

The Bayesian Framework for the Resurrection

The most famous mathematical approach to Jesus's divinity is the **Bayesian Probability Equation**, popularized by philosopher Richard Swinburne and mathematician Dr. Peter Stoner. It calculates the probability that a hypothesis (like "Jesus is God") is true given a specific piece of evidence (like the Resurrection).

The equation is:

$$P(G | E) = \frac{P(E | G) \times P(G)}{P(E)}$$

Here is what each variable means in this context:

- $P(G | E)$ = The probability that "Jesus is God" (**G**) is true, **given** the historical evidence (**E**) we have (the empty tomb, post-mortem appearances, the birth of the Church, etc.). This is what we want to solve for.
- $P(E | G)$ = The probability that we *would* see this evidence (**E**) if Jesus is God. Apologists argue this is **very high (close to 1.0)** because if God became man, it is entirely expected that He would rise from the dead.
- $P(G)$ = The **prior probability** that God would become incarnate in human history. This is the most debated number. Theologians often assign a low number here (e.g., **0.01** or **1%**) to be mathematically conservative, acknowledging that divine intervention is rare by definition.
- $P(E)$ = The probability that we would see this evidence (**E**) **whether or not** Jesus is God. This is calculated as:
 - $P(E | N)$ = The probability we would see this evidence if Jesus is **not** God (i.e., if natural causes are all that exist). Apologists argue this is extremely low (e.g., **0.001**), because dead men do not naturally rise.
 - $P(N)$ = The prior probability that Jesus is *not* God (which is $1 - P(G)$, or **0.99** if we use the 1% prior).

Plugging in the Numbers (The Apologetic Calculation)

Let's run the equation using the conservative numbers that Christian apologists often propose:

1. $P(G)$ (Prior for God) = **0.01** (1% chance)
2. $P(N)$ (Prior for "not God") = **0.99** (99% chance)
3. $P(E | G)$ (Evidence if God) = **0.99** (99% chance we'd see the Resurrection if Jesus is God)
4. $P(E | N)$ (Evidence if not God) = **0.001** (0.1% chance we'd see evidence of a resurrection if naturalism is true)

Step 1: Calculate $P(E)$, the total probability of the evidence:

$$P(E) = (0.99 \times 0.01) + (0.001 \times 0.99)$$

$$P(E) = 0.0099 + 0.00099 = 0.01089$$

Step 2: Plug into Bayes' Theorem to find $P(G | E)$:

$$P(G | E) = \frac{0.99 \times 0.01}{0.01089}$$

$$P(G | E) = \frac{0.0099}{0.01089} \approx 0.909 \text{ or } 90.9\%$$

The Result: According to this specific apologetic equation, even if you start with only a 1% prior belief that God would act in history, the historical evidence for the Resurrection raises the probability that "Jesus is God" to **over 90%**.