

## The Real Jesus (Luke 9:18-20)

### Introduction

1. What do the crowds say about Jesus? Who is Jesus, really? Popular books and movies of the past few years have fed the public grand theories about the “real” Jesus.
2. *Jesus Seminar*: red for words Jesus almost certainly spoke, pink for his probable locutions, gray for the less than likely, and black for the implausible. *Da Vinci Code*; *The Jesus Papers*; *The Jesus Family Tomb*, etc.
3. They all suggest that the Jesus of Faith cannot be the Jesus of History. But as we study biblical and extra-biblical evidence, we find a compelling case for the real Jesus. The Jesus of Faith is the Jesus of History!

### Discussion

#### I. A Real Person

- A. Jesus is a true, historical figure, not a legend or lore. We are not gathered today to retell portions of the Legend of Jesus Christ. We are here because of a true historical event. Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and on the third day, rose again. His resurrection early on the first day of the week is why Christians gather to worship Him. The Bible is not the only place that we learn about Jesus and His effect upon the world beginning in His own generation. But secular historians writing in the first and early second centuries mention Him as well as His followers.
- B. Josephus, a priest, Pharisee, defender of the Romans to the Jews, finished His history of the Jewish people, called *The Antiquities* in A.D. 93. He mentions Jesus a couple of times and says very interesting things about Him.
  1. James, the brother of Jesus. “Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned...” *Antiquities* xx.ix.i
  2. Jesus Christ. “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 ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.” *Antiquities* xviii.iii.iii
- C. Tacitus, a Roman historian who wrote his *Annals* in A.D. 115 makes mention of the actions of Emperor Nero in 64 A.D. and the fire that destroyed Rome.
  1. Nero blamed the Christians for the fire that destroyed Rome.
  2. “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... Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty: then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.” *Annals* 15.44.

- D. Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia in northwestern Turkey. Wrote to his friend, Emperor Trajan, asking guidance about what to do with Christians in A.D. 111.
  - 1. Book 10 of Pliny's *Letters* refers specifically to Christians he had arrested.
  - 2. "I have asked them if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution; for, whatever the nature of their admission, I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy ought not go unpunished... They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery..." *Letters* 10.96
- E. From secular history, apart from the Bible, there is sufficient information to have an outline of Jesus' life. We can know 7 things for sure based on extra-biblical historical sources:
  - 1. Jesus was a Jewish teacher.
  - 2. Many people believed he "worked wonders."
  - 3. Many people believed he was the Messiah, the Christ.
  - 4. Jesus was rejected by Jewish leaders.
  - 5. Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius.
  - 6. Despite his shameful death, his followers believed Jesus was still alive.
  - 7. His followers spread far beyond Palestine by A.D. 64 and worshipped Jesus as God.
- F. Jesus is a real person. Secular historians of the first and early second century wrote about him and their writings corroborate all the Bible tells.

## II. A Real Claim

- A. How would all these thousands of people all over the ancient Roman world get the idea that Jesus was the Christ, the savior the Messiah? Well for one reason, that's who He claimed to be. He told people He was the Lord and His Lordship was preached! His claim to be Lord is a real and significant claim.
- B. Jesus claimed to be Lord
  - 1. He accepted title, "Christ, Son of God" (Matt. 16:13-16)
  - 2. He forgave sins (Mark 2:5-7)
  - 3. He is "I Am" (John 8:24, 58)
  - 4. Condemned for the claim (Luke 22:66-71)
- C. Jesus' claim is either True or False.
  - 1. Jesus is a real person who made a real claim to be the Lord and we must hold Him to it. Was He right or wrong about that claim? We cannot pretend He didn't claim it or that thousands of people have not died believing it is so.
  - 2. "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else he is a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a Demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." – C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- D. If Jesus' Claim is false and He knew it was false then He was a Liar.
- E. If Jesus' Claim is false and He did NOT know it was false then He was a Lunatic.

## III. Real Testimony to Investigate

- A. Jesus offered a fourfold Witness (John 5:31-47). He did not ask for people to believe He was Lord simply because He said it. He gave some evidence to believe it.
- B. John the Baptist (John 5:32-35).
  - 1. Was John the Baptist a real person?
  - 2. Josephus wrote of him also, 93 A.D. “Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod’s army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment for what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism...Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod’s suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death.” *Antiquities* xviii.v.ii
  - 3. What did John the Baptist say of Jesus (John 1:29-34)?
- C. The miracles that I do (John 5:36; 20:30-31).
- D. God the Father (John 5:37; Matt. 3:17; 17:5).
- E. The Old Testament Scriptures (John 5:39, 46-47).
  - 1. Over 300 major Messianic Prophecies foretelling the Lord. Jesus points everyone to those O.T. scriptures to see if He is the fulfillment.
  - 2. Consider some that He fulfilled that are beyond the power of any man to fulfill.
    - a. Did you get to choose your family? Well, the Messiah would be born from the family (house) of David (Jeremiah 23:5). Jesus was from the lineage of David (Luke 3:31).
    - b. Did you get to choose the town you were born in? Well, the Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-7).

#### **IV. Make A Real Choice**

- A. His claim to be Lord and the evidence that He is Lord brings each of us to make a real choice. Who do you say that He is? Is Jesus a liar? Is Jesus a Mad Man? Or is He the Lord, the son of God as He claims to be?
- B. If Jesus’ claim is True and He is actually the Lord, then the implications of His lordship are immediate to our lives! It means that:
- C. Jesus is worthy of our praise and worship (Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 5:11-14).
- D. Jesus wields all authority (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 3:17).
- E. Jesus warrants our love and obedience (Luke 6:46; John 14:15, 21; Hebrews 5:9).
- F. Jesus is Lord and Savior – He washes away sins (1 Peter 1:18-19; 3:18; Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16).

### **Conclusion**

1. Will you choose to follow the real Lord Jesus Christ today and become a Christian?