

How Can I Know Jesus is Real?

By Jeremy Sweets

How can I know that Jesus is real? The answer to that question is a simple one. We can know that Jesus is real in the same way that we know that Julius Caesar, Napoleon and George Washington are real. Since we do not live at the same time as these historical figures, records of eye-witness testimony must be examined.

Several different witnesses provide an overwhelming amount of evidence that Jesus is real.

- *Pagan sources* testify to the existence of Jesus. Tacitus, a first century Roman historian, and Lucian, a late second century Greek poet, refer to Christ as being the leader of Christians (Tacitus in *Annals* 15, 44; Lucian in *The Death of Peregrine*).
- *Early Jewish sources*, including the Babylonian Talmud and Josephus, refer to Jesus, attesting to his reality (Babylonian Talmud in Sanhedrin 43a; Josephus in *Antiquities* 18:33).
- *The Old Testament books* were written hundreds of years before Christ lived, but many of them contain very precise prophecies that were fulfilled in Christ. Prophecies include specific statements about his birth (Mic. 5:2; Isa. 7:14), life (Deut. 18:18; Isa. 35:5-6; 60:3), death (Psa. 22:16; Isa. 50:6; 53:5) and resurrection (Psa. 16:10).
- *The Gospels* provide the most detailed information on Jesus' life, representing four independent records. Luke mentions that his Gospel was the result of investigation, taking into consideration the accounts of other witnesses (Luke 1:1-4).
- *The Epistles* were written by apostles and associates who had a close connection to Christ. Peter and John both provide firsthand knowledge of Jesus (2 Pet. 1:16-18; 1 Jn. 1:1-4).

The New Testament speaks of different types of witnesses. The varied backgrounds and different associations of the witnesses create a more reliable testimony about Christ.

- *Friends and Disciples* followed Jesus after listening to his message and witnessing his miracles (Matt. 8:22-23; Mk. 3:7-11). They were persuaded that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:13-16).
- *Enemies* even acknowledged his miracles; although, they tried to attribute them to the work of Satan (Matt. 9:34; 12:24). They attempted to discredit him, but they could not deny what he was doing.
- *The apostles* risked life and limb in order to follow Jesus (Acts 5:27-42). Many left their family, home and career behind (Matt. 4:17-22; Phil. 3:2-11). The extent of their suffering indicates that they were not frauds but true believers in the reality of Jesus.
- *Large crowds* witnessed his teaching and miracles (Matt. 4:25; 15:30). Over five hundred people saw the risen Savior (1 Cor 15:6). Jesus' life was not a big secret. He was open to investigation by large crowds of people.

After considering testimony from many witnesses, we can clearly conclude that Jesus is real.

- *Jesus really lived.* He was not a myth or fiction, but an actual historical figure who lived during the reign of the Roman empire in the first century (Lk. 2:1-7).
- *Jesus really died.* He was an innocent man, but he willingly sacrificed his life for the sins of the world (2 Cor 5:21; Heb. 2:9). Because of Christ, we can now receive forgiveness and restored fellowship with the Father (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 2:13).
- *Jesus was really raised from the dead.* He did what no mortal can do on his own – he conquered death (1 Cor. 15:54-55). The resurrection validates his claim as the Son of God and completes the work of redemption (Rom. 1:4; 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:3).