw with horror that the big round stone that covered the entrance had been moved. Someone must have tampered with the tomb and stolen the body:*

(Slide 15) *By now there was enough morning light to peer inside. The linen wrappings lay tidily on the rock shelf, but the body had gone. The women stood there, silent tears coursing down their cheeks. Suddenly two shining angels were sitting where Jesus’ body should have been. “Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” the angels asked. “He is not here; he has risen! Remember what he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee, that he would be crucified and on the third day rise again.” Then the women remembered.*

The women dashed back through the morning sunshine, all fear and sadness gone. They burst in on the huddled group of disciples. “He is alive! He really is alive!” they shouted with joy.

Discuss the women (Slide16)

Witness	Reasons <u>against</u> Jesus being viewed as God	Reasons <u>for</u> Jesus being viewed as God
<p>Female Followers These women had been close friends/followers of Jesus during his life. They were present at his crucifixion (Matthew 27:55-56) and were the first people to go and visit his tomb (Luke 24). Jewish people believed that bodies were ceremonially unclean hence Jesus had been buried in the tomb just before the Jewish Sabbath (special day of the week where there was to be no work and worship was held at the local synagogue). Consequently, it wasn’t until after the Sabbath that the women were coming to dress the body with spices. These were needed because in a hot culture bodies would soon start to decompose and smell!</p>	<p>These are not reliable witnesses! (John 8:17 only the testimony of two men was considered by their culture to be valid...the testimony of women held no weight in court).</p> <p>Like the disciples, they were in a very emotional state having just seen their leader killed like a criminal. Perhaps in such an emotionally charged state their mind might have played tricks on them?</p>	<p>NB: to avoid repetition, the same arguments for the ‘Other Disciples’ apply for the ‘Female Followers’ - so please refer to the relevant table below.</p>

(Slide 17) That same Sunday, two other friends of Jesus left Jerusalem to walk home to Emmaus. As Cleopas and his friend trudged along they kept going over the sad events of the past few days. They scarcely noticed when a stranger drew level with them, and matched his pace to theirs.

“You’re looking miserable,” he remarked. “What’s the matter?”

“You mean you haven’t heard?” Cleopas answered. “You must be the only person around who doesn’t know what’s been happening. Jesus, our master, has been put to death. We were certain that he was God’s Messiah but now our hope has gone.”

The stranger laughed gently. “You’ve made a big mistake,” he said. “Think what the prophets had to say about the Messiah. Isaiah compared him to a lamb being led to the slaughterhouse. The Messiah had to die – not for a crime that he had committed but for the sin of other people, in order to bring them peace and forgiveness from God.”

(Slide 18) The journey flew by as the stranger went from one Old Testament writing to another, explaining that it was God’s plan that the Messiah should first die and then rise from death because he had conquered evil. It seemed no time before they were at their own door. The stranger looked as if he was going on up the street. “Do come in,” Cleopas begged. “It’s getting late. Have supper with us.”

(Slide 19) The stranger accepted and, when supper was ready, he took bread, thanked God for it, broke it and shared it between them. Then they recognised the familiar way that he did it all. The stranger was Jesus – alive! They turned to him, but he had gone.

“No wonder our hearts grew warm as he talked with us. We must go back to Jerusalem straight away and tell the others.”

But when they arrived the disciples greeted them with the news, “He has risen!” As they all talked excitedly together about their various discoveries, Jesus himself joined them. He shared their meal and explained to them all the wonderful things he had told the two on the road to Emmaus.

Discuss the two followers on the road to Emmaus (Slide 20)

Witness	Reasons <u>against</u> Jesus being viewed as God	Reasons <u>for</u> Jesus being viewed as God
<p>Followers on the Road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13-35)</p> <p>This is the story of how two other supporters of Jesus were leaving Jerusalem after his death and were met and accompanied on the road by a stranger who talked to them about what had happened and how it related to the prophecies of the Old Testament (Jewish scriptures). When they sat down for supper the stranger gave thanks and shared the food and as he did so the two travellers recognised Jesus. Jesus disappeared and the two men returned to Jerusalem to share what they had experienced with the disciples.</p>	<p>Some elements of this encounter are hard to understand:</p> <p>Why did the two supporters of Jesus not recognise him until he gave thanks and broke the bread?</p> <p>What happened to Jesus as soon as they recognised him how did he disappear?</p> <p>Were these two men therefore good witnesses?</p> <p>Could the Defence make use of the prophecies (listed in the next column)... Can we be sure that they refer to Jesus?</p>	<p>It might be interesting to look at some of the prophecies from the Old Testament about Jesus and how he fulfilled them. This is what he had made known to these two travellers. See:</p> <p>~ <u>Isaiah 7:14</u> (foretelling his birth) “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Alternatively see Micah 5:2.</p> <p>~ <u>Isaiah 35:5-6</u> (explaining the nature of Jesus’ ministry). “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy...”</p> <p>~ <u>Isaiah 53:5-6</u> (explaining Jesus’ death upon the cross) “But he was pierced for our transgressions [wrong-doings], he was crushed for our iniquities [sin/disobedience to God]; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed...and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.”</p> <p>~ <u>Psalms 16:10</u> (that Jesus would not stay dead) “...you will not let your Holy One see decay.”</p>

(Slide 21) *Thomas had missed it all. He hadn't been there that first resurrection Sunday when Jesus came to the disciples. As soon as he arrived back, they all began to tell him at once.*

“I don't believe it!” Thomas answered bluntly. He had seen Jesus' dead body. No one could persuade him that Jesus could be alive again after a death like that. “I'd have to see the marks

that the nails made in his hands and feel the gash, where the Roman soldier thrust his spear, before I'd believe," he told them.

Discuss the disciples (Slide 22)

Witness	Reasons <u>against</u> Jesus being viewed as God	Reasons <u>for</u> Jesus being viewed as God
<p>Other Disciples Along with Thomas, there were 11 other disciples who journeyed with Jesus through his ministry before his crucifixion. One of them, Judas Iscariot (who betrayed Jesus to the authorities) - no longer joined this group of disciples after Jesus' death. The others stuck together after Jesus' death, hiding out, afraid for their own lives. Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection (both with and without Thomas present) see John 20. The Bible teaches that Jesus then ascended into heaven (Acts 1) and the Disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and started to teach boldly in public about Jesus (Acts 2).</p>	<p><u>Perhaps they stole the body?</u> (Certainly, the Jewish leaders anticipated this see Matt 27:62-66). They had spent 3 years following Jesus, having given up everything to do this. Imagine what a state they must have been in, having pinned all their hopes on this man, and now seeing him executed, dying a criminal's death. No-one likes to be proved wrong about things (we are too proud!) so who knows what lengths they might have gone to in order to continue advocating for Jesus being something special? Would they have been prepared to create a myth surrounding his death and purported resurrection? <u>Are they reliable witnesses?</u> Having just suffered the massive trauma of the death of their leader and the fear that they might be next (as Jesus' closest followers, they might well have feared for their own lives) their emotional turmoil might not make them the most reliable witnesses.</p>	<p><u>Did they steal the body?</u> They would have had to get past the Roman guard (no mean feat!) and move the stone. <u>But...</u> All except one disciple went on to be martyred (killed) for their faith in Jesus. If they had known that it was all a lie (e.g. if they had nicked the body) would they all have been prepared to go through with the lie and suffer really painful deaths and a lot of beating and persecution beforehand? <u>Also...</u> Consider the change in their behaviour from a bunch of very scared men, hiding out in Jerusalem afraid (John 20:19) to a group of very bold men standing in the streets of Jerusalem preaching openly about Jesus (Acts 2:14). What caused this change?</p>

(Slide 23) A whole week passed. The next Sunday the disciples were together again and Thomas was with them. The door was locked because they were still afraid of the Jewish leaders. All at once, Jesus was with them in the room. "Peace to all of you," he said. Then he turned to Thomas and looked straight at him. "You may touch the nail-marks in my hands and feel the place where the spear pierced my side. But stop doubting, Thomas. Believe that I am alive!"

(Slide 24) Thomas was overcome with happiness but he was also very ashamed. "You are my Lord and my God!" he exclaimed in wonder.

"You believe because you have seen me," Jesus said. "There is a special blessing for those who put their trust in me although they have never seen me with their own eyes."

Discuss Thomas (Slide 25)

Witness	Reasons <u>against</u> Jesus being viewed as God	Reasons <u>for</u> Jesus being viewed as God
<p>Thomas Thomas was one of Jesus' twelve disciples – the men who had been his closest followers for the three years of his public ministry. They had been with Jesus continually in that time, watching, listening and learning from him. Thomas is often known as 'doubting Thomas' because after the resurrection he was not present with the other disciples when Jesus first appeared to the men. When they told him about it afterwards, Thomas responded that he would not believe unless he saw Jesus for himself and could touch him. The account of this is in John 20:24-29.</p>	<p>Did Thomas change his mind simply because he was following the crowd or did he see the risen Jesus? He was in a very emotional and vulnerable state where he needed his friends - did he just go along with what they said because he didn't want to be left out?</p>	<p>Thomas' initial disbelief because he hadn't seen Jesus led him to hold on and wait to see the physical 'proof' for himself. Does this give weight to other accounts of Jesus' physical resurrection because it came from a cynic? He wasn't just following the crowd of his friends.</p>

Questions for thinking that Jesus was God:

(Slide 26) Focus the pupils on the questions (leave on the board as a prompt):

- *How did people respond to his death?*
- *Did he rise to life (as his disciples claimed)? If not, what happened to his body? Can we be sure that he died?*
- *If it is possible that he rose to life, what are the implications of this for whether he is God?*

How does each witness add information to these questions?

Questions for disputing that Jesus was anything more than an unusual man:

(Slide 27). Again focus the pupils on the questions (leave on the board as a prompt):

- *How did people respond to his death?*
- *Did he rise to life (as his disciples claimed)? If not, what happened to his body? Can we be sure that he died?*
- *If it is possible that he rose to life, what are the implications of this for whether he is God?*

How does each witness add information to these questions?