

Lessons in Bible History
“Historical Evidence for Jesus”

John 1:6-13

By Russell Earl

Thesis: I want to show the Historical Evidence for Christ.

- Intro:
1. Tonight we are going to do a brief history lesson on the Historical Evidence for Jesus.
 2. We will look at what skeptics have said and what Historians have said about the existence of Christ.

I. The Voice of Skeptics (Psalm 14:1)

A. Dan Barker

1. Denominational preacher-turned-Atheist Dan Barker once wrote
“The Gospel stories are no more historic than the Genesis creation accounts are scientific. 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 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.”

B. Timothy Freke & Peter Gandy

1. **“We have become convinced that the story of Jesus is not the biography of a Historical Messiah, but a myth based on perennial Pagan stories. Christianity was not a new and unique revelation but actually a Jewish adaptation of the ancient Pagan Mystery religion. This is what we have call the The Jesus Mysteries Thesis”**

C. Marshall J. Gauvin

1. **“Not only has the divinity of Christ been given up, but his existence as a man is being more and more seriously questioned. Some of the ablest scholars of the world deny that he every lived at all”**

D. Psalm 49:10

E. We must not allow the mocking of the non-believer deter us from giving sound & logical answers to questions about God (Ecc 7:6).

II. Historians & Jesus

1. Hostile Testimony

- a. **The first type of records comes from “hostile” sources. That is writers who mentioned Jesus in a negative light or derogatory fashion.**
- b. **These individuals rejected the teachings of Christ, thus, you cannot say they are biased as they acknowledged His existence but hated what He stood for.**
- c. Tacitus –
 - i. when referencing the “Great Fire of Rome” had this to say.
“Nero fabricated scapegoats-and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were called). Their

originator, Christ, had be executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus."

ii. Tacitus hated both Christians and their leader, Christ. He therefore had nothing positive to say about what he referred to as a "deadly superstition." He did, however, have something to say about it.

d. Suetonius

i. **In his history, Suetonius wrote: "Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbance at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from the city" (Claudius, 25:4; note that in Acts 18:2 Luke mentioned this expulsion by Claudius). It is believed that Chrestus is a probable misspelling of Christos, "the Greek word that translates the Hebrew 'Messiah' " (1993, pp. 49-50). Suetonius further noted: "Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief" (Nero, 16:2).**

e. Pliny

i. **"In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been denounced to me as Christians is this: I interrogated them whether they were Christians; if they confessed it I repeated the question twice again, adding the threat of capital punishment; if they still persevered, I ordered them to be executed".**

ii. **He noted that those who had professed Christianity 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..."**

2. Jewish Testimony

a. Josephus

i. **Jesus is mentioned by Josephus in Antiquities 18:3:3**

"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"

III. Lessons for us today

A. The truth about Skeptics

1. Skeptics cling to unproven ideas and theories

2. Skeptics have been shown to misrepresent the facts, deliberately

3. **1 Timothy 6:20b “falsely called knowledge”**

B. Meanwhile...

1. **Simple history shows the truth, Christ did exist, and so much more.**
2. **Even those who hated him, acknowledged his existence, by writing about their hatred of Him.**

Application & Conclusion:

1. **We can rest assured about the existence of our Savior.**
2. **The facts have been examined time and time again. The truth is in – Christ existed in the times of the apostles. He walked the earth, He healed the sick, and He died on the cross, and rose three days later (Isa 44:6)**
3. **The evidence doesn't lie (Rom 1:20)**
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