

A Reasonable Faith

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Who is the Real Jesus?

In the course of human history, no life has been as thoroughly examined as that of Jesus of Nazareth. A good standard by which to measure this intense interest is *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which uses over 20,000 words to describe the life of Jesus, far outweighing articles on the lives of Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Aristotle or Galileo. No wonder Ralph Waldo Emerson declared:

“The name of Jesus is not so much written as plowed into the history of the world.”¹

It is no wonder that more theories have been concocted about Jesus Christ than any other person in history, including John F. Kennedy and Elvis combined! Added to this, the last century saw the rise of a scholarly movement that seeks to unveil the so-called “historical Jesus,” as if this is somehow different from the biblical Jesus. Amid all this uproar, one could be forgiven for crying out: “Would the real Jesus please stand up!”

Who is the real Jesus? What did he really say and do? How did he perceive his mission from God? How can we be certain about anything in his life? Should we agree with Rudolf Bultmann, who states, “I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus”²?

The case for the historical Jesus is tried on two grounds:

- Was Jesus a real man in history?
- Is the Gospel record credible?

It is our aim in this lesson to prove that the answer to both questions is a resounding “Yes!”

Is the Christian Faith Rational?

Does God Exist?

Is the Bible God’s Word?

Do Science and Scripture Agree?

Why is There Evil in the World?

Do Miracles Really Happen?

Who is the Real Jesus?

What Should We Think of Jesus?

Did Jesus Die and Rise Again?

Is There a Heaven and Hell?

Is There No Other Way of Salvation?

How Do I Share My Faith?

Jesus – A Man in History

The atheist Bertrand Russell, in his essay, “Why I Am Not a Christian,” penned these words:

“Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we do not know anything about him.”³

Sadly, Russell was quite uninformed. No respectable scholar has ever ventured to deny there was a real Jesus in history. Scholars have sought to debunk the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life, but not the existence of Jesus himself. Contrary to Russell’s statement, historically it is quite *certain* that Christ existed and that we can know *much* about him, even from sources outside of the Bible. As F. F. Bruce explains:

“Some writers may toy with the fancy of a ‘Christ-myth,’ but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the ‘Christ-myth’ theories.”⁴

The historical existence of Jesus is the mainstay of Christianity. Without a real historical Jesus, there can be no Christian faith. As multiplied millions of Christians over the centuries have recited in the Apostle’s Creed:

“I believe in Jesus Christ...who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hades; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty...”

What is amazing about Jesus Christ is that he did not exist in some mythological past, but can be pinpointed with great accuracy to a specific period, and even to a specific year, in history. And of even greater wonder is the fact that the period in which Jesus lived – the first century – is the best documented period in ancient times. As Paul points out in **Galatians 4:4** (*Amplified Bible*):

“But when the proper time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman...”

It is almost as if history conspired to bring about exactly the right conditions for Jesus Christ to appear on the scene and, according to Scripture, that’s exactly what happened.

Suffered Under Pontius Pilate

The phrase “suffered under Pontius Pilate,” found in the early Christian creeds, is a historical marker. It locates Jesus in time and space, attaching him to a particular period in Israel’s history – the Roman occupation of Palestine under the governorship of Pontius Pilate. Cornelius Tacitus has been called the “greatest historian of ancient Rome,” and is acknowledged by scholars as having great integrity as a chronicler of history.⁵ In his *Annals*, he writes:

“Hence to suppress the rumor [that he had ordered the burning of Rome], [Nero] falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also.”⁶

It must be remembered that Tacitus was a pagan and in no way enamored by the Christians, as can be seen in his description of their message as a “pernicious superstition” and a “mischief,” and the fact that Christians were “hated for their enormities.” F. F. Bruce writes:

“Pilate is not mentioned in any other pagan document which has come down to us...And it may be regarded as an instance of the irony of history that the only surviving reference to him in a pagan writer mentions him because of the sentence of death which he passed upon Christ. For a moment Tacitus joins hands with the ancient Christian creed: ‘...suffered under Pontius Pilate.’”⁷

Another unlikely confirmation of the historical existence of Jesus comes from the pen of a Syrian named Mara Bar-Serapion, who wrote from prison to his son. In his letter he compares Jesus to the Greek philosophers Socrates and Pythagoras.

“What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given.”⁸

Although the writer is a pagan, he exhibits a familiarity with the historical setting of Christ and links his life with a historical event – the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews from their homeland. Other evidence comes from Lucian, a Greek satirist of the second century. In his scornful description of Christians, he unwittingly gives testament to the history of Christ. In *The Death of the Peregrine*, he wrote:

“The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed upon them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from

the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.”⁹

The fact that Jesus existed and was indeed crucified cannot be called into question, if for no other reason that it is ludicrous to suppose that anyone would “cook up” such a preposterous account. Who in their right mind would ever conceive that a crucifixion could become the foundation for a new religion? So heinous was the sentence of crucifixion – so painful and shameful – that it simply could not have been dreamed up by anyone to be the basis for a successful creed. As Paul himself acknowledged in **1 Corinthians 1:23**:

“...but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”

So severe was this “offense of the cross” (**Galatians 5:11**), some Christians in Paul’s day wanted to downplay the importance of the Cross in the Gospel message. Yet Paul and the other apostles stood their ground, describing it as being of “first importance” (**1 Corinthians 15:3-8**).

The existence of Jesus was never called into question in the first centuries of this era. This remarkable fact cannot be overstated. As Grant Jeffrey observes:

“The greatest critics of Christianity in the early centuries, including Celsus, who debated Christian writers in the second century...never once ventured to suggest that Jesus of Nazareth did not live or die in Jerusalem. Surely if the pagans had possessed any evidence that contradicted the basic account of Christ’s life, they would have openly challenged the Christian writers with those facts.”¹⁰

Hostile Witnesses

Ironically, some of the most poignant witnesses to the historical person of Jesus come from Jewish writers, many of whom were bitterly hostile to the Christian message. If Jesus were not a real person – if he were simply a figment of the imagination of early Christians – you would expect Jewish contemporaries to point out this fatal flaw. In a modern criminal trial, they would be regarded as “hostile witnesses” – people who witnessed the events, but are seriously biased against the person on trial. Yet these hostile witnesses provide support for the historicity of Jesus. For example, in the *Babylonian Talmud* we read:

“...On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu [the Nazarene]. And an announcer went out, in front of him, for forty days [saying]: ‘He is going to be stoned, because he practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray. Anyone who knows anything in his favor, let him come and plead in his behalf.’ But, not having found anything in his favor they hanged him on the eve of Passover.”¹¹

Although this passage offers a distorted account of Jesus' death, it coincides with the Gospel accounts on two important points:

- Jesus was hanged on the eve of Passover (note **John 18:28; 19:14**). The description "to be hanged [on a tree]" was a uniquely Jewish way of describing the act of crucifixion (see **Acts 5:30; 10:39; Galatians 3:13**).
- Jesus practiced "sorcery." This is one of the strongest corroborations of the miraculous nature of Jesus' ministry that could be given by a hostile witness. Remember that even during Jesus' ministry, his enemies accused him of healing and casting out unclean spirits "by Beelzebub, the prince of demons" (**Matthew 12:24,27**). The enemies of Jesus never denied the occurrence of miracles; they simply attributed those miracles to sorcery.

The hostile witnesses of history provide an indirect testimony to the supernatural element in the story of Jesus. John Meier explains:

"Many treatments of Jesus get bogged down in a discussion of the possibility of miracles; properly speaking, that is a philosophical rather than a historical or even a theological problem... [A]ll that need be noted is that ancient Christian, Jewish and pagan sources all agreed that Jesus did extraordinary things not easily explained by human means. While Jesus' disciples pointed to the Spirit of God as the source of His power, Jewish and pagan adversaries spoke of demonic or magical forces. It never occurred to any of the ancient polemicists to claim that nothing happened."¹²

The Witness of Josephus

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian of the late first century, provides a number of invaluable descriptions of Jesus as a real, historical person and independently corroborates parts of the biblical account. In his book *Jewish Antiquities*, he writes:

"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared."¹³

This remarkable passage undoubtedly includes "interpolations" – phrases inserted by early Christian copyists that are out of character for Josephus and foreign to his style. Yet the fact that Josephus referred to Jesus is not in question. Most scholars agree that Josephus probably wrote something like this:

"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man. For he was one who wrought

surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks [who claimed] he was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.”

This edited passage is completely in line with the vocabulary and style of Josephus, who in a later passage calls Jesus “the so-called Christ.” As John Meier explains:

“Josephus calls Jesus by the generic title ‘wise man’ (*sophos an’r*, perhaps the Hebrew *khakham*). Josephus then proceeds to ‘unpack’ that generic designation (wise man) with two of its main components in the Greco-Roman world: miracle working and effective teaching. This double display of ‘wisdom’ wins Jesus a large following among both Jews and gentiles, and presumably – though no explicit reason is given – it is this huge success that moves the leading men to accuse Jesus before Pilate. Despite Jesus’ shameful death on the cross, his earlier adherents do not give up their loyalty to him, and so (note that the transition is much better without the reference to the resurrection in the deleted passage) the tribe of Christians has not yet died out.”¹⁴

We now turn our attention to the most plentiful source of information about Jesus – the Gospel record.

The Eyewitness Accounts

Having established the historical existence of Jesus, the next question is:

➡ Is the Gospel record credible?

We often view first century humanity as somehow inferior to modern humanity – that they were more prone to believing and propagating legendary overlays to real historical events, that they were undiscerning in their acceptance of such stories. But this is simply not the case. People of the first century could be just as skeptical as anyone today. This fact is borne out by the fact that Peter had to pen these words in **2 Peter 1:16**:

“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

The sole reason that Peter had in writing these words was to refute those who were skeptical of the historical facts of Christ’s life, death and resurrection, as presented in the preaching of the apostles. But in the face of natural skepticism, the apostles’ message remained the same:

“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (**Acts 5:32**).

As we shall see, it is the eyewitness nature of the Gospel record that provides us with a high confidence in its historical credibility.

The Appeal to Common Knowledge

In the evangelism of the first century Church, we find a tactic frequently used – the appeal to common knowledge. In **Acts 2:22**, we find Peter addressing the crowd of Jews on the day of Pentecost, just 53 days after the crucifixion of Christ:

“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, *as you yourselves know.*”

In **Acts 26:26**, Paul would make a similar claim in his trial before King Agrippa:

“The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.”

The Gospel record is founded upon the appeal to common knowledge. In **1 Corinthians 15:6**, Paul claims that Christ “appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living.” Paul expected that any person, if they seriously wanted to verify the facts of the Gospel, could track down one of those original five hundred who were witnesses of the resurrected Christ.

Ironically, it turns out that the very miracles recorded in the Gospel account are a significant proof of that the accounts are genuine. Grant Jeffrey, in his book *Jesus: The Great Debate*, explains:

“...when you carefully consider the Gospel claims about the feeding of the five thousand, it becomes obvious that these supernatural claims would have been instantly rejected as absurd if it were not for the fact that thousands of people in Israel were eyewitnesses to these events. Claiming such miracles, had they never occurred, would have been the surest way to destroy the new religion of Christianity. The fact that Christianity constantly affirmed the greatest miracles in history, including the resurrection of Jesus Christ, while thousands of eyewitnesses to these events were still alive, provides the strongest evidence that these remarkable events must have actually occurred as recorded in the Gospels.”¹⁵

Nor did the appeal to common knowledge end in the first century. Because public records were still available well into the second and third centuries, detailing such things as the birth of Christ in Bethlehem and his crucifixion under Pontius Pilate, early Christians continued to appeal to the proof of history. Justin Martyr, for example, thoroughly investigated the historical facts of the Gospel accounts in the Roman records available in his day and verified them as accurate. He wrote:

“Now there is a village in the land of the Jews, thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, in which Jesus Christ was born, as you can ascertain also from the registers of the taxing made under Cyrenius, your first procurator in Judea.”¹⁶

Quadratus, in his defense before the Emperor Hadrian, made this statement:

“The deeds of our Savior were always before you, for they were true miracles; those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They remained living a long time, not only whilst our Lord was on the earth, but likewise when he had left the earth. So that some of them have also lived to our own times.”¹⁷

Answering the Critics

Liberal scholars – those who reject the Gospel accounts as records of history – have long cast doubt on the credibility of the biblical record. Their argument is that the Gospel accounts are legendary and that while many of the Gospel stories may have a kernel of truth, much of the message of the Gospel has been fabricated by Christians far removed from the time of the actual events, thus reflecting a mythology of Jesus that developed generations after him.

Just as evolution requires billions of years to pass in order to allow for the gradual change of species, so liberal scholarship requires generations to pass before the life of Jesus can become “mythologized.” Thus the credibility of the Gospels comes down to one simple question: *When were they written?*

As we examine the Gospel record, we find that it is highly implausible to give them the late date that liberal scholars would prefer. In fact, the authorship of the Gospel accounts can be traced back authoritatively to within a few decades after the events of Christ’s life – between AD 32 and AD 64 – well within the generation of those who had witnessed those events. This is based on a number of reasons:

- There is a conspicuous absence of any mention of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by any of the Gospel authors. If the Gospel accounts had been written after this event, the authors would naturally have referred to this event as a significant fulfillment of the prophecies Jesus had made. This indicates that the Gospel accounts are likely to have been written sometime prior to AD 66, the beginning of the Jewish-Roman War.
- Quotations from the book of **Mark**, **Acts**, and other New Testament books, have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating no later than AD 68, when the Qumran community was destroyed by Roman forces.
- Luke ends his account of **Acts** with the house arrest of Paul in Rome. It is likely that Luke completed the book of **Acts** in AD 63, since he makes no mention of Paul’s acquittal at his first trial before Caesar, his continuing ministry afterward, the later execution of both Peter and Paul, and the sacking of Jerusalem in AD 70. Because **Acts** was written after **Luke** (see **Acts 1:1-2**), this makes Luke’s Gospel account an even earlier composition, also pushing back the dates of **Matthew** and **Mark** (note **Luke 1:1-2**).
- The Gospel accounts exhibit an amazingly accurate record of life and customs in early first century Palestine. Such detailed knowledge could only have come from eyewitness testimony.

Sir William Ramsay, a scholar of the late nineteenth century, set out to disprove the Gospel accounts through the best and most logical means available – archaeology. Ramsay sifted the ruins of ancient Greece and Asia Minor, searching for archaeological clues that would overturn the account described by Luke and prove that he invented the histories of Christ and the early Church. Yet archaeological evidence unearthed by Ramsay proved that Luke was accurate down to the smallest details, finally forcing him to declare the overwhelming support that archaeological evidence provides the biblical record. He writes:

“Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historical sense...In short this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”¹⁸

As F. F. Bruce remarks on Luke:

“A man whose accuracy can be demonstrated in matters where we are able to test it is likely to be accurate even where the means for testing him are not available. Accuracy is a habit of the mind, and we know from happy (or unhappy) experiences that some people are habitually accurate just as others can be depended upon to be inaccurate. Luke’s record entitles him to be regarded as a writer of habitual accuracy.”¹⁹

Now if Luke’s account of the rapid spread of the Gospel across the Roman world (and beyond) is accurate, it is understandable that accounts of that Gospel would need to be written down at an early date. At first, the accounts of Jesus were passed on through the testimony of the original apostles. But as the Church exploded across the known world, there quickly arose the need for authorized accounts to be written down detailing the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Rise of Legendary Material

The issue is not whether legends can arise surrounding real people and real events, but whether they did in the case of Jesus. Once an early date for the composition of the Gospel accounts is established, the possibility of legendary exaggeration becomes highly unlikely, for the span between the actual events and their recording is “too slight to permit any appreciable corruption of the essential center and even of the specific wording of the sayings of Jesus”²⁰ and of the Gospel story.

But there is further evidence that supports the credibility of the Gospel accounts. All it takes is to look at the so-called “gospels” that appeared in the second century – the very time frame required by liberal scholars to allow for legendary development – to see exactly what legendary material is like. These apocryphal accounts of Jesus’ life show themselves to be vastly inferior to the true Gospel record, with none of the realistic narrative and all the signs of a fabricated mythology. As Philip Schaff observes:

“The credibility of the canonical Gospels receives...negative confirmation from the numerous apocryphal Gospels which by their immeasurable inferiority and childishness prove the utter inability of the human imagination, whether

orthodox or heterodox, to produce such a character as the historical Jesus of Nazareth.”²¹

The consistent style of the Gospel accounts is one of realistic narrative. Just take a look at some of these examples of Gospel narrative:

Read Matthew 27:27-44

Read Mark 14:1-11

Read Luke 24:13-35

Read John 9:1-41

C. S. Lewis had this to say about the distinctive characteristic of the Gospel record:

“I have been reading poems, romances, vision literature, legends, myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know that none of them is like this. Of this text there are only two possible views. Either this is reportage – though it may no doubt contain errors – pretty close to the facts...Or else, some unknown writer in the second century, without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern, novelistic, realistic narrative. If it is untrue, it must be narrative of that kind. The reader who doesn’t see this simply has not learned to read.”²²

The Gospel record reads like reality because it is reality. It has the stamp of the genuine upon it, what F. F. Bruce calls “the ring of truth.” Regardless of what a person may believe concerning Jesus Christ, it is hard to deny that the accounts of his life reveal that the authors genuinely believed what they wrote. In countless small ways, the writers reveal that they had personal knowledge of the events they record, or at the very least knew people who had such personal knowledge.

Even the supposed discrepancies between the four Gospel accounts lend the accounts a distinctive eyewitness feel, without hint of contrivance or collaboration. As Michael Green comments: “The artless, unplanned harmony in their accounts is impressive and convincing.”²³

The primary bastion of liberal scholarship – to “create enough time between the events and the recording for eyewitnesses to die off and a mythology to develop around the founder of Christianity”²⁴ – has evaporated in the light of archaeological and textual evidence. Even the claim that there is too great a time gap between the original manuscripts and our surviving manuscripts has proven unfounded. As Frederic Kenyon, a highly respected textual scholar, writes:

“The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written down has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”²⁵

In fact, we would have to agree with Iranaeus who, just 150 years after the time of Christ, declared:

“...so firm is the ground upon which these Gospels rest, that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them.”²⁶

Once we evaluate all the evidence, we find that “we possess more authentic historical material about the life of Jesus than almost any other person from ancient history. In fact, we know more about the last eight days of the life of Jesus of Nazareth than we do about any other person in the ancient world of Rome, Egypt, or Greece.”²⁷ Grant Jeffrey concludes:

“...the Gospels were written, distributed, and translated into other languages within thirty to forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus – at a time when thousands of Jews who witnessed these events in Christ’s life and ministry were still alive. Christianity could never have survived, let alone flourish, if it had been based on a lie.”²⁸

The Case for Christ

In order to determine whether the Gospel accounts, as they have been passed down to us, would qualify as acceptable historical evidence, we now turn to the legal profession. Over a century ago, Simon Greenleaf, arguably the greatest legal mind this world has ever known, wrote a book called *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, which is still held in high regard. The *London Law Magazine* wrote of this book: “Upon the existing Law of Evidence more light has shone from the New World than from all the lawyers who adorn the courts of Europe.”²⁹

Greenleaf turned his attentions to the Gospel record with the intention of disparaging the quality of evidence found there, but his evaluation of the Gospel accounts caused him to reassess his attitude toward Jesus Christ. He writes:

“In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is not whether it is possible that the testimony may be false, but whether there is sufficient probability that it is true...In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed credible, until the contrary is shown; the burden of impeaching his credibility lying on the objector.”³⁰

This flies in the face of much modern biblical scholarship, which rejects anything in the Gospel accounts upon even the slightest doubt of its accuracy. But there are no special rules when it comes to determining whether the Gospel record can be accorded historical status. As Greenleaf explains:

“A proposition of fact is proved, when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence.”³¹

Likewise he states concerning the evidence as it relates to the Gospel accounts:

“Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise.”³²

Grant Jeffrey expounds this further:

“The courts of Western nations grant that copies of ancient documents that are universally received as legitimate (such as the Bible) are to be given the same value as evidence as the original manuscripts.”³³

The early Christians did not put their faith in an abstract theology; they put their faith in eyewitness accounts, and these eyewitness accounts were identical to the ones that have been recorded for us by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. At any time, all that was needed to disprove the whole basis of the Christian message was to have an eyewitness stand up and say, “No, that never happened!” Yet though the enemies of the Gospel cast a different interpretation on the history of Jesus, they never contradicted these basic facts about him:

- Jesus lived
- Jesus taught
- Jesus performed miracles
- Jesus was crucified

Based on this historical evidence, Howard Clark Kee offers this conclusion:

“The result of the examination of the sources outside of the New Testament that bear directly or indirectly on our knowledge of Jesus is to confirm his historical existence, his unusual powers, the devotion of his followers, the continued existence of his movement after his death at the hands of the Roman governor in Jerusalem, and the penetration of Christianity into the upper strata of society in Rome itself by the later first century.”³⁴

On the preponderance of evidence for the existence of Jesus, no informed person can conclude that Jesus never existed. And the weight of positive evidence pointing to the credibility of the Gospel record makes the Bible our best and most reliable source of information on the life of Jesus. We have come full circle. The historical Jesus, it turns out, is identical to the biblical Jesus.

¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted by Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus: The Great Debate* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1999), p.172.

² Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p.8.

³ Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, edited by Paul Edwards (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p.16.

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1972), p.119.

⁵ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.121.

⁶ Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals XV*, 44, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.121.

⁷ F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), p.23.

⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1972), p.114.

⁹ Lucian, *The Death of Peregrin*, 11-13, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.121.

¹⁰ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus: The Great Debate* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1999), p.42.

- ¹¹ *Sanhedrin 43a*, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.123-124.
- ¹² John P. Meier in the *New York Times Book Review* (December 21, 1986), quoted in *Christianity Today*, vol.31, no.16.
- ¹³ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18.63-64, quoted by Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p.103-104.
- ¹⁴ John P. Meier, "The Testimonium: Evidence for Jesus Outside the Bible," *Bible Review*, June 1991, p.23.
- ¹⁵ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus: The Great Debate* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1999), p.43.
- ¹⁶ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.133.
- ¹⁷ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History IV: III*, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.131-132.
- ¹⁸ Sir William Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), p.80.
- ¹⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1972), p.90.
- ²⁰ William F. Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1955).
- ²¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, XII, 78, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0.
- ²² C. S. Lewis, quoted by Ian Wilson, *Jesus: The Evidence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p.49.
- ²³ Michael Green, quoted by Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus: The Great Debate* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1999), p.32.
- ²⁴ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), p.388.
- ²⁵ Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1940).
- ²⁶ Irenaeus, quoted in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986).
- ²⁷ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus: The Great Debate* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1999), p.10.
- ²⁸ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus: The Great Debate* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1999), p.43.
- ²⁹ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus: The Great Debate* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1999), p.32.
- ³⁰ Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists* (New York: J. C. & Co, 1874).
- ³¹ Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists* (New York: J. C. & Co, 1874).
- ³² Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists* (New York: J. C. & Co, 1874).
- ³³ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus: The Great Debate* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1999), p.36.
- ³⁴ Howard Clark Kee, *What Can We Know About Jesus?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.19.

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