

The Historical Jesus



Who Is This Jesus?

- Christianity is the religion of history.
- The religion of Jesus Christ presents itself in the events of human history
- Paul in making the case for the resurrection on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus wrote of the various people who had seen Jesus alive after his crucifixion.

What Does Historical Evidence Say about Jesus?

- Christian faith is not some blind leap in the dark.
- Faith is assurance, confidence, and certainty.
- Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.” (ASV)
- “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (NIV)
- Those are strong and confident words. Is there sufficient historical events to back it up?

What are the Roman sources of evidence?

- The Roman historian Tacitus wrote of Nero and the terrible fire at Rome in July of A.D. 64.
- He tells of how some of the citizens suspected the emperor himself of having put the city to the torch and of Nero's wicked attempt to divert suspicion from himself.

- Tacitus was no friend of Christianity and he didn't join in with people trying to invent a character.
- His reports are a matter-of-fact account of an unsympathetic historian about the presence and impact of a Jewish religious figure.
- He wrote around 115 A.D.

- Another Roman historian Suetonius writing of the career of Claudius (emperor of Rome A.D. 41-54).
- He writes: the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.
- While not a direct reference to the life of Jesus, it proves the existence of the Christian movement in Rome within 20 years of the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

- Josephus born around 37 or 38 A.D. gives corroboration background information that is current to New Testament times.
- Our preaching of Jesus cannot be divorced from historical fact.
- We must have the courage and the honesty to allow Christianity to be investigated historically and scientifically.

The Jesus of Faith

- What do these secular sources have to do with saving faith?
- It is the gospel (Good News) of Jesus' atoning death that is the basis of our hope, and not a reliance on secular history.
- Of course the gospel's central message is the person and life of Jesus.

- “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).
- “Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

- They explain the response we are expected to make to him; we must believe and obey him unto eternal life.
- “For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16).
- But the who and why of Jesus and the response we should make to him cannot be separated from the facts of history.

If the facts are dubious or false, there is no gospel

- Can the events, places and people be trusted if they are in doubt in history?
- The parting of the Red Sea reveals nothing to us about God if it never occurred.
- So if Jesus was not a real figure of history, live, die and was bodily raised from the dead then there is no gospel for us to preach.

- History bears record to what God has done in sending Jesus into the world.
- While history corroborates His life it is the Bible that gives us the clear meaning of His life.
- In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son.