

Why We Believe Week 3: In Search of the Historic Jesus

- A. Is there a Historic Jesus?
1. No serious scholar would assert that Jesus did not live during the first century.
 2. Great movements of history, philosophy, and religion don't start themselves.
 3. Besides the New Testament, Jesus is attested to by Tacitus, Lucian, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Thallus, Phagon, Mara Bar-Serpion, Josephus, and the Talmud.
- B. What Would We Know Without the Bible?
1. Jesus was from Nazareth.
 2. He lived a wise and virtuous life.
 3. He was crucified in Palestine under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius Caesar at Passover time, being considered the Jewish King.
 4. He was believed, by his followers, to have been raised from the dead on the third day.
 5. His enemies acknowledged that he did great feats that they referred to as 'sorcery.'
 6. His small band of followers multiplied rapidly so that there were multitudes of Christians in Rome by 60 AD.
 7. His disciples rejected polytheism, lived moral lives, and worshiped Jesus as God.
- C. Where do we learn about Jesus?
1. From people who knew him?
 2. From people of the same time period?
 3. From people who never met him?
 4. From people who lived in other eras?
- D. Are the Gospels Reliable?
1. As we discussed last week, the Gospels have tremendous textual support.
 2. Archeology is also supportive of their accounts.
 3. The four Gospels have a very high degree of internal consistency.
 4. The Gospel of Luke defines good multi-source history.
- E. Is Jesus the Messiah?
1. The Old Testament contains nearly 300 prophecies about the Messiah.
 - a. They cover details including the location and circumstances of his birth, where he would live, and how he would die, including the fact that people would cast lots for his clothing at his death.
 - b. I have included a list with some of the prophecies in handout for today.
- F. Did Jesus Claim to be God?
1. Even secular sources recognize that Jesus's followers believed that he claimed to be God, from the earliest moments of Christianity.
 2. In John 10:30 Jesus claims, "I and the Father are one."
 3. In John 8:58 Jesus states, "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

4. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. John 5: 22-23

5. Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" "You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." John 8: 19

6. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" John 14: 7-9

7. Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20: 28-29

8. What did His Followers Understand?

a. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

b. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. Romans 9: 5

c. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. Colossians 1: 15-18

d. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, Colossians 2: 9

e. while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Titus 2: 13

G. Was Jesus Just a Good Teacher?

1. Good teachers don't lie.

2. Jesus claimed to be God, this is either true or he is not a good teacher.

3. Jesus and His followers claimed to have done great miracles.

Good teachers don't start false religions.

H. Can't We Just Ignore the Miracles?

1. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Luke 5: 19-24

2. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

I Corinthians 15: 14

I. "Who do you say I am?" Jesus (Matthew 16:15)

There are really only three choices:

A Lunatic

A Liar

The Lord