

PROVING THE BIBLE

Lesson Six

The Historical Truth of Jesus

The Bible is God's Word

Is the Bible God's Word? In order to know we would need to show evidence that the Bible is beyond human ability. The Bible contains things that people on their own could simply not have known.

So far we have looked at four lines of evidence:

The Bible is Scientifically Accurate – for example: paths of the sea, quarantine, soap, handling the dead, food safety requirements and more.

The Bible is Historically Accurate – it is 100% perfectly accurate. Remember archeological evidence such as the proof of David's existence, Hezekiah's tunnel, the Taylor prism, and Pilate's existence? All archeological evidence has only continued to prove the Bible is true.

The Bible has Perfect Prophecies – Humans could not come up with such accurate, detailed, correct prophecies on their own. These include prophecies written and fulfilled in the Old and New Testament. Prophecies such as the fall of Tyre, the fall of Babylon, and we saw just a few of the 300 prophecies concerning Jesus. All of which came true exactly as stated.

There are also other evidences such as:

The Bible is Perfectly United – Written over 1600 years. Forty writers from kings, priests, farmers, scribes, a soldier, doctor, shepherd, etc. Would we expect forty different men spread out over 1600 years, written in three different languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, to agree on everything?

They were discussing important questions that have been debated for thousands of years: the meaning of life, what the afterlife is like, politics, psychology, science, the future, and they were always perfectly united. That is not human. We wouldn't expect even forty people today with the same language and background to be united on every topic without disagreements. That is supernatural.

The Bible is Short – What does this mean? The Bible was written in a way that huge ideas and topics were discussed but still the entire Bible can fit in a purse. Would people be able to do that without divine help? See a library to know that people are known for their many, many words, and books upon books that stack shelves, with each and every topic imaginable. Some books on a single topic are longer than the entire Bible.

The Bible has Godly qualities which are beyond the ability of humans to make. Today we are going to look at the historical accuracy of Jesus.

Questions:

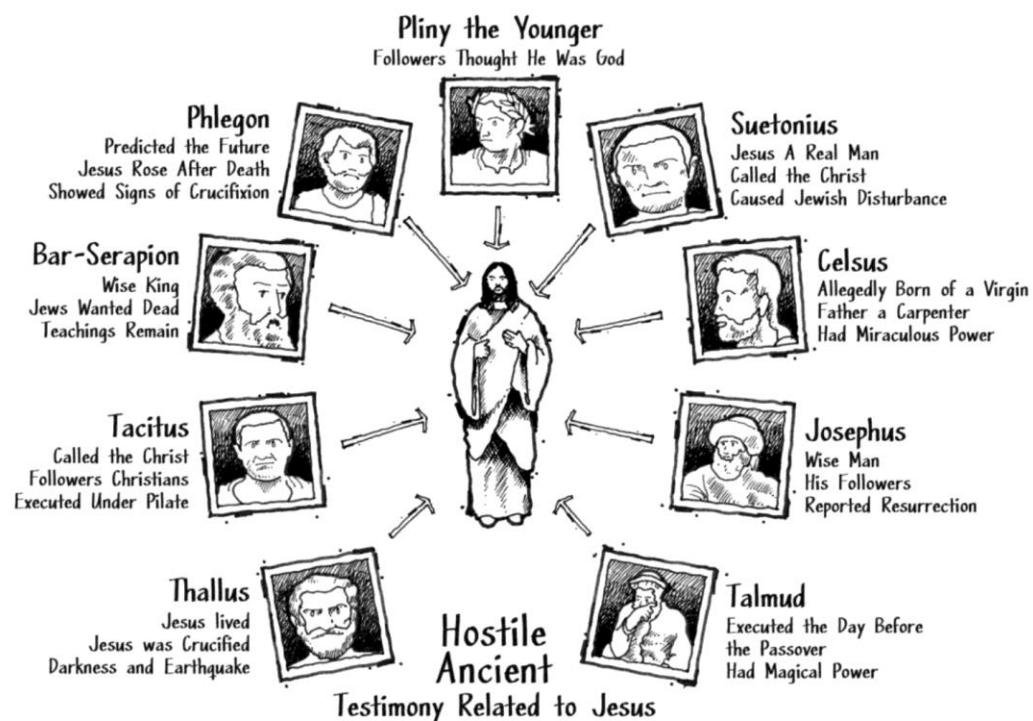
Has anyone you know ever said they don't believe Jesus was a real person?

What evidence did they give, if any?

We are going to look at outside sources and what they say about Jesus and Christians.

The Historical Christ – Did Jesus really live? Or is he a fake?

Even non-Christian writers said Jesus was real. There were many that wrote about Jesus. See below for an example. But we will focus on just a few today.



These include:

1. Thallus – wrote around 52 AD

Mark 15:33 – In this verse we see what happened at Jesus' death when he died at noon.

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

Thallus was a Samaritan whose writings were lost, but Julius Africanus who liked Thallus' work, wrote:

“Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun.”

In Mark 15 when Jesus died at noon, Mark writes it was dark. The quote by Thallus proves at the very least that it happened as the Bible said. That on that day, it was so dark, people took notice. Also, it shows he didn't deny that Jesus died and that was why they had to explain away the darkness. So even non-believers stated certain events occurred. Jesus lived and went to the cross and during that time it got dark. It wasn't an eclipse like Thallus thought, it was God.



2. Cornelius Tacitus: born between 52-54 AD

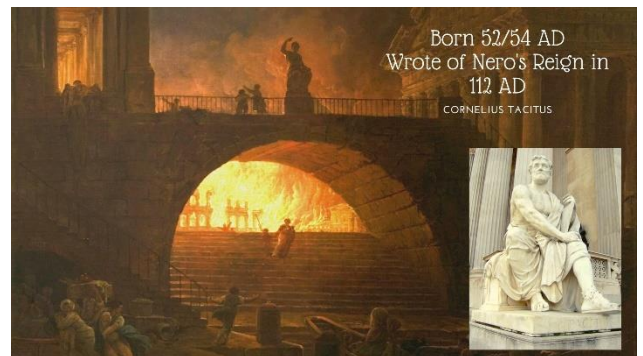
Top historian of Rome, Tacitus, at about the age of 60 (around 112 AD) wrote of Emperor Nero. Nero was the Emperor of Rome from 54 to 68 AD. Nero blamed the Christians for the Great Fire of 64 AD that happened in the city. Later it was discovered that Nero himself started the fires.

Cornelius spoke of the Christians, Christ, and Pontius Pilate.

Tacitus wrote:

“Nero ... punished ... Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus.”

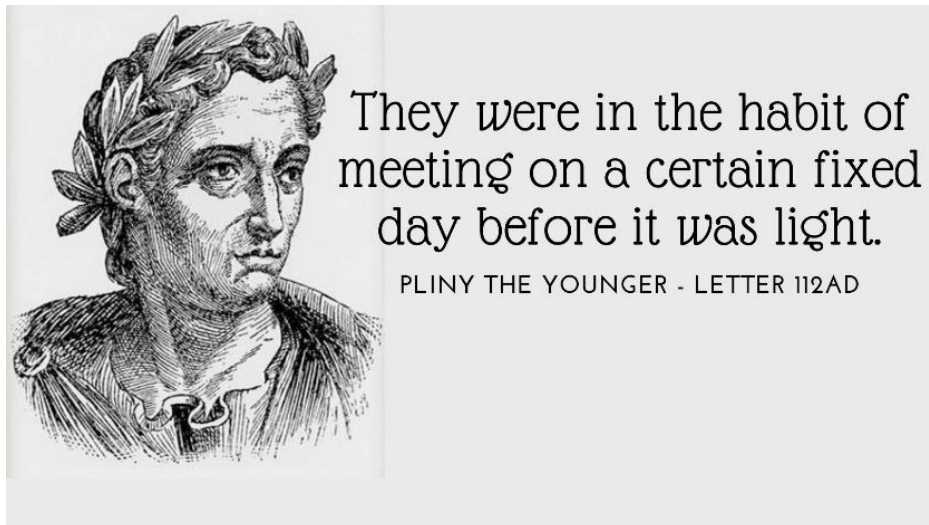
Tacitus hated both Christians and Christ. He had nothing positive to say about them. Yet, his testimony proves that Christ was a real person, who was so important that



Jesus' followers even attracted the attention of the Roman emperor himself! He confirms Jesus was a real man, killed by Pontius Pilate, and that Christians were victims of Nero.

3. C. Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Younger)

Pliny was the governor of Bithynia. In a letter to Trajan (around 112AD), Pliny asked how to deal with the Christians that he was in charge of torturing. While writing he mentions among other things that:



Not only did he say this, but Pliny found out how they worshipped, that they would not do evil, they would eat together, they thought Jesus was God, and had fellowship in an innocent way. What does this prove? That Christians were real, and that they met and did what the Bible said they should do.

4. Suetonius – c. 120 AD wrote of Claudius Caesar

“As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (Christ), he (Claudius) expelled them from Rome.”

Suetonius wrote that Claudius told all the Jews to leave Rome. This matches what Luke wrote in Acts 18.

- Wrote of Claudius Caesar in 120 AD
 - Acts 18:1-2
- SUETONIUS



Acts 18:1-2

After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. 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.

Acts was written by Luke before any other people wrote about it, including Suetonius. Suetonius proves that this event did happen just as the Bible said.

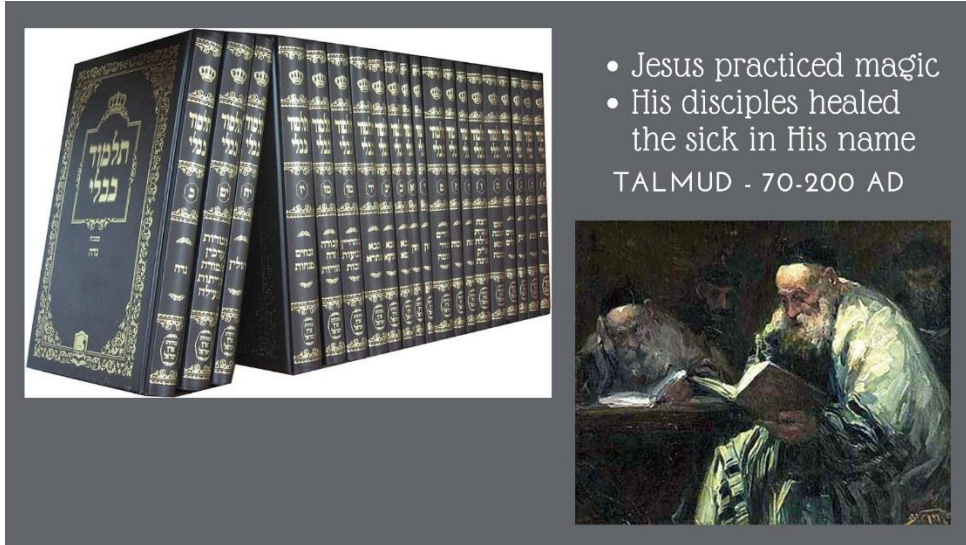
These and other historians said that Jesus was real and is who the Bible said he was. These writers did not believe in God and still tell us about facts that are the same as the Bible.

Evidence from Early Jewish Sources

1. Talmud – Written around 70 to 200 AD

We looked at Roman witnesses, now let's look at Jewish witnesses. Jewish rabbis wrote about Jesus in the Talmud. If a person as important as Jesus had existed in Jerusalem, surely the Jews would have had something to say about him. As F.F. Bruce a well-known scholar said:

According to the earlier Rabbis whose opinions are recorded in these writings, Jesus of Nazareth...who practiced magic...was hanged on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people. His disciples, of whom five are named, healed the sick in his name (1953, p. 102).



- Jesus practiced magic
 - His disciples healed the sick in His name
- TALMUD - 70-200 AD

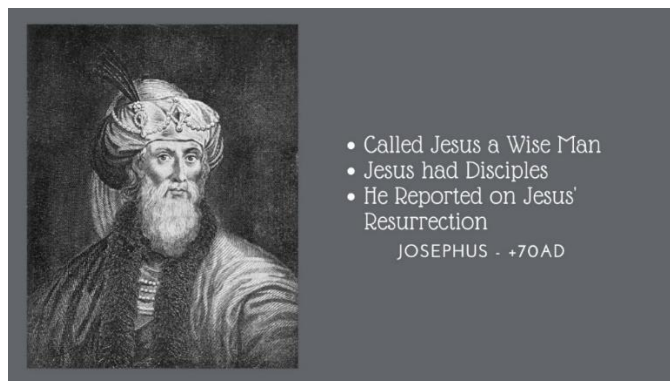
Even though most of the Jewish leaders refused to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God, they did say he was a historical man from a literal city known as Nazareth. They also wrote important facts about his life and death. Even that he could do “magic” and his followers could heal people.

2. Josephus – (Sometime after 70 AD) a former Jewish general who was captured by the Romans and wrote history for them.

Josephus writes about many of the people we read of in the New Testament: Pilate, Quirinius of Syria, the Caesars, the Herods, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Annas, Caiaphas, Felix, Festus, Jesus’ brother James, and the death of John the Baptist.

Josephus stated Jesus was the Chosen One of God, appeared alive on the third day, and was predicted about, to name a few. Josephus, never claimed to be a believer but wrote this as historical truth while in Rome.

No true scholar denies that Jesus was a real person. Even experts that don’t believe in Jesus as the Son of God admit that Jesus was in fact a real person. Anyone who denies Jesus existed, denies reality and historical evidence.



- Called Jesus a Wise Man
 - Jesus had Disciples
 - He Reported on Jesus' Resurrection
- JOSEPHUS - +70AD

Many writers who were either against Christians, or at the very least disliked them show us beyond what I have given you here that:

Jesus' enemies agreed he did miracles, he was a good man, a Jewish teacher, was rejected by Jewish leaders, was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius, that Christianity spread beyond Jerusalem to the point that the emperor blamed them when he burned Rome, and that they worshipped Jesus as God.

This evidence is enough to prove that Jesus was a real person. We accept he existed as historical fact!

The author of this series said: When I was in university taking a Classic History course, my professor who admitted was an atheist said of Jesus: Jesus was a real Man who did amazing things which no one can explain. He lived, died, was buried and on the third day His body was nowhere to be found. I do not believe He was the Son of God, but I can't deny He was a real person who did things we cannot explain.

Any thoughts or questions?

Next time we will look at eyewitness testimony and then miracles of Jesus to gain more evidence that proves the Bible and everything in it is accurate, factual and can be trusted.