

Jesus: Myth or Man? Maniac or Messiah?

The following is not a joke: What do Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD 55-120), Suetonius (c. AD 69-122), Thallus (writing c. 52 AD), and Josephus (c. AD 37-100) all have in common?

Other than their funny names, and in addition to being noted historians who lived in the first century in the Roman Empire, none of them were Christians yet each made reference to “Christ” — a Jewish man at the head of a religious movement.

Many other non-Christians who lived in the first and second (and third and fourth...) centuries also referred to Christ. And while we cannot include every quote in this article, here is one for you to sample:

“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 trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.” (Lucian of Samosata, born c. AD 125, *The Death of Peregrine*, 11-12. Source:

www.sacred-texts.com.)

These kinds of historical statements are significant. Allow me be explicit: **The man Jesus Christ really lived!** In fact, as the renowned scholar F.F. Bruce wrote, “Some writers may toy with the fancy of the ‘Christ-myth,’ but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. *It is not historians who propagate the ‘Christ-myth’ theories*” (as quoted by Joshua McDowell in *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, 1999. P. 120, emphasis added).

Consider some other facts that can be gleaned from non-Christian writers of ancient times: It was Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, who crucified Christ, and this happened in the reign of Tiberius; it was dark (in the day time!) during Christ’s crucifixion; Christ, it was supposed, was then resurrected; Christians worshipped Christ as God on a certain fixed day; this was a new religion. Why call attention to these things? The point is, being that the Bible also records these very things, the trustworthiness of the Bible is demonstrated (again and again and again...): *if the Bible says it, you can believe it!* (See our last flier —write or call if you don’t have it.)

Someone may ask, “But what about the things in the Bible that are unverifiable today, things like “miracles”?” Great question!

First, because God is (see our second flier — write or call if you don’t have it), miracles are possible. Once this “difficulty” is overcome, since the Bible continually demonstrates its

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trustworthiness in what can be verified, trusting the Bible in what cannot be verified is easy! It is like trusting your parents when they tell you that you were born on such and such day: The event itself is unrepeatable, and you “were not there” to witness it, but because you have verified your parents’ trustworthiness in general, you trust them when they tell you your birthdate.

Second, we do have evidence of something in the Bible that, despite being unverifiable when it was spoken, it since has been verified; namely, the end of the Jewish nation and the destruction of Jerusalem (by Titus in AD 70). In Matthew 24, Jesus foretold [unverifiable when spoken] that would happen. In a letter to his son written sometime after AD 70, Mara Bar-Serapion, referred to this event as something that had already happened [verified]: “What advantage did the Jews have in executing their wise King? It was just after that their kingdom was abolished. ... the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion” (McDowell.123).

We’ve said a lot; let’s review: (1) Things in the Bible that can be verified are in fact always verified as true. (2) Many things in the Bible that were not verifiable when written have since been verified as true. (3) Because God is, there is sufficient reason to believe the miracles in the Bible did occur. (And note well that people alive back then have verified them; so the miracles are not

without verification!)

This leads us to the following observation about Jesus: Not only was He a real man but also **He was is the real Messiah, and He is the real Son of God!**

What leads us to this conclusion? *The Bible tells us so!* Consider just two passages:

- “...Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know ... This Jesus God raised up ... exalted to the right hand of God ... therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:...22, 32, 33, 36, NASB).
- Jesus “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4, NASB).

Can you justify ignoring the proof of the historicity of Jesus and His subsequent Lordship? That is to ask, are any such justifications actually reasonable?

If you would like to discuss this or any other spiritual matter with us, we would be thrilled if you contacted us (see below)!

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The Indian River Church of Christ

We meet in the Shopping Center at 2 South Main Street in Philadelphia NY.

We assemble Sunday mornings at 10 for Bible study and at 11 for worship.

We also assemble Thursday evenings at 7:15 for Bible study.

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