

## The Real Jesus: Part 1- Did Jesus Exist?

### I. INTRO

- A. Welcome/Online/So What about.
- B. Easter coming.
  - 1. Around this time we start seeing a lot the documentaries and news articles about one person... Jesus.
  - 2. Claiming to have new information that shock the experts.
  - 3. People get really interested about this stuff... seems to loom large in our culture and many other cultures as well...
  - 4. As the historian H.G. Wells said... **Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.**
  - 5. He may be the most dominant but that doesn't mean there is an agreement about who he was or is.
  - 6. Ask 10 people who do you think Jesus is? And You'll likely get 10 different answers.
    - a. Good man/Teacher/Jewish Rabbi/Healer/Myth/Son of God
- C. **Problem of God. Mark Clark**
- D. It's important for us, whether you're a Jesus-follower or not, to look into to this.
  - 1. B/c **if we can discover the real Jesus...** who he was, what he taught, what he did... **we can discover the real us and real life.**
- E. In order to find the real Jesus we first need to discover... did Jesus really exist?
  - 1. Might seem like a funny question... but this is something many people wrestle with and question.

### II. Problem

- A. **The Christ Myth...**
  - 1. **Jesus Christ never existed.**
  - 2. **The early church** got together and **created him out of mythologies that predate Xianity.**
  - 3. They used Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Hindu mythologies that came 1000's of years before Jesus.
  - 4. They just made up a new religion... trying to fool people.
  - 5. Xianity is the greatest story ever SOLD to the world.
  - 6. Anyone who follows or believes in a real Jesus has been duped.
  - 7. Proponents of this theory point out how closely the story of Jesus in the gospels aligns with the stories of Horus, Dionysus, Mithras, and others.
    - a. Stories about dying gods rising from the dead, healing people, having 12 disciples, even being born from virgins.
  - 8. We're going to look at these similarities but first we have to point out...
- B. **This theory is not taken seriously by legitimate scholars.**
  - 1. It's a great conspiracy theory... but that's all it is...
    - a. Along the lines of the 9/11 conspiracy theories or the moon landing conspiracies.
- C. Google Mithras and Jesus or Horus and Jesus... it's a fun journey into the creative human mind... but it's simply not history.
- D. How do we know?- Actual historical study

### III. History

- A. **Proof for the existence of Jesus**
- B. First we have **the biblical writings**... written by eyewitnesses... See Part 3 of our so what about series.
- 1. 1 John 1:1-3**
  - “Yeah but those were written by the people biased people”... OK...
  - FYI- just b/c my police report was biased doesn't mean it's not true.
- C. There are also at least 10 **1<sup>st</sup> century historians and writers outside of the biblical writings** who mention Jesus of Nazareth by name.

#### 2 examples...

- ...so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned:

Josephus, *Antiquities*. Book 20: chapter 9

- Writing in 93-94 Describing the death of James in 62.

- Nero fastened the guilt... on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate.

Tacitus, *Annals*. Book 15, chapter 44.

- Writing in 116 about the great fire in Rome in July of 64.
- Facts about Rome in the mid 60's
  - 1) There was already a sizable number of xians in Rome at this time.
  - 2) And many of the facts of the Jesus story were known even to unbelievers

- Non-biblical writers say many of the same things the New Testament writers says about Jesus...
  - He was a charismatic leader
  - The Jews and Romans killed him
  - His disciples claimed he was resurrected from the dead after he was crucified by Pontius Pilate
  - And that his early followers worshipped him as God, resulting in their torture and death.
- Which leads to our next proof... **the history of the early church** itself is proof of the existence of Jesus.
  - Despite persecutions from both Jews and the Roman Empire, Xianity grew from a group of 12 disciples to over 33 million people in just 350 years.
  - By 400 AD, 56% of the entire population of the Roman Empire were Xians.
  - How did this happen?
  - Why were his followers, even family members, willing to be tortured and die for this belief?
  - They got no power over the susceptible masses b/c of this belief.
  - If it was made up... someone would've cracked... people always give in when there's a conspiracy or crime.
  - Not the early xians... why?
  - B/c they had seen the real Jesus die and had seen the real Jesus rise again.
  - They weren't afraid of what Rome would do to them.
  - The rise of the early church is one of the anomalies of history.
  - The fact that largest religion in the world grew so quickly from a single man and 12 followers, often at the cost of their own lives is astounding.
- SO that's the surface of the proof FOR a historical Jesus... but what about those myths we talked about?

#### IV. The Myths

A. Most popular comparison is with the Egyptian god **Horus**

**(Pictures are below).**

1. He was one of the oldest and most significant deities in ancient Egypt.
2. Here are some of the claims made about his similarities with Jesus.
  - a. He was born from a virgin
  - b. On Dec 25<sup>th</sup>
  - c. Had 12 disciples
  - d. He was crucified and rose from the dead.
3. **Facts**- No Egyptologist accepts this theory.
4. Born of a virgin?
  - a. Mother was Isis Father was Osiris.
  - b. Osiris was in a fight was killed and his body was chopped up.
  - c. Isis gathered up the body parts and hovered over his distinctly male part in order to conceive Horus.
  - d. Not really a virgin birth.
5. Same birthday as Jesus?
  - a. Jesus' birthday isn't Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - b. No one knows for sure most say around Sept or Oct.
  - c. Pope Julius I declared it was Jesus birthday in 350 ad to counter the pagan Roman celebration of the god Saturnalia.
6. 12 disciples?
  - a. No mention of 12 disciples in the Egyptian book of the dead or ancient hieroglyphics.
  - b. The only mention of followers of Horus are 4 disciples
    - 1) A turtle, a bear, a lion, and a tiger.
    - 2) More in common with Dorothy than Jesus.
7. Crucified? Nope. Most stories don't have him dying at all.
8. Resurrection?
  - a. The one story that talks about him dying...
  - b. He is cut up in pieces and thrown into water. Crocodiles then fish his body out.
9. Makes for fun internet reading but not based on any historical fact.

B. What about the Greek god **Dionysus**?

1. Greek god of wine and other fun things
  2. Similarities
    - a. Both divine and human
    - b. Virgin birth on Dec 25<sup>th</sup>
    - c. Rose from the dead
    - d. Had disciples who followed him as he taught truth.
  3. Birth- Zeus tricked and seduced a human princess who conceived Dionysus.
    - a. Hera (Zeus' wife) tricked Zeus into showing the princess who he really was which resulted in the princess dying.
    - b. To save the baby Zeus sowed him into his thigh and when the baby came out he was called the twice born or... BORN AGAIN!
  4. Rose from the dead?
    - a. Comes from previous story or the story Titans eating everything of Dionysus but his heart that they left on the ground.
    - b. Zeus comes down defeats the Titans and brings Dionysus back to life with his own heart.
    - c. Some claim this is a clear parallel of Jesus dying on a cross and rising from the dead.
  5. Disciples?
    - a. Stories talk about Dionysus going around teaching people how to make wine... JUST LIKE JESUS!
  6. All very very big stretches.
- C. What about **Mithras**?
1. Very popular with the Roman military from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.
    - a. Might have borrowed idea from Persia.
    - b. Mystery religion most of what is known is from ancient reliefs and sculptures.
  2. Similarities
    - a. Born of a virgin on Dec 25<sup>th</sup>
    - b. Shepherds attended his birth
    - c. Had 12 disciples

d. Was buried in a tomb and 3 day later rose from the dead.

3. Birth- Born fully formed out of a rock with a dagger in one hand and a torch in the other.
4. There were shepherds at his birth... they help dig him out of the rock.
5. Did not have 12 disciples- Persian version has 1 Roman has 2
6. No record of Mithras dying
7. Biggest problem? Earliest stories date at least 100 yrs after the Gospels.
  - a. In fact early church writers Tertullian and Justin Martyr write about how the Mithraic cults took some of their practices like baptism and communion and Christian symbols FROM xianity.
8. So saying Jesus didn't exist b/c stories about Mithras' death and resurrection are similar is like saying Jesus didn't exist b/c Harry potter dies and comes back to life.

- D. So are there parallels in these myths and the story of Jesus?
1. Maybe... but you really have to stretch it... beside if there are parallels does that mean Jesus didn't exist?

## V. GOD

- A. In fact **if the story of Jesus is true there should be similar myths that predate him...** WHAT?
- B. If there is a God who made everything and from the beginning planned on coming as the Savior of the world... he would have prepared people and cultures to understand and anticipate him.
  1. Would have prepared our hearts to respond.

## C. Colossians 2:16-17

1. All the religious festivals, celebrations, symbols, and myths were a shadow... and anticipation of the real Jesus.
2. **Myths prepared people to understand the truth of Jesus when it actually happened.**
3. As J.R.R Tolkien explained to a friend the idea that the Christ story has been woven into the fabric of stories we

have told each other. "Our myths might be misguided, but they steer however shakily towards the true harbor."

- D. After thinking through this C.S. Lewis decided to become a xian... he wrote.

1. The old myth of the dying God comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens- at a particular date, in a particular place. From Osiris, dying- nobody knows when or where- to a historical person crucified (it is all in order) under Pontius Pilate, it says. Christ is more than Osiris, not less. We must not be ashamed of the parallels... they ought to be there, it would be a stumbling block if they weren't! Those who do not know that this great myth became FACT when the Virgin conceived are, indeed, to be pitied."

## E. We are drawn to great stories because God put a longing for the greatest story in our hearts.

## VI. YOU

- A. So to reject Xianity b/c of forced parallels with pagan stories is naïve...
- B. But to ignore the fact that these myths point to truth would be a mistake as well.
- C. The myths in their way, point to the historical fact that there was a man who was God who saved the world through his death and resurrection.
- D. Did the real Jesus really exist?- I think you owe it to yourself to find out once and for all.
  1. Think about it... (Jesus-Follower or Not)
  2. If he did exist, the world would have been positively impacted by his life... check
  3. If he did exist, the lives of his followers would show transformation... check
  4. If he exists today, he should be drawing you to himself in very personal ways... check?
  5. **How has Jesus been making your story part of his great story?**

6. What have you seen in your life that could be evidence of his activity in your life?

- a. A close call?
- b. A decision that protected you in some way?
- c. Coincidences that seem more than coincidences?
- d. Could be positive or negative circumstance that made you think about him differently
- e. Or even an unusual thought or even impression that there is more going on than meets the eye?

B. One of Jesus first followers- Peter wrote that God doesn't want anyone to have to live or die without him but for everyone to come to know his love now and forever.

C. Jesus said that no one comes to God unless God draws them to himself.

1. How has God been drawing you personally?
2. How has he been showing you that this greatest story... this myth come true might actually be for you?

D. Here's what I believe...

E. **The real Jesus really existed.**

F. It's better than a myth... it's more than a myth.

G. It's the truth that all great myths point to.

H. So what did he teach? What did he do? Who did he really say he was?

I. Come back.

J. Read the Gospels.