

# Who Do You Say I Am?

## I. Was Jesus merely human?

- A. In his essay, "Why I am not a Christian." the British philosopher **Bertrand Russell** says, "Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him." (Russell, WIANC, 16)
- B. In **Dan Brown's** popular novel/movie *The Davinci Code* we are told that everything we were ever told about Jesus is wrong. But that with some enlightenment we can discover the real truth that Jesus was just a man.
- C. While you and I may disagree with both of these men it is a sad reality that their opinions about Jesus are shared by many. Why is it important to humanize or even fictionalize Jesus? Because if he is made up or only a human being it reduces his relevance today.
- D. Jesus Questioned His Own Disciples by asking them, "**Who Do You Say I Am?**"

### E. **Matthew 16:13-15**

## II. Who is Jesus of Nazareth?

### A. According to History

1. **Cornelius Tacitus** writing of Nero's persecution of the Christians says, "Christus, 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." (Tacitus was the leading Roman historian of his day and he confirms that Jesus most certainly did live and did die.)

2. Another Roman historian, **Suetonius**, wrote. "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of the Chrestus, {Claudius} expelled them from Rome." Luke refers to this same event in Acts 18:2 which happened in AD 49. This confirms that Christianity had already spread to Rome in less than 20 years after the cross. He goes on to write that the Christians were dying for their convictions that Jesus had really lived, died, and risen from the dead.
3. In the Jewish Babylonian **Talmud** we read: "It has been taught: On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshua...because he practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray."
4. And **Josephus**, the Jewish historian born just a few years after Jesus died. Writes in His book, *The Antiquities* (18.63-64): "About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their

affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.”

5. The evidence from the hostile non-Christian sources is in. Jesus was most certainly a real historical person. Once again our trust in the Bible is affirmed.

#### **B. From Eyewitnesses**

1. **2Peter 1:16-19** “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”
2. **1Corinthians 15:3-5** “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.”(creedal statement)

- C. Using just the New Testament Gary Habermas has come up with at least 17 historical claims that the **early Church** made about Jesus...

1. Jesus was born in real human flesh
2. He was of the family of David
3. He was Baptized
4. His word was preached
5. People believed His message
6. He attended a dinner
7. On the night of his betrayal
8. He gave thanks before the meal
9. shared both bread and drink
10. which he declared represented his imminent atoning sacrifice
11. Jesus stood before Pilate and made a good confession
12. He was King of the Jews
13. He was killed for mankind’s sin
14. In spite of his righteous life
15. After his death he was resurrected
16. this event validated his person and message
17. He ascended to heaven and was glorified and exalted.

#### **D. In His Own Words**

1. Claimed to be Messiah- **Mark 14:61-62** “But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.””
2. Claimed to forgive Sin- **Mark 2:5-7** “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow

- talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
3. Claimed to be God- **John 8:58-59** "'I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds."
  4. Other claims of Christ include: raising and judging the dead, equal authority with God, acceptance of worship as God, and praying in his name as if to God. He called himself: the Good shepherd, the son of God, and the son of man (messianic title from Daniel 7).

- D. What does it mean that he cared more about the poor and helpless than the rich and religious?
- E. I invite you to take a real look inside yourself today. If you find hopelessness, sin, and pain, then you need Jesus!

### **III. Why does this make him relevant?**

- A. **How does all this make Jesus relevant today?**
- B. Listen again to the question and the response in **Matthew 16:13-17**
  1. The Promised One
  2. The Son of God (monogeneēs)
  3. The Living God
- C. **Is he Liar Lord or Lunatic?**
- D. If Jesus is much more than a man if he truly is **the image of God in human form** (Hebrews 1:3).
- E. Then it makes a difference!
- F. He is God's answer to my sinfulness.
- G. He is the way the truth and the life.
- H. He brings healing to the sick and freedom to those in captivity.

### **IV. What does He Mean to You?**

- A. Ask yourself what does the arrival of God in human flesh mean to me?
- B. What does it mean to you that the God of the universe paid the price of your sin?
- C. What does it mean that death could not keep him in the ground?