

Why Should You Believe in Jesus Christ?

by

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Many people today do not believe in Jesus Christ; in fact, in their thinking, it would be intellectual suicide to become one of His followers. It used to be that some of those who attacked the Christian faith said that Jesus never lived and that the story of His life was in the same category as fairy tales and legends.

However, all serious historians now know for certain that Jesus Christ did live and walk on the earth. This knowledge has come from the discovery of many references made by ancient writers to the existence of the man Jesus. Perhaps the most dramatic reference to Christ was found in the works of Josephus (A.D. 37-100), a Jewish historian, who wrote this:

"Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works – a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and thousands of other wonderful

things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVIII, Chapter 3, Paragraph 3).

This statement is particularly important because Josephus never became a disciple of Jesus in any way. He was simply an unbiased writer of the first century.

Even those who were enemies of Jesus accepted His existence. Julian the Apostate (A.D. 331-363) did all he could to destroy Christianity. He wrote a book attacking Jesus Christ, but instead of destroying the record of Christ, he established in this book the fact that Jesus was born during the reign of Augustus Caesar, that the Christian religion began to grow during the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius, and that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the authors of the first four books of the New Testament. The existence of Christ was again proven, even by His enemies.

The truth is that many ancient writers confirmed that Jesus did exist in real life. Quotations from Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, and others can be furnished to prove this. The result is that today no reasonable person would dare say that Jesus Christ was a legend or fairy tale.

Jesus Christ was a real person. There is far more evidence to support His existence than there is to support the existence of Julius Caesar. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* uses over 20,000 words to describe the life of Christ, more space than it devotes to Caesar, Buddha, Confucius, or Napoleon. The encyclopedia considers Him to be a historical figure in world history.

But the title of this tract does not only refer to believing that Jesus actually existed. Belief in Jesus means commitment of one's life to Him. There have been other religious leaders in the history of the world who actually lived. Should we, therefore, commit our lives to Buddha or Confucius or leaders of other world religions, just because they were real people? Of course not.

The problem with Jesus is that He said that He was more than just another religious leader. One of the greatest statements illustrating this can be seen in His address to the apostles:

John 14.6, 9-10 - I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.... He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?

Buddha, Mohammed, and Confucius did not claim to be God, and they certainly did not claim to be able to forgive sins. Yet Jesus said:

John 8.24 - ...unless you believe that I am He [the Messiah], you shall die in your sins.

Even the bitterest enemies of Christ during His life understood that He was saying that He was the Son of God. The Jews, in fact, accused Him of sin on this very point:

John 19.7 - We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.

It is impossible for anyone to remain neutral about Jesus Christ. He did exist, and He did say that He was God in the flesh.

Suppose that the president of the United States were to say to the press, "I am God in the flesh. If you want to have your sins forgiven, it will only come through me." What would be the reaction of the nation? That man would be immediately relieved of his duties, and the vice-president would replace him.

And yet, this is exactly what Jesus claimed for Himself. Actually, there are only three possibilities about Christ: either He was God in the flesh, or He was insane, or He was a great deceiver.

Why should you believe Him and commit your life to Him? Please consider three reasons for believing in Jesus and accepting His claims.

The Change Jesus Makes in Our Lives

Those who have already believed in Christ can speak eloquently about the change that He has made in their lives, and this is just what Jesus said would happen:

John 7.16b-17 - My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.

Jesus was saying here that if a person is willing to try the Christian way of life, he will know whether Christ was from God or

not. In other words, the Christian faith works. We can see a difference in our lives.

Jesus makes that difference by giving meaning to life; and frankly, without Christ, life has no meaning. One famous entertainer of our day has summarized life without Christ with these words:

"In real life everyone gives himself a distraction, whether it's by turning on the TV set or by playing sophisticated games. You have to deny the reality of death to go on living every day."

Without Christ, we would truly have to be just the result of a freak combination of atoms billions of years ago. Of course, as the entertainer said, people can try to cover up the loss of meaning. They can resort to everything from drugs to astrology to yoga, but meaning to life cannot be found in those places.

Without Christ, we are like a little boat being tossed around by 30-foot waves in the North Atlantic. There would be no purpose to life, and all the material goods that the world can offer would still not give one particle of meaning to life. Even technology, one of the gods of our age, cannot tell us why we are here and why we should even want to go on living.

The illustrator and artist Ralph Barton spoke for many people when he left this note pinned to his pillow as he took his own life:

"I have had few difficulties, many friends, great successes; I have gone from wife to wife, and from house to house, visited great countries of the world, but I am fed up with inventing devices to fill up twenty-four hours a day" (*New York Times*, May 21, 1931, p. 1).

And yet, what a profound difference Christ makes in our lives. All Christians can understand the words that Leo Tolstoy wrote on this subject:

"For 35 years of my life I was...a man who believed in nothing. Five years ago my faith came to me. I believed in the doctrine of Jesus, and my whole life underwent a sudden transformation.... Life and death ceased to be evil; instead of despair I tasted joy and happiness that death could not take away."

A non-believer once was giving a lecture to a crowd about why he did not believe in Jesus. At the end of his attack, he asked for questions from the audience. A man who had lived a very sinful life but who had recently been converted to Christ went to the platform, took an orange out of his pocket, peeled it, and began eating it. Then he asked his question: "Can you tell me whether this orange is sweet or sour?" The atheist became very upset at the question; he replied, "How can I possibly know whether it is sweet or sour? I have never tasted it." The Christian then asked, "Then how can you know anything about Christ if you have not tried Him?"

Why should you believe in Jesus? If you will try Jesus Christ, you will see a remarkable change that will occur in your life. Jesus is asking you to test Him in this way.

The Sinless Life of Jesus

There is a second reason why you should believe in Jesus: because He lived His life without committing any sin.

Something very interesting happens when we begin to study great historical figures: the more we know about them, the more

flaws we see in their lives. It doesn't matter if we are studying George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, or any other great person. The more closely we look, the more weaknesses and mistakes we see. In fact, with such great thinkers as Ernest Hemingway, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, their personal lives were marred with despicable deeds that embarrass even their most faithful followers. The luster begins to dull, and we find that they had feet of clay, just as we do. It is like examining our skin with a magnifying glass; the flaws are truly shocking.

But something very strange occurs when we study the life of Christ: regardless of how closely we look, we cannot find any mistakes that He made. What historical figure was ever so reckless as to say: "I have never made a mistake; I have never done anything wrong; I have never failed at anything"?

But that is exactly what Jesus said about His life:

John 8.46 - Which one of you convicts me of sin?

That question still stands and waits for an answer. In fact, the more we study Christ, the more His character glows, and the more sacred and pure He becomes.

There never has been anyone like Christ on this earth! What sin did He commit? What mistake did He make? Why do we never have to forgive Him of some weakness or apologize for some bad advice that He gave? Christ never asked anyone for advice. He never changed His mind. He never acted too quickly. He never showed fear. He never confessed sins. He prayed many times, but He never asked others to pray for Him. He never turned down a sincere

request or refused to answer an honest question. He never charged for His services.

Jesus never gave in to pride. On several occasions the people tried to crown Him as a political king, but that was not His goal. In fact, all the treasures of the world could have been His, but He still faithfully completed the job His Father had given Him.

Jesus was totally innocent of all sin. Pilate was the official representative of the Roman Empire at the time of the crucifixion, and he interviewed Jesus very carefully. Pilate's conclusion was:

John 18.38 - I find no guilt in Him.

Pilate went on to declare Jesus innocent two more times (*John 19:4, 6*). Why should you believe in Jesus? Because He lived a sinless life.

He Performed Great Miracles

In the book of *John*, we read of seven great miracles that Jesus performed, beginning with the changing of the water into wine (*John 2:1-11*) and ending with the raising of Lazarus from the dead (*John 11:38-44*). Some people today say that the miracles never happened, but those who actually witnessed what took place didn't say that – they believed. In fact, after Lazarus was raised from the dead, the Bible says:

John 11.45 - Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him.

When the New Testament writers wrote about the miracles, were they trying to deceive people? There was no reason for them to do that. They were not going to get any special reward for saying these things

about Christ. Rather, they would receive ridicule and persecution, and many of them would lose their lives for recording these things. The New Testament writers gave up all that they had in order to testify about what they knew had taken place.

They did not write like irrational men. The four gospel accounts are coherent; the words can be understood. There is a quiet dignity to these four records of the life of Christ. Their testimony is simple, direct, and honest.

Even though one gospel writer might give details that would not be found in the other books, their accounts do not contradict each other. There is no evidence that they conspired to write these accounts. There is no evidence of fraud or deception.

The people who saw the miracles reached this conclusion:

John 3.2 - Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these things that You do unless God is with him.

Why Believe in Jesus?

So why should you commit your life to Christ? Because He is the Son of God. There will always be those who are not going to accept that, no matter what might be said or what evidence might be presented.

A preacher once asked a college student, "Do you plan on becoming a Christian?" The student replied, "No." The preacher asked why not. The student said, "Frankly, because it would keep me from living the way I want to live."

But for those who have sincere hearts and who are searching for the truth, there is only

one conclusion: Jesus Christ was who He said He was.

Napoleon was one of the most brilliant men of his century, and after a careful study of the life of Christ, he spoke these words during his exile on the island of St. Helena:

"Hannibal and Caesar and Charlemagne and I have all founded empires. Our crowns have fallen and our thrones have crumbled. Not one of these mighty empires stands today. As for me, while I was with my men, they would die for me. But where is the French soldier today who would strike for Napoleon? Not one. While I was with them in person, they loved me, followed me, and were loyal to me. But I am soon to die on this lonely island at the hand of the British...and not a soldier in the armies of France would strike for me."

"But eighteen centuries ago Jesus, a humble carpenter of Nazareth, in Palestine, founded an empire – his empire was founded on love – and today there are thousands who would die for the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."

"Our empires and states were founded on force and blood – his was founded in love. I tell you that I know men, and Jesus Christ was not a man" (Words spoken to General Bertrand, 1820).

What will your decision be about Christ? All of the Scriptures in this tract up to this point have been taken from the fourth book of the New Testament, *The Gospel of John*. Please accept this challenge: take the time today to read through the book of *John*, and try to disprove the claims of Christ in that gospel. Try to explain away the statements that John made about the life of His savior.

One of the most exciting things that John recorded was the statement Jesus made concerning what He is doing right now:

John 14.1-3 - Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

A person can go to heaven without money, beauty, a college education, fame, or even friends, but no one can go to heaven without Christ, because that eternal home is being prepared only for His followers.

With many personalities in world history, it really does not matter whether they actually lived or not; it would not affect our lives one way or the other. They are just interesting footnotes in textbooks.

But the evidence about Jesus Christ demands a decision. If He was correct in His claim of being the Son of God, then believing in Him becomes the single most important thing that we can ever possibly do in this life. It changes absolutely everything. In fact, nothing will ever be the same again, once we believe in Him and obey His commandments. It means that this world is not our home – that we are looking

forward to being with Him someday in that place that He is now preparing for us.

If you are ready to commit your life to Jesus Christ, you must first be ready to believe that He is who He said He was – the Son of God (*John 3:16*), you must make a public confession of your faith in Him (*Matthew 10:32*), you must repent of your past sins (*Luke 13:3*), and you must be baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of your sins (*Acts 2:38*).

Then you will be able to sing with other Christians down through the ages:

All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

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