

# Apologetics

## The Historical Jesus

### Introduction

#### A. Last week I gave several Reasons to believe:

1. Because the Christian faith is an Objective, Historical, Intelligent and Rational faith!
2. With these things in mind, consider the evidence of the Historical Jesus!

### 1. Was There Ever Any Question?

#### A. Skeptics who called Jesus a myth!

1. A popular thought of the 1800's, but rare today, except:
  - a. by those ignorant of the facts.
  - b. By those who suppress the evidence.

#### B. Today no serious Historian disputes Jesus as part of History

1. H. G. WELLS
  - a. An atheist, he spoke of Jesus in his book, Outline Of History
  - b. "...one is obliged to say, 'Here was a man. This part of the tale could not have been invented.'"
2. WILL DURANT
  - a. Ex-professor of Philosophy of History at Columbia University
  - b. He spent two chapters in "The Story Of Our Civilization" depicting Jesus as a historical figure right along with the Caesars
3. ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA
  - a. Used over 20,000 words to describe Jesus
  - b. More than Aristotle, Cicero, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, or Napoleon

### 2. The Evidence For A Historical Jesus

#### A. AMONG "PAGAN" SOURCES...

1. THALLUS (a Samaritan historian, ca. 52 A.D.)
  - a. Wrote attempting to give a natural explanation for the darkness which occurred at the crucifixion of Jesus
  - b. He did not deny the existence of Jesus
  - c. But only tried to explain away the strange circumstances surrounding Jesus' death
2. LETTER OF MARA-SERAPION (written to his son, ca. 73 A.D.)
  - a. He tells of the deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras, and of Jesus
  - b. "What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king?...Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given."

3. CORNELIUS TACITUS (Roman historian, ca. 112 A.D.)
  - a. Writes of Jesus in his ANNALS
  - b. "Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberias."
4. PLINY THE YOUNGER
  - a. Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, ca. 112 A.D.
  - b. Wrote to the emperor Trajan about Christians and their devotion to Christ
5. SEUTONIUS (Court official and annalist under Hadrian, 120 A.D.)
  - a. "As the Jews were making constant disturbance at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."
  - b. Luke makes reference to this same expulsion in [Acts 18:1-2](#)

#### B. AMONG "JEWISH" SOURCES (Hostile Witnesses)

1. THE TALMUD
  - a. Consists of two separate books dealing with Jewish law, written during the period from 100 A.D. to 500 A.D.
  - b. Speaks frequently of Jesus of Nazareth. In unfriendly terms, of course, but never disputes his status as a historical figure
2. FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS
  - a. A Jewish general turned Roman historian, born 37 A.D.
  - b. Makes several references to Jesus in his History Of The Jews
  - c. E.g., "...and brought before it the brother of Jesus, the
  - d. so-called Christ, whose name was James."

### 3. The Implications of This Evidence

#### A. WHAT IT "DOES" DO...

1. It provides a solid basis upon which one can intelligently believe in Jesus as a person who actually existed in history
2. It exposes the shallow thinking of any who would try to mark off Jesus as a myth
3. It requires everyone to give some sort of answer to the question posed by Jesus Himself: "But who do **you** say that I am?" - [Matthew 16:15](#)

#### B. WHAT IT "DOES NOT" DO...

1. The evidence we have seen thus far DOES NOT prove Jesus to be the Son of God
2. In fact, it does not tell us anything about Jesus except:
  - a. That He lived and died during the First Century AD
  - b. That He must have done something significant to gain some notoriety by the historians

#### C. To Learn More About Jesus, We Must Look Elsewhere

1. Next week we will look at the New Testament as the only reliable source: For now we have laid one block to the foundation of our faith.
2. Tonight, I regress to the question, "Who do YOU say I am?" If you believe Jesus to be the Son of God, repent and be baptized ...