

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
CHRISTOLOGY: JESUS CHRIST
PART 5

This morning in our series on Foundation of Faith we continue looking at Christology or the study of Jesus Christ. Over the past few weeks we have looked at the fact that the Scriptures clearly speak of Jesus being God. That the attributes associated with Jesus are the same ones that we saw in God the Father. You see, only God is eternal, only God is all powerful, only God is all knowing, only God is present everywhere, only God is unchanging and thus, if these attributes are seen in Jesus, and they are, then He must be God, the second person of the Holy Trinity!

Not only is Jesus God, but in the Incarnation He became fully man. And as we saw, He was 100% God and 100% man in the Incarnation. I can't explain that, but that is what the Scriptures teach us. And we looked at the fact that Jesus was born of a woman; that He was subject to the laws of human development or He grew up; that He possessed the essential elements of human nature regarding having a body, soul and spirit; He was also subject to physical limitations in that He became weary, He slept, He hungered, He suffered physical agony, He experienced intense sorrow and distress and He died; and Jesus was subject to temptation. Fully God and fully man in the Incarnation!

And that is exactly what Paul tells us in Romans 1:1-4, **“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”** Paul is speaking of the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ in these verses!

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts verses 3 and 4 here in Romans chapter 1, **“[The Gospel] regarding His Son, Who as to the flesh (His human nature) was descended from David, And [as to His divine nature] according to the Spirit of holiness was openly designated the Son of God in power [in a striking, triumphant and miraculous manner] by His resurrection from the dead, even Jesus Christ our Lord (the Messiah, the Anointed One).”** And The Living Bible puts these two verses like this, **“It is the Good News about his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who came as a human baby, born into King David's royal family line; and by being raised from the dead he was proved to be the mighty Son of God, with the holy nature of God himself.”**

You can't miss what Paul is saying here unless you don't want to see it. Paul is clearly showing us the humanity of Jesus, that He was born of the seed of David, and also His divinity, that He was declared to be the Son of God. The Greek word for **“declared”** is HORIZO and we get our English word “horizon” from it. In other words, in response to Jesus being God, He has always been God and will always be God just as the horizon stretches forth across the sky!

What is the evidence of Jesus being the Messiah? His resurrection from the dead, that He had the power to rise the third day from the dead! Jesus said in John 10:18, “**No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.**” And the reality is, His whole life was a testimony to the fact that He is the Messiah as He fulfilled down to the tiniest detail all that the prophets said regarding Him!

Now here is the problem for many today, they don't even believe that Jesus existed; they don't believe that He was real, but made up in the minds of people. They feel that there is no historical evidence for Jesus being real and thus, if He is not real, then there is no humanity and there is no deity, you have nothing but a fable that people believe in, nothing more than a fairy tale!

Maybe you have talked with people that feel this way, that Jesus did not exist and they want evidence that does not come from the Bible to prove it because they feel the Bible was written by men and thus, they made it say what they wanted it to say. They made up Jesus and thus, there is no humanity or deity because there is no person!

Let me share with you what some people think about the historical Jesus and then we will look at extra Biblical evidence for the historical Jesus, is it out there. I think this is important for us to understand especially in a day when people are negating the authority of the Bible. And we will deal with the authenticity of the Bible when we get to that topic, but just keep in mind, from what I believe, the Bible is the inerrant, authoritative, inspired Word of God!

Let me share with you a few things from an article by Jim Walker called, “Did a historical Jesus exist? This is what he wrote,

Amazingly, the question of an actual historical Jesus rarely confronts the religious believer. The power of faith has so forcefully driven the minds of most believers, and even apologetic scholars, that the question of reliable evidence gets obscured by tradition, religious subterfuge, and outrageous claims. The following gives a brief outlook about the claims of a historical Jesus and why the evidence the Christians present us cannot serve as justification for reliable evidence for a historical Jesus.

No one has the slightest physical evidence to support a historical Jesus; no artifacts, dwelling, works of carpentry, or self-written manuscripts. All claims about Jesus derive from writings of other people. There occurs no contemporary Roman record that shows Pontius Pilate executing a man named Jesus. Devastating to historians, there occurs not a single contemporary writing that mentions Jesus. All documents about Jesus came well after the life of the alleged Jesus from either: unknown authors, people who had never met an earthly Jesus, or from fraudulent, mythical or allegorical writings. . . .

“Even if there was a historical Jesus lying back of the gospel Christ, he can never be recovered. If there ever was a historical Jesus, there isn’t one any more. All attempts to recover him turn out to be just modern remythologizings of Jesus. Every “historical Jesus” is a Christ of faith, of somebody’s faith. So the “historical Jesus” of modern scholarship is no less a fiction.” (Robert M. Price, “Jesus: Fact or Fiction, A Dialogue With Dr. Robert Price and Rev. John Rankin”).

Of course a historical Jesus may have existed, perhaps based loosely on a living human even though his actual history got lost, but this amounts to nothing but speculation. However we do have an abundance of evidence supporting the mythical evolution of Jesus. Virtually every detail in the gospel stories occurred in pagan and/or Hebrew stories, long before the advent of Christianity. We simply do not have a shred of evidence to determine the historicity of a Jesus “the Christ.” We only have evidence for the belief of Jesus.

So if you hear anyone who claims to have evidence for a witness of a historical Jesus, simply ask for the author’s birth date. Anyone whose birth occurred after an event cannot serve as an eyewitness, nor can their words alone serve as evidence for that event.

- Jim Walker, Did a historical Jesus exist?

First of all, if you want eyewitness accounts you have to go to the Bible because we have eyewitness accounts of the existence of Jesus. But if you want historical evidence outside the Bible, you go to historians and people that were antagonistic towards Christianity, because they have nothing to gain by speaking of Jesus, only stating that facts that He did exist! And yes, there are not volumes written of Jesus outside the Scriptures, but understand that He was nobody important who came from a hick town. In the Roman world He was not worth writing about even though we have some writings regarding Jesus outside of the Scriptures and I am going to share with you this evidence.

Now please understand that we are going to extra Biblical sources here and that is not my usual mode of operation, but I think it is important that we see and are able to defend ourselves before those who say that there is no secular evidence for Jesus, because there is! And again, there are many who deny the historical evidence for Jesus. Bertrand Russell, in his essay, "Why I Am Not a Christian" wrote, "Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him."

But that is truly foolish as you will see. Even Thomas Paine, who held Christianity in utter contempt, did not question the historicity of Jesus who is called the Christ. And granted, Paine denied the deity of Jesus, he thought they were mythological, but he did believe that Jesus actually lived. He wrote, "He [Jesus Christ] was a virtuous and amiable man. The morality that he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before; by the Quakers since; and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any."

And again, this is important for us to understand as our faith is grounded in history. New Testament scholar Donald Hagner wrote, “True Christianity, the Christianity of the New Testament documents, is absolutely dependent on history. At the heart of the New Testament faith is the assertion that ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself’ (2 Cor. 5:19 NASB). The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a real event in time and space, i.e., as historical realities, are the indispensable foundations of Christian faith. To my mind, then, Christianity is best defined as the recitation of, the celebration of, and the participation in God’s acts in history, which as the New Testament writings emphasize have found their culmination in Jesus Christ.” And so, let’s look at this extra Biblical evidence for the historical Jesus!

3. EXTRA BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS OF JESUS

Let's begin looking at Cornelius Tacitus, who lived in 55 to 120 A. D., who was a Roman historian and has been called the "greatest historian" of ancient Rome. Not only that, he was also known for his moral "integrity and essential goodness." Thus, not a believer and would gain nothing by lying about the historical Jesus and yet, listen to what he wrote regarding the reign of Nero and how he alludes to the death of Christ. We are told, "But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome. Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus [Christ] the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also."

Notice that we see Christians in Rome at this time, we see them persecuted for their faith by Nero and we see that their faith was in the Christ, in Jesus who was put to death by Pontius Pilate, just as the Bible tells us took place. Again, Tacitus gains nothing in lying about Jesus and thus, as a respected historian, why not believe what he is telling us? The only reason people reject what he is saying is they don't want to believe in Jesus!

Also there was Lucian of Samosata, a Greek man who lived a century after Christ and listen to what he wrote about Jesus and the followers of Jesus. We are told from his book, *The Death of Peregrine*, “The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day - the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. . . . You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.”

And in his book, *The Passing Peregrinus* he states “the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world.”

Again, notice what he is saying. First of all we see the widespread worship of Jesus and that He was crucified just as the Scriptures tell us. He tells us of the faith of Christians that is based on the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament. And, once again this man is not a believer and gains nothing by speaking of Jesus and His disciples and yet he does so because it is a part of history, Jesus was real!

And there is another Roman historian named Suetonius, who served as a court official under Hadrian and he wrote in his *Life of Claudius*, “As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [another spelling of Christus], he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.”

Now what I want you to notice here is what Luke tells us in Acts 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.**” In other words, what we see Suetonius do is substantiating what the Bible has to say regarding the expulsion of the Jews. You see, in 49 AD Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome. And these were not unbelievers, but they were the followers of Christ that were causing trouble. Bruce puts it this way in regards to the expulsion of the Jews, “dissension and disorder within the Jewish community of Rome resulting from the introduction of Christianity into one or more of the Synagogues of the city.” Again, we have a secular writer speaking of Jesus being real, that He existed and was the cause of the Jews being expelled from Rome!

Then there was Plinius Secundus, also known as Pliny the Younger and he was the Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor or modern day Turkey in 112 A. D. And he was not a good man, he was brutal towards Christians. And what I am going to share with you is a letter that he wrote to Emperor Trajan asking counsel in what he should do with Christians, how he should treat them. You see, he was killing men, women and children and he was killing so many Christians that he was wondering if he should kill anyone who was discovered to be a Christian or only certain ones. He made Christians bow down to the statues of Trajan and he also “made them curse Christ, which a genuine Christian cannot be induced to do.”

He goes on to say in that same letter to Emperor Trajan regarding the people being tried, these Christians, “They affirmed, however, that 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 verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up.” Notice that he says that these Christians worshiped Christ as a god, and he is mistaken. They did not worship Him as a god but the God. Here is a man who is putting to death Christians for their faith in Christ, for their refusal to bow the knee and say that Trajan is Lord and through it all they are honorable people. If Jesus did not exist, why did Pliny the Younger mention Him and why would these people die for a lie? You see, there is historical evidence for Jesus!

Here is another person stating the fact that Jesus existed and please understand, he is not a believer and what he says about some of these other philosophers doesn't negate that he speaks of Jesus. Listen to what Mara Bar-Serapion, a Syrian and probably a Stoic philosopher, wrote some time after 70 A. D. And keep in mind that this letter was written to his son from prison and encouraging him to pursue wisdom. This is what he wrote,

“What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; He lived on in the teaching which He had given.”

Again, I am not saying his theology is correct; Jesus was not just a good teacher or philosopher. Jesus does not live in His teaching but in His resurrection. But what I want you to notice is that he had no problem with the fact that Jesus was real, that He walked this earth and was not something that people made up over the years! He is not a believer and yet he clearly speaks of Jesus!

And a name that some of you may be familiar with and that is Josephus ben Mattathias, also known as Flavius Josephus. Flavius was his Roman name and Josephus his Jewish name. This man was a Pharisee and a priest living in Jerusalem. He was born in 37 A. D. and died sometime after 100 A. D. Thus, he saw first hand all the events leading up to the destruction of the Temple by the Romans. In fact, he was a general of the Jewish rebel forces in Galilee, fighting against Rome.

And then Josephus was captured by the Romans at the fall of the city of Jotapata and ended up being friends with the Roman General, Vespasian. Then, in Rome of 94 A. D. Josephus published his study of the Jewish people and called it Antiquities of the Jews. And in this book is a passage that has caused great debate and concern if it is accurate or not. Let me share with you what he wrote and then we will look at the authenticity of his statement. And please understand the only reason it is being questioned is because it mentions Jesus as an orthodox Jew. Listen carefully to what he wrote,

“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.”

As you read this you see that there is a little evidence for the existence of Jesus in this document. And think about it, he is writing about the history of the Jews and if he was not good at it, if he just made things up, they would have exposed him for it because the writing of this was only some 60 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and there were many witnesses of these events still living.

Look at some of the things he said. First of all he speaks of Jesus, that he was real, that he lived. Not only that but He is the Christ or the Messiah just as the Jewish Scriptures foretold would come! How can he be so certain? He was a Pharisee and a priest and thus, he knew the Old Testament Scriptures, even though he was now a turn coat, siding with Rome! He came to save both Jews and Gentiles, which is supported by the New Testament Scriptures and even the Old Testament Scriptures! He was crucified under Pilate, and then, on the third day He appeared to His disciples alive, again, as the prophets foretold! Thus, Christians are followers of Christ and they were in existence in Josephus' day and on into our day because Jesus is real, He lived and died for our sins and there is extra Biblical evidence to support this fact!

Then what is the problem? Listen carefully to what Grant Jeffrey wrote, Numerous liberal scholars have declared that this reference to Jesus Christ and another reference to James and John the Baptist must be interpolations or forgeries by later Christian editors. In other words they have concluded that Josephus's reference to Jesus could not possibly be genuine. However, such an assertion of forgery requires significant proof. Yet none of these scholars can produce a single ancient copy of Josephus's Antiquities of the Jews, that does not contain this passage on Jesus. If they had found dozens of ancient copies of Josephus's book that failed to contain this passage they would have some "evidence" that this was not an original passage by the Jewish historian.

- Grant Jeffery, The Signature of God, p. 92

Then why go through so much trouble to negate the fact that Jesus actually lived, that He walked this earth? That is very simple, to deny the existence of Jesus you now have just a fairy tale to believe in, it is not true, none of it and thus, you do away with God and that is exactly what they are trying to do and yet they have no evidence to support their fairy tale that Jesus did not exist!

Grant Jeffery goes on to say that,

However, Philip Schaff declared in his book, *History of the Christian Church*, that all ancient copies of Josephus's book, including the early Slavonic [Russian] and Arabic language versions, contain the disputed passage about the life of Christ. Every one of the ancient copies from the fourth and fifth centuries in several different languages contains these passages. No one has ever explained how an editor could have altered each of these widely distributed versions during the centuries following their publication. The real reason why these liberal scholars reject the Josephus passage out of hand is their deeply ingrained prejudice that it could not be genuine because it confirms the historicity of the claims about Jesus Christ. If the events recorded in the Gospels actually occurred, it is only natural that Josephus would mention them at the appropriate place in his narrative of that turbulent century. In fact, it would be astonishing if Josephus had failed to mention anything about the ministry and resurrection of Jesus.

- Grant Jeffery, *The Signature of God*, p. 92-93

And keep in mind that Josephus had nothing to gain by writing about Jesus, he was not a believer. Then why did he write about Jesus? Very simply, he was recording the history of the Jews and Jesus played a role in their history. You see, why would he negate an historical event? He wouldn't and he didn't!

In fact, regarding this whole issue, R. C. Stone said this in his article titled, Josephus, "The passage concerning Jesus has been regarded by some as a Christian interpolation; but the bulk of the evidence, both external and internal, marks it as genuine. Josephus must have known the main facts about the life and death of Jesus, and his historian's curiosity certainly would lead him to investigate the movement which was gaining adherents even in high circles. Arnold Toynbee rates him among the five greatest Hellenic historians."

And folk's, there is more writings of Josephus that show us that Jesus did exist, that He walked this earth. Again, in his book Antiquities of the Jews he speaks of the death of James, the half-brother of Jesus. He wrote, "As therefore Ananus (the High Priest) as of such a disposition, he thought he had now a good opportunity, as Festus (the Roman Procurator) was now dead, and Albinus (the new Procurator) was still on the road; so he assembles a council of judges, and brought before it the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, whose name was James, together with some others, and having accused them as law-breakers, he delivered them over to be stoned."

Here we see Josephus, only a half century after the death and resurrection of Jesus, attesting to the fact that Jesus was not a figment of the churches imagination but a real historical figure!

Let me give to you just two more extra Biblical sources regarding the historical Jesus and this first one is from a North African Christian teacher named Julius Africanus and he wrote this in 215 A. D. And what Julius did was record the writing of a pagan historian by the name of Thallus and Thallus lived in 52 A. D., only some 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and thus, an eyewitness to these events. And what Thallus wrote about was this darkness that covered the land and this is what Julius wrote, “Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun – unreasonably, as it seems to me (unreasonably, of course, because a solar eclipse could not take place at the time of the full moon, and it was at the season of the Paschal full moon that Christ died.)”

Remember what the Scriptures tell us regarding this time, “**Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.**” Mark 15:33. Jesus was placed on the cross at 9 AM and now from 12 noon until He gave up His spirit at 3 PM, darkness covered the land. Now some say this was just a local darkness, but the word for, “**land**” is GE, (ghay) in the Greek from which we get our word, “geography” from. So it seems to imply that darkness covered the whole earth and every major culture does speak of these 3 hours of darkness! Also, Amos speaks of this day when he says, “**‘And it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight; I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day.’**” Amos 8:9-10.

Now here is the thing. If you did not believe in Jesus, if you deny He is God and came to die for your sins, to pay them in full, when this darkness comes upon the land in the middle of the day and lasts for three hours, you are going to try and come up with a naturalistic explanation for this event, and that is what Thallus tried to do, but it did not fit the picture, he was wrong with it being a eclipse! And here is the thing, Thallus did not deny the crucifixion of Jesus, he just tried to come up with a reason for what took place, this darkness and he tried to use nature to justify what took place. The key, of course, is that the basic facts were not called into question, just a difference in interpretation of what took place that day!

The last one in regards to extra Biblical sources pointing to the existence of Jesus comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls. These Scrolls were written by the Essenes who established a religious community near the shores of the Dead Sea. And they had a zeal for the Word of God, faithfully copying each of the Old Testament scrolls in their village in Qumran. Listen carefully to what Grant Jeffery wrote about one scroll that points to the crucified Messiah. We are told,

In 1991 the world was astonished to hear that one of the unpublished scrolls included incredible references to a “Messiah” who suffered crucifixion for the sins of men. The scroll was translated by Dr. Robert Eisenman, Professor of Middle East Religions of California State University. He declared, “The text is of the most far-reaching significance because it shows that whatever group was responsible for these writings was operating in the same general scriptural and Messianic framework of early Christianity.” Although the original scroll team still claimed that there was no evidence about early Christianity in the unpublished scrolls, this new scroll totally contradicted their statements. This single scroll is earth-shaking in its importance. As Dr. Norman Golb, Professor of Jewish History at the University of Chicago said, “It shows that contrary to what some of the editors said, there are lots of surprises in the scrolls, and this is one of them.”

This remarkable five-line scroll contained fascinating information about the death of the Messiah. It referred to “the Prophet Isaiah” and his Messianic prophecy (chapter 53) that identified the Messiah as one who will suffer for the sins of his people. This scroll provides an amazing parallel to the New Testament revelation that the Messiah would first suffer death before He would ultimately return to rule the nations. Many scholars believed that the Jews during the first century of our era believed that, when he finally came, the Messiah would rule forever without dying. The exciting discovery of this scroll reveals that the Essene writer of this scroll understood the dual role of the Messiah as Christians did. This scroll identified the Messiah as the “Shoot of Jesse” (King David’s father) the “Branch of David,” and declared that he was “Pierced” and “wounded.” The word “pierced” reminds us of the Messianic prophecy in Psalm 22:16, “They pierced my hands and feet.” The prophet Jeremiah (23:5) said, “I will raise unto David a righteous branch.” . . .

This scroll confirms the historical truthfulness of the New Testament record about Jesus and His crucifixion. The evidence from the scroll suggests that the Jewish Essene writer acknowledged that Jesus of Nazareth was the “suffering Messiah” who died for the sins of His people.

- Grant Jeffery, *The Signature of God*, p. 99-100

And just think about this for a minute. In the 1974 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica they wrote about Jesus Christ and they used twenty-thousand words to describe Him. That is pretty good considering those that say there is no information on Jesus, no extra Biblical information. In fact, there was more space given to this so-called fictitious person than Aristotle, Cicero, Alexander, Julius, Caesar, Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, or even Napoleon Bonaparte! Not too bad, don't you think for a person who, by some, did not really exist!

Thus, there is ample extra Biblical sources that attribute to the fact that Jesus was a real person. Howard Clark Kee, who was the professor emeritus at Boston University, made the following comments regarding outside sources regarding Jesus, those that are outside of the New Testament. He wrote,

The result of the examination of the sources outside the New Testament that bear directly or indirectly on our knowledge of Jesus is to conform his historical existence, his unusual powers, the devotion of his followers, the continued existence of the movement after his death at the hands of the Roman governor in Jerusalem, and the penetration of Christianity into the upper strata of society in Rome itself by the later first century. . . .

In spite of this range of ways in which the tradition about Jesus has been transmitted, we have available clear and remarkably consistent array of evidence about this figure whose life, teachings, and death have continued to have such a profound impact on the subsequent history of the human race.

- Howard Clark Kee, *What Can We Know about Jesus?*, pp. 19, 114

R. T. France had this to say, “Non-Christian evidence, therefore substantiates the fact of Jesus’ existence, his popular following, his execution and the rough date.” There is the evidence, you can accept it or reject it but don’t say there is no extra Biblical evidence for the existence of Jesus.

Let me make this last point and then I will close this morning. Edwin Yamauchi, professor of history at Miami University, said that we have more and even better historical documentation for Jesus than for any other religious founder. Can you imagine saying that Mohammed never lived, he was made up, he was a fairy tale? You would have an outcry from the Muslim community and the reality is, there is no one challenging the existence of Mohammed, why? Because he is not God, he is not the truth and the Devil can care less about a lie that leads people to Hell, so why bother fighting against something that is working in his favor! But to deny the existence of Jesus, to get people to believe that He is not real, that He is not God, will send them to Hell, and thus, the attack against His existence continues on, even today!

Listen to the remarks that Edwin Yamauchi made in regards to the non Biblical sources that testify of Jesus, that He existed. He wrote,

Even if we did not have the New Testament of Christian writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger that: (1) Jesus was a Jewish teacher; (2) many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms; (3) he was rejected by the Jewish leaders; (4) he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; (5) despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by A.D. 64; (6) all kinds of people from the cities and countryside – men and women, slaves and free – worshipped him as God by the beginning of the second century.

- Edwin Yamauchi, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: What Is the Evidence?*” *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, (Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland), pp. 221-22

So I believe the evidence is overwhelming for the historical Jesus, that He is real. And let me leave you with this to think about. As you study what is out there you will find that there is overwhelming evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ, both in secular and Biblical history. But, perhaps the greatest evidence that Jesus did exist is the fact that literally thousands of Christians in the first century A. D., including the twelve apostles, were willing to give their lives as martyrs for Jesus Christ. People will die for what they believe to be true, but no one will die for what they know to be a lie.