

Why I Believe...part 3
Why I Believe Jesus Is Real
Luke 1:1-4
By Russell Earl

Thesis: I want to show why you should believe Jesus is real.

Intro: 1. Why such a lesson? Because of the voices coming from the world. Dan Barker (Denomination preacher-turned-atheist) has this to say regarding the gospel accounts of Jesus:
“They are filled with exaggerations, miracles, and admitted propaganda. They were written during a context of time when myths were being born, exchanged, elaborated, and corrupted, and they were written to an audience susceptible to such fables. They were written to an audience susceptible to such fables. They are cut from the same cloth as other religions and fables of the time. Taking all of this into account, it is rational to conclude that the New Testament Jesus is a myth (1992).”

I. Testimony of Naysayers

A. Tacitus

1. **A member of the Roman provincial upper class, held high positions under several emperors.**
2. **In his writing “Annals” when speaking of the great fire of Rome. A fire many suspected Nero of starting, stated this: “Nero fabricated scapegoats-and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius’ reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus. But in spite of this temporary setback the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome.”**
3. **Tacitus hated both Christians and Christ, yet his words stand to show that Christ not only existed, and walked the earth, but that He was such an important figure that He gained the attention of the emperor himself.**

B. Pliny the Younger

1. **Pliny was sent by the Roman emperor Trajan to govern the affairs of the region of Bithynia.**
 - a. **It was from this location that He corresponded with the emperor about how to punish those professing to be Christians.**
2. Pliny used the name “Christ” three times in his letters to the emperor.
 - a. He also had this to say about those who professed to be a Christian.
 - i. *“affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds...”*

C. Testimony of Jesus among the Jews

1. The Talmud a book of history composed by Jewish rabbis
 - a. A history by the name of Bruce had this to say about the Talmud: *“According to the earlier 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.”*
 - i. 1st Century Judaism, in large part, refused to accept Jesus as the Son of God, yet it did not refuse to accept Him as a man who existed and is part of world history.

D. Josephus

1. Josephus writings are few by many of the Jewish nation as writings of a traitor. He names Christ twice in his book “Antiquities”.
 - a. *“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 lead away many Jews, and also Greeks. This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross of his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him a 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.”*

E. Jeffrey Jay Lowder

- a. co-founder and past president of “Internet Infidels, Inc., an international coalition of nontheists dedicated to promoting and defending a naturalistic worldview on the Internet,”. After attempting to refute much of the historical evidence regarding Jesus, had this to say concerning the testimony of Josephus and the existence of Christ. *“I think there is ample evidence to conclude that there was a historical Jesus. To my mind, the New Testament alone provides sufficient evidence for the historicity of Jesus, but the writings of Josephus also provide two independent, authentic references to Jesus”*

II. Additional Evidence

A. Eye-Witness Testimony (Lk 1:1-4)

1. The early “church father”, “Papias” is recorded as identifying Marks gospel as the eyewitness of Peter.
 - i. Papias was a disciple of the apostle John, so he was only one generation removed from Jesus Himself.
 - a. This is a very close testimony and strongly suggesting that the Gospels are based on eyewitness accounts, accounts that included testimony of Jesus.
2. Polycarp – an early Christian writer.
 - a. He wrote several letters including one titled “The Epistle to the Philippians”.
 - i. In this writing Jesus is mentioned at least 11 times, explains how Jesus “suffered even unto death,” and mentions several commandments and remarks from Jesus.

III. Lessons for us today.

- A. Christ is the most important aspect of World History
 - 1. Verified by Historians
 - 2. Verified by the Naysayers
 - 3. Verified by His followers
 - 4. Verified by past history books

Application & Conclusion:

- 1. Logical examination of the evidence points to Christ walking the earth and being more than just another man.
- 2. The evidence does not lie, Christ walked the earth.
 - a. When He walked the earth He did so as the Messiah and the Son of God.
- 3. Full Invitation

Non-Christians must:

Hear – James 1:22, Romans 10:15,17

Believe – Jn 12:44, Jn 8:24, Mt 16:16

Repent – Luke 13:2-3

Confess – John 12:42, Romans 10:9

Be Baptized – 1 Pt 3:21, Acts 22:16, Col 2:11, Mk 16:16, Rom 6:3-4

Live faithfully – John 14:15, Rev 2:10

Christians must:

Repent: Acts 17:20, Acts 8:37, Lk 13:3

Pray: James 5:16, 1 Jn 1:9