

Apologetics

Jesus A Historical Figure

(Lk 1:1-4)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Evening
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on "Apologetics"
 - a. Apologetics simply means "
3. In **Lk 1:1-4** Luke is writing specifically to Theophilus
 - a. Luke says the purpose of the writing was to "set in order" the things which they believed.
 - b. Notice he says these things were delivered from eyewitnesses.
 - c. Thus Luke wanted Theophilus to know that what he was taught was true.
 - i. He wanted to prove Jesus was who He said He was.
4. For many years there was never a doubt to whether Jesus was a real person.
 - a. Today however there has been an uprising to whether or not Jesus really existed.
5. So this evening we are going to look into the history of Jesus and see if indeed He did exist.

I. Non-Christian Hostile Historians

A. Tacitus

1. he lived around 56 AD to 117 AD
2. He wrote a book in 115 AD called "Annals"
 - i. It was a history of Rome during his time.
3. In section 15.44 he said, "...Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome..." (<http://tinyurl.com/3pdctw4>)
 - i. Notice that Christians existed in the time of Nero (60's AD)
 - ii. Notice that Christ was their creator.
 - iii. Notice He was killed during Tiberius' reign and by governor Pontius Pilatus.
 - iv. Notice Christians spread throughout Judea and into Rome.
4. Thus here is very good secular evidence that Jesus was a historical figure.

B. Seutonius

1. Seutonius is said to have relied upon eyewitness for his history.
2. In his "Life of Claudius" (25.4) he writes, " Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus,⁷⁵ he expelled them from Rome."
 - i. **Ac 18:2** "And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them." (<http://tinyurl.com/2hxnn7>)

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3. So what we see from this is that Chrestus ie Christ was the cause for all the disturbance.
 - i. Thus Luke's historical record is accurate, remember Luke wrote the book of Acts to Thiophilus also.
- C. The rabbis in the Talmud
 1. If any historical writing existed about a man named Jesus should be some Jewish history writings, thus the Talmud.
 2. F.F. Bruce says in regards to the writings in the Talmud which was in print by 300 AD, "According to the earliest 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." (<http://tinyurl.com/3fac7bs>)
 3. The Sanhedrin Tractate shows this.
 - i. "On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostacy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!" (<http://tinyurl.com/3rnnjym>)
 4. **Jn 11:8** "The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?""
- D. Josephus
 1. A Jewish historian
 - i. In his book Antiquities in 18.3.3 he said "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." (The New Complet Works of Josephus translated by Whiston, William pg. 580)
- E. What does all that mean?
 1. It proves along with many more proofs that Jesus was a historical figure.

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II. Christian Historians

- A. Clement of Alexandria
 - 1. He lived 150 AD to 215 AD
 - 2. He wrote a letter to Corinth.
 - i. In Chapter 16 he wrote, "For Christ is of those who are humble-minded, and not of those who exalt themselves over His flock. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sceptre of the majesty of God, did not come in the pomp of pride or arrogance, although He might have done so, but in a lowly condition, as the Holy Spirit had declared regarding Him." (<http://tinyurl.com/3c7v5hb>)
- B. Polycarp
 - 1. He lived 65 AD to 155 AD
 - 2. He wrote a letter to Philippi
 - i. "and bringeth forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death..." (<http://tinyurl.com/3wx2tg4>)
- C. Justin Martyr
 - 1. He lived 100AD to 165AD
 - 2. He wrote concerning the birth of Jesus.
 - i. "Now there is a village in the land of the Jews, 35 stadia from Jerusalem, in which Christ was born, as you can ascertain also from the registries of the taxing under Cyrenius your first procurator in Judea" (<http://tinyurl.com/3p5apf3>)

III. The Biblical History

- A. The Bible is a historical document itself
 - 1. Every book tells in some way or another about Jesus.
- B. Two verses however have been pointed out by scholars as being significant.
 - 1. **I Co 15:3-4** "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures"
 - 2. This particular portion of text in the book of 1 Corinthians has an underlying tradition. (<http://tinyurl.com/3mfpvrr>)
 - i. Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians around 55 A.D. only about 25 years after Jesus death.
 - ii. Paul says here that he delivered that which he also received.
 - a. When did he receive it?
 - iii. It was, no doubt, sometime after his conversion that he was taught these things.
 - a. That happened around 36-38 A.D.
 - iv. This information was given to Paul, so it is older, even, than that.
 - v. Thus, the New Testament record of the existence of Jesus dates very far back to the time of Jesus himself. (Ibid)

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- C. How about the gospel accounts
 - 1. Matthew 50-60 AD
 - 2. Mark around the same time
 - 3. Luke in the 60's AD
 - 4. John in the 90's AD

CONCLUSION

- 1. Jesus was a historical person, of that we can be most assured.
 - a. Non-Christians & Christians wrote about Him.
 - b. The New Testaments wrote about Him.
 - c. The evidence is there to plainly see.
- 2. So here is the question...What will you do with this historical Jesus?
- 3. Invitation¹
 - a. God's Plan of Salvation
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**

¹ Much research was gleaned from Brother Cauley's sermon "Was Jesus A Historical Figure" found at <http://tinyurl.com/3mfpvrr>