

Jesus Christ

INTRODUCTION

- A. Is Jesus A Real Person In History
1. Most kids recognize name of Jesus.
 2. Is Jesus of Nazareth a fictional character who deserves to be included in a list containing mystifying magicians, daring dragon slayers, and flying boy heroes?
- B. Some Think So..
- The world-famous medical doctor and lifelong critic of Christianity, Albert Schweitzer, answered with a resounding “yes” when he wrote: “The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, **never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb** (1964, p. 398). (Taken From Apologetics Press)
- C. Is He A Historical Figure? Where can we find the facts?

DISCUSSION

- I. LET’S GO TO OUR FRIENDS WHO FOLLOWED JESUS!
- A. LK 24:4-7.
- B. For example, in his book, *The Earliest Records of Jesus*, Francis Beare lamented: Everything that has been recorded of the Jesus of history was recorded for us by men to whom he was Christ the Lord; and we **cannot expunge their faith from the records** without making the records themselves virtually worthless. **There is no Jesus known to history except him who is depicted by his followers as the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour to the World** (1962, p. 19).
- C. Tacitus wrote: “Nero fabricated scapegoats—and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius’ reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus. But in spite of this temporary setback the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome (1952, 15.44, parenthetical comments in orig.). Tacitus hated both Christians and their namesake, Christ. He therefore had nothing positive to say about what he referred to as a “deadly superstition.” **He did, however, have something to say about it.**
- D. Suetonius “The Twelve Ceasars” - “Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief” (*Nero*, 16:2). Again, it is evident that Suetonius and the Roman government had feelings of hatred toward Christ and His alleged mischievous band of rebels. It is equally evident that Suetonius (and, in fact, most of Rome) recognized that Christ was the noteworthy founder of a historically significant new religion.
- E. Pliny
- This is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it, I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist, I sentence them to death (as quoted in Wilken, p. 4). Pliny used the term “Christian” or “Christians” seven times in his letter, thereby corroborating it as a generally accepted term that was recognized by both the Roman Empire and its emperor. Pliny also used the name “Christ” three times to refer to the originator of the “sect.”
- F. From The Jews
- According to the earlier Rabbis whose opinions are recorded in these writings, Jesus of Nazareth was a transgressor in Israel, who practiced magic, scorned the words of the

wise, led the people astray, and said that he had not come to destroy the law but to add to it. He was hanged on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people. His disciples, of whom five are named, healed the sick in his name (1953, p. 102).

G. Josephus

Twice in *Antiquities*, Jesus' name flowed from Josephus' pen. *Antiquities* 18:3:3 reads as follows: And there arose about this time Jesus, a wise man, *if indeed we should call him a man*; for he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He led away many Jews, and also Greeks. *This man was the Christ*. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease; *for he appeared to them on the third day alive again, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him*: and even now the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out.

H. Without the gospel records historians could accurately identify Jesus of Nazareth!

In fact....

(1) Jesus was a Jewish teacher

(2) Many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms;

(3) He was rejected by the Jewish leaders;

(4) He was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius;

(5) Despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by 64 A.D.

(6) All kinds of people from the cities and countryside—men and women, slave and free—worshiped him as God by the beginning of the second century (1995, p. 222).

I. If Not... Why Not!

II. HOW DID JESUS CHRIST DIE?

A. JN 19:30.

B. What Do Others Say?

1. Tacitus, the ancient Roman historian writing in approximately A.D. 115, documented Christ's physical demise when he wrote concerning the Christians that "their originator, Christ, **had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus**" (1952, 15.44).

2. Did He Die? Jesus of Nazareth was a transgressor in Israel who practiced magic, scorned the words of the wise, led the people astray, and said that he had not come to destroy the law but to add to it. **He was hanged on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people** (Bruce, 1953, p. 102, emp. added).

3. Josephus - "There arose about this time Jesus, a wise man.... **And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross** on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.3).

4. The fact that Pilate condemned Christ to the cross is an undisputed historical fact. As archaeologist Edwin Yamauchi stated: Even if we did not have the New Testament or Christian writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings such as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger that...**he [Jesus—KB] was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius** (1995, p. 222).

C. Was The Tomb Of Jesus Empty?

Jews; Pilate; Guards; All acknowledged body in tomb on Saturday!!!

D. New Tomb! JN 19:41; 2 KI 13:21

E. Could He Have Escaped? All said he was dead before He went in! Tomb was cut out of solid rock, no back doors! The cave was blocked by a massive stone! The stone was affixed with a seal and watched by soldiers!

- F. Only By Resurrection Miracle!! MT 28:1, 5-6.
 - G. The Tomb Was Empty!
Confirmed:
At least six of the Lord's followers.
A few Roman guards.
Antagonistic Jews.
Proclaimed on Pentecost!
 - H. Ridiculous Theories
Swoon
Wrong Tomb
Friends stole the body
Enemies stole the body
God stole the body
Hallucination
 - I. Did The Apostles Preach A Physical Resurrection Of Jesus?
Acts 1:22, 24, 31; 1 CO 15; Acts 3:15, 21; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30.
 - J. Words Of Infidels - Even Joseph McCabe, one of the early twentieth century's most ***outspoken infidels***, remarked: "***Paul was absolutely convinced of the resurrection***; and this proves that it was widely believed not many years after the death of Jesus" (1993, p. 24).
 - L. Evidence Is Overwhelming! Apart from what a person believes about the resurrection of Christ, he or she cannot deny (legitimately) the fact that the apostles traveled far and wide to preach one central message - 1 CO 15:3-4.
 - M. Did The Apostles Suffer & Die Because Of Teaching The Resurrection? 1 CO 4:9-13.
This Is True!!! Wayne Jackson correctly noted that "while men may die out of religious deception, they do not willingly go to their deaths knowing they are perpetrating a hoax" (1982, 2:34).
- III. IS THE BIBLE ACCURATE?
- A. Linton remarked concerning the Gospels: A fact known to all who have given any study at all to this subject is that these books were quoted, listed, catalogued, harmonized, cited as authority by different writers, Christian and Pagan, right back to the time of the apostles (1943, p. 39).
 - B. Such an assessment is absolutely correct. In fact, the New Testament enjoys far more historical documentation than any other volume ever known.
 1. There are 5,366 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in existence today.
 2. The best manuscripts of the New Testament are dated at roughly A.D. 350.
 - C. Just To Compare - Livy wrote 142 books of Roman history, of which a mere 35 survive. The 35 known books are made manifest due to some 20 manuscripts, only one of which is as old as the fourth century. Two manuscripts of Tacitus' *Histories* and *Annals*, one from the ninth century and one from the eleventh. The *History of Thucydides*, another well-known ancient work, is dependent upon only eight manuscripts, the oldest of these being dated about A.D. 900. "Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals."
 - D. If Everything Else Is Accurate – Acts 1:1-3.
- IV. WHAT ABOUT CONTRADICTIONS?
- A. "Tell me exactly what happened on Easter Sunday or let's leave the myth of Jesus buried."

- B. Collusion - "Collusion: A secret agreement between two or more parties for a fraudulent, illegal, or deceitful purpose" (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000, p. 363).
- C. Addition Does Not Make A Contradiction – LK 24:10; MT 28:1; MK 16:1; JN 20:1.
- D. Men or Angels At The Tomb – LK 24:4; JN 20:12.
- E. All Done In A Corner? Acts 26:26, 8.

CONCLUSION

- A. If Jesus Is Raised From The Dead... JN 12:48; LK 9:23; 16:13; MT 10:39.
- B. MK 16:15-16.