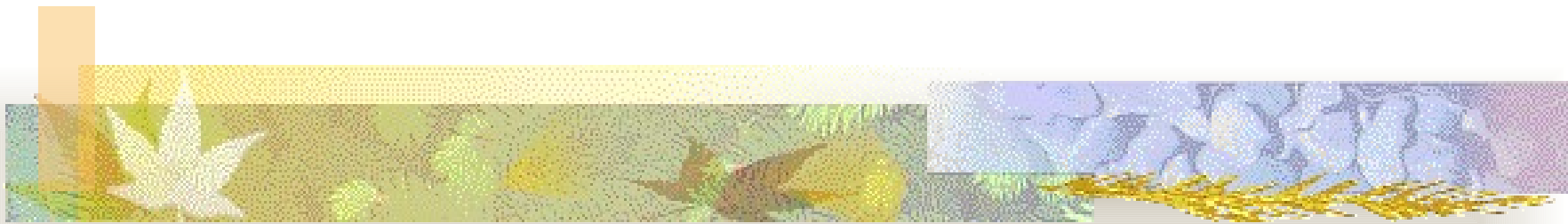


# Jesus' Credibility – Is He God?



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# Overview

- Evidence of Jesus' life on earth
  - Biblical, Roman, Jewish
- Jesus in His humanity
- Jesus claimed to be God
- Jesus' attributes
- Jesus' actions (miracles)
- The Apostles taught the deity of Christ
- Four possibilities – which one was He?
  - Liar, lunatic, legend, or the Truth
- What are Jesus' credentials?

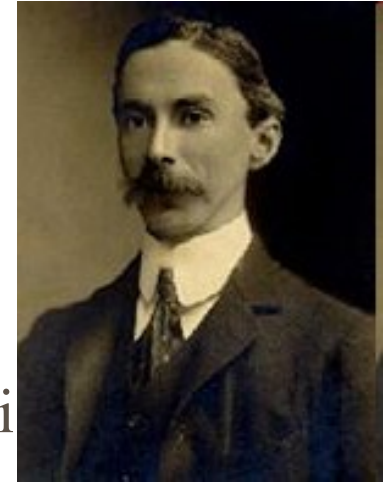


# Did Jesus Live on Earth?

- The Apostle Paul
  - Persecuted the believers
  - Converted by Jesus
  - Convinced of the truth of Christ's claims
- Emperor Constantine believed in Christ
  - Made Christianity the empire's legal faith
  - Baptized in His name
- Calendar dating references A.D.

# Secular Opinions

- Bertrand Russell, British mathematician and philosopher in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Wrote “Why I Am Not a Christian”
  - “Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we know nothing about Him.”
- Thomas Paine, early American thinker in 18<sup>th</sup> century
  - Wrote “Age of Reason”
  - “There is no history written at the time Jesus Christ is said to have lived that speaks of the existence of such a person, even such a man.”





# Early References to Jesus

- The four Gospels
  - Written ~ 55 - 85 A.D.
- Paul's epistles
  - His incarnation, **Rom. 1:3**
  - Institution of Lord's Supper, **1 Cor. 11:23-26**
  - His provision of eternal life, **Rom. 5:15-21**
  - His Crucifixion, **1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 2:20**
  - His death, burial, resurrection, **1 Cor. 15:3-8**





# Roman References to Christ

## ■ Cornelius Tacitus

- Lived 55-120 AD
- Leading Roman historian of the day
- Wrote the Annals, a historical work
- Section on Nero mentioned the persecution of the Christians
- “Christus, the founder of the name [Christians], 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.”



# Pliny the Younger

- Lived in 62-113 AD
- Governor of Bithynia and Pontus
- Wrote to Emperor Trajan in 112 AD for advice on how to treat Christians”
  - “But they declared that the sum of their guilt or error had amounted only to this, that on an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to God, and to bind themselves by an oath, not for the commission of any crime but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and breach of faith, and not to deny a deposit when it was claimed.”



# Historian Suetonius

- Lived in 75-160 AD
- Wrote “Lives of the Caesars”
- In his “Life of Claudius”
  - “Since the Jews were continually making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.”
- Refers to a controversy that arose between Jews and Christians over Christ and certain doctrinal issues
  - **Acts 18:2**, “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.”





# Lucian of Samosata in Syria

- Lived in 125-190 AD
- Writer of revived Greek literature
- Wrote a satire on Christians and their faith, “The Passing of Peregrinus” in 170 AD
  - He describes Christ as the originator of “this new cult” of Christianity and mentions that he was “crucified in Palestine” for having started the cult.



# Jewish References to Christ

- Josephus, Jewish historian
  - Lived 37-100 AD
  - Wrote “Antiquities of the Jews” + others
  - “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.”



# Jewish Talmud

- In the Babylonian Talmud:
  - “It has been taught: On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu [Jesus]. And an announcer went out, in front of him, for forty days (saying): ‘He is going to be stoned, because he practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray. Anyone who knows anything in his favor, let him come and plead in his behalf.’ But, not having found anything in his favor, they hanged him on the eve of Passover.”
- Affirms the historicity of Jesus and His death
- In later Talmud passages we see:
  - Jesus had disciples
  - Jesus called by the name “Son of the Virgin”



# Early Non-Christian References

- Ten non-Christian references identified
- Some could be considered anti-Christian
- None contradict events described in the NT
- What we can determine from these documents:
  1. Jesus lived during the time of Tiberius Caesar
  2. He lived a virtuous life
  3. He was a wonder worker
  4. He had a brother named James





# Further Determinations

1. He was acclaimed to be the Messiah
2. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate
3. He was crucified on the eve of the Jewish Passover
4. Darkness and an earthquake occurred when He died
5. His disciples believed He rose from the dead
6. His disciples were willing to die for their belief
7. Christianity spread rapidly as far as Rome
8. His disciples denied the Roman gods and worshiped Jesus as God





# Background

- God revealed Himself to us:
  - Special revelation in the Bible
  - General revelation in His Creation
- We could not know whether God exists or what He is like unless He took the initiative and revealed Himself to us
- Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago – God Incarnate (in the flesh)
- The Bible identifies Christ as part of the Trinity – Father, Son, Holy Spirit



# Christ's Birth

- Born of a virgin
- Birth announced by the angel Gabriel
- Visited by shepherds
- Signaled by a star in the east
- King Herod feared the birth of one who was prophesied to be “King of the Jews”
  - **Matt. 2:1-18**, slaughter of the innocents
  - Prophesied in **Jer. 31:15**



# Christ's Human Development

- Conceived in His mother's womb
  - **Matt. 1:18,20; Luke 1:34-35**
- Born of a woman after full term
  - **Luke 2:6-7**
- Grew up as a normal boy, developing physically, mentally, emotionally
  - **Luke 2:40-52**
- Grew into a man
  - **John 8:57, “ ... you are not yet fifty ... ”**

# Christ's Affections

- Physical traits
  - He hungered, **Matt. 4:2**
  - He became tired, **Mark 4:38**
- Emotional traits
  - Expressed sorrow, **Matt. 26:38**
  - Expressed wonder, **Mark 6:6**
  - Wept, **John 11:35**
- Tempted to sin
  - Did not yield to temptation, **Matt. 4:1-11;**  
**Mark 1:12-13; Heb. 2:18; 4:15**





# Christ's Death

- Died a human death
- Witnessed by many people – John, women followers, soldiers, mocking crowd
  - Luke 23:48-49
  - John 19:25-27
- Confirmed by professional executioners
  - John 19:32-34
- Buried according to local customs
  - John 19:38-41





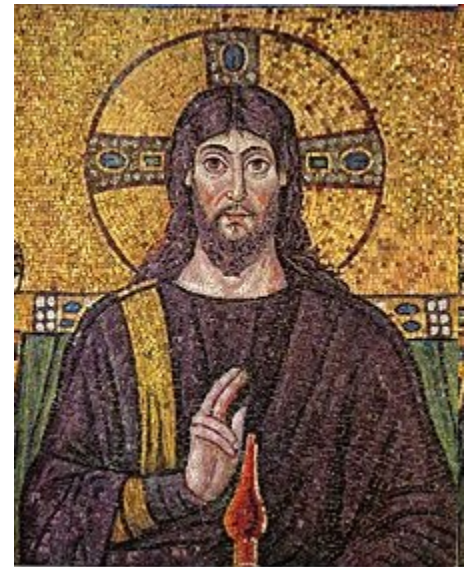


# Christ's Impact

- He confounded scholars and rabbis in the Jerusalem synagogue
  - **Luke 2:49**, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”
  - **Matt. 7:29**, “He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”
- His coming changed the calendar and the course of history

# Jesus Claims To Be The Son of God

- Jesus Christ is the only religious figure who ever claimed to be God in human flesh,  
**Mark 14:61-64**
- Buddha, Moses, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Confucius – no other ever made this claim



6<sup>th</sup> century mosaic,  
Ravenna, Italy



# Jesus Claims To Be THE Truth

- **Matt. 16:15**, “Who do you say I am?”
- **Matt. 16:16**, Peter answered and said “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
  - This did not shock Jesus
- **John 14:6**, “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”
  - A very exclusive statement!



# Jesus Claims To Forgive Sins

- Jesus claimed and demonstrated attributes that only God has
- **Mark 2:5**, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”
- **Mark 2:7**, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”
- The Pharisees considered this blasphemy





# Jesus Heals The Sick

- **Mark 2:5-11**, Jesus proved His deity by demonstrating His divine power
  - Jesus forgave the paralytic's sins
  - Jesus healed the paralytic
  - The Scribes considered this blasphemy
- His authority, miracles, teaching, sinlessness and character were traits true only of God





# Jesus Claims To Be Equal With God

- **John 5:1-18**, “ ... The Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making himself equal with God.”
  - Jesus healed on the Sabbath
  - Jesus did what the Father did (maintenance)
- **John 10:30**, “I and the Father are one.”
- **John 10:33**, “We are not stoning you for any of these, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”



# Jesus Will Return To The Father

- **John 16:28**, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father."
  - He existed along with the Father before being born as a baby
  - He grew up, fulfilled His mission/ministry, was crucified and raised from the dead (all part of the "mission")
  - He left the world to go back to the Father in heaven, where He is now seated at the right hand of God (the place of honor)
  - He is the only person who **ever** existed before conception
  - He was in a "pre-incarnate state" meaning that He is God

# Jesus Claims To Be The Christ

- **Mark 14:61-64**, At His trial the high priest asked Him directly: “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”
  - Jesus calmly answered “I am.”
  - See also **Matt. 26:63-65;**  
**Luke 22:67-70**
- Jesus was condemned and executed for his alleged blasphemy





# Jesus' Claims To Be "I AM"

- **John 8:23-24; 56-58**, “And He said to them, ‘You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins. ... Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’”
  - See also **John 18:4**
  - References to **Ex. 3:14**
- “I AM” was the name of the Self-existing God who had revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush
  - This was an assertion of absolute, timeless existence





# Jesus Claims To Be “I AM”

- Jesus quoted from the OT
- **Ex. 3:14**, “And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.’”
  - Jesus was claiming to be “I AM.”
  - To the Jews this was blasphemy
- The Jews took stones to throw at Him



# Jesus Claims The Father's Honor

- Jesus taught that He deserved the same honor that the Father deserved
- **John 5:22-23**, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”
- Jesus taught that He also deserved to be worshiped



# Jesus Accepts Worship

- The OT Law forbid the worship of any being other than God, **Ex. 20:1-6**
- Jesus accepted worship on numerous occasions
  - **Matt. 2:11; 14:33; 28:9; 20:28-29**
  - **John 9:38; 20:28-29**
- **John 17:5**, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”
  - Jesus before the Creation of the world



# Prayer in Jesus' Name

- Jesus requested prayer in His name
  - **John 14:13-14**, “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.”
  - **John 15:7**, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”
- The disciples prayed in His name and prayed to Him
  - **1 Cor. 5:4**, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,”
  - **Acts 7:59**, “And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’”





# Jesus' Claims Summarized

- To know Him was to know God, **John 8:19; 14:7**
- To see Him was to see God, **John 12:45; 14:9**
- To believe in Him was to believe in God, **John 12:44; 14:1**
- To receive Him was to receive God, **Mark 9:37**
- To hate Him was to hate God, **John 15:23**
- To honor Him was to honor God, **John 15:23**



# Jesus' Attributes

- Jesus is Eternal

- **John 8:58**, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

- Jesus' omnipresence

- **John 3:13**, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”
- **Matt. 28:20**, “and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”
- **Matt. 18:20**, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”



# Jesus' Omniscience

- **John 16:30**, “Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.”
- **John 21:17**, “He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’”
- **John 2:24-25**, knowing what was in man
- **John 4:29**, knowing life history of Samaritan woman



# Jesus' Omnipotence

- Jesus' omnipotence
  - **Matt. 28:18**, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”
  - **Heb. 1:3**, “Who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”
  - His miracles (37 of them recorded)
- Jesus is immutable (unchanging)
  - **Heb. 13:8**, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.”





# Testimony of John the Baptist

- Forerunner of Jesus
- John exalted Jesus
  - **Matt. 3:1-17**, “And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
  - **Mark 1:3-11; Luke 3:2-20; John 1:15-36**
- John described Jesus as divine
  - **John 1:29**, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”
  - **John 1:34**, “And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”



# Recognized by Satan & Demons

- **Matt. 4:1-11**, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”
- **Mark 1:24**, “Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, “Let *us* alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!”
- **Matt. 8:29**, “And suddenly they cried out, saying, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?””



# Role of Miracles

- Miracle – an unusual, irregular, and specific act of God who is beyond the universe
- Are miracles possible?
  - If God exists, miracles are possible
- Are miracles credible?
  - Examine the evidence of past history
- Are miracles scientific?
  - A miracle occurs whenever God deems it necessary
  - Moses' miracles confirmed God's calling, **Ex. 7-12**
  - Elijah's call for fire showed God's power, **1 Kings 18:16-40**



# Characteristics of Miracles

- Are miracles historical?
  - The miracles in the Bible are subject to investigation
- Are miracles mythological?
  - **1 Cor. 15:17**, “And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins!”
- Are miracles definable?
  - Power – comes from God (not Lucifer/Satan)
  - Wonder – inspires awe in observers
  - Sign – purpose of miracles





# Sign/Wonder/Power in OT

## ■ Sign

- Confirm Moses' authority, **Ex. 3:12; 4:3-8**
- Confirm God's message, **Jud. 6:17; Is. 38:7**

## ■ Wonder

- Used with sign, **Ex. 7:3; Deut. 26:8**
- Signs called wonders, **Ex. 4:21**

## ■ Power

- To create, **Jer. 10:12**
- To defeat enemies, **Ex. 15:6-7; Num. 14:17**



# Sign/Wonder/Power in NT

## ■ Sign

- Jesus' miracles, **John 2:11; 6:2; 9:16**
- Apostles' miracles, **Acts 2:43; 4:16, 30**
- Resurrection, **Matt. 12:39-40**

## ■ Wonder (used 16 times, with word “sign”)

- **Matt. 24:44; John 4:48; Acts 6:8; 14:3**

## ■ Power

- Of miracles, **Matt. 11:20; 13:58; Luke 1:35**
- Of the Gospel, **Rom. 1:16**



# Practices Linked to Demonic Power

- Witchcraft, **Deut. 18:10**
- Fortune telling, **Deut. 18:10**
- Communicating with spirits, **Deut. 18:11**
- Mediums, **Deut. 18:11**
- Divination, **Deut. 18:10**
- Astrology, **Deut. 4:19; Is. 47:13-15**
- Heresy, **1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 4:1-2**
- Immorality, **Eph. 2:2-3**
- Idolatry, **1 Cor. 10:19-20**



# Miracles vs. Magic

## Miracles

- Under God's control
- Not available on command
- Supernatural power
- Associated with good
- Assoc. only with truth
- Can overpower evil
- Affirm Jesus as God
- Prophecies always true
- Never assoc. with occult

## Magic

- Under man's control
- Available on command
- Natural (mystical) power
- Associated with evil
- Assoc. also with error
- Cannot overpower good
- Denies Jesus as God
- Prophecies sometimes false
- Often assoc. with occult





# Summary of Miracles

- Are miracles valuable?
  - They support the truth of Christianity
- Christianity has better evidence of miracles
  - Witnesses writing close to time of events
  - More witnesses
  - Resurrection
  - Fulfilled prophecies
  - Divine deliverance



# Jesus' Actions (Miracles)

- He healed diseases for which there was no known cure
  - Healing Peter's mother-in-law, **Matt 8:14-17**
  - Cleansing a leper in Galilee, **Matt. 8:2-4**
  - Healing a woman with an issue of blood, **Matt. 9:20-22**
  - Healing a man with dropsy, **Luke 14:1-6**
  - Cleansing ten lepers in Samaria, **Luke 17:11-19**



## Jesus' Actions – 2

- He healed at a distance
  - Healing a nobleman's son at Cana, **John 4:46-54**
  - Healing a centurion's servant at Capernaum, **Matt. 8:5-13**
- He exhibited power over victuals
  - Turning water into wine, **John 2:1-11**
  - Feeding 5000, **Matt. 14:14-21**
  - Feeding 4000, **Matt. 15:32-39**



# Jesus' Actions – 3

- He restored limbs or body functions
  - Healing a lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, **John 5:1-9**
  - Restoring a paralytic in Capernaum, **Matt. 9:2-8**
  - Healing a man with a withered hand, **Matt. 12:9-14**
  - Healing two blind men, **Matt. 9:27-31**
  - Healing a deaf mute in Decapolis, **Mark 7:31-37**
  - Healing a man born blind, **John 9:1-7**
  - Restoring high priest servant's ear, **Luke 22:49-51**





# Jesus' Actions – 4

- He exercised power over nature
  - Stilling a storm on the Sea of Galilee, **Matt. 8:18-27**
  - Walking on the water, **Matt. 14:24-33**
  - Cursing a fig tree, **Matt. 21:18-19**
  - Providing two miraculous catches of fish, **Luke 5:1-11; John 21:1-14**
  - Finding tribute money, **Matt. 17:24-27**



# Jesus' Actions – 5

- He wielded power over demons
  - Delivering a synagogue demoniac, **Mark 1:23-28**
  - Healing a blind and dumb demoniac, **Matt. 12:22**
  - Delivering the Gadarene demoniac, **Matt. 8:28-34**
  - Delivering a dumb demoniac, **Matt. 9:32-33**
  - Delivering the Syro-Phoenician's daughter, **Matt. 15:21-28**



# Jesus' Actions – 6


- He demonstrated power over death
  - Raising a widow's son,  
**Luke 7:11-17**
  - Raising Jairus' daughter,  
**Matt. 9:18-19, 23-26**
  - Raising Lazarus,  
**John 11:17-44**



# Evidence For The Truth of Jesus' Claims

- Jesus claimed that He was THE Truth,
  - **John 14:6**, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, ... “
- Jesus performed many miracles (37)
- He fulfilled prophecies (300+)
- He lived a sinless life on earth
- He rose from the dead, as he said He would, **Matt. 12:40; John 2:19,21**





# The Apostles Taught The Deity of Christ

- The leaders of the first generation church taught that Jesus is God
- **Matt. 1:23**, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us.’”
  - Reference to **Is. 7:14**, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”
- **John 1:1-2**, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”



# Thomas and Paul's View

- **John 20:28**, “And Thomas answered and said to Him, ’My Lord and my God.’”
- **Rom. 10:9-10**, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”



# Paul's Teaching

- **Phil. 2:5-11**, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”



# More on Paul's Teaching

- **Col. 2:9**, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”
- **1 Tim. 3:16**, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”
- **Titus 2:13**, “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”





# Peter's Witness

- **Matt. 16:16**, “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”
- **2 Pet. 1:1**, “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”
  - Further confirmation that Jesus claimed to be God
- The Apostles were in fact willing to die for their testimony (they believed)



# Summary of Apostles' Teaching

- Attributed titles of deity to Jesus
  - Rev. 1:17; 2:8; John 1:9
- Considered Him to be Messiah – God
  - Zech. 12:10; John 19:37
- Attributed powers of God to Him
  - John 11; Acts 5:31; 13:38
- Associated Jesus' name with God's
  - 1 Cor. 5:4; Acts 7:59
- Called Him God directly
  - John 20:28; Col. 2:9
- Said He was superior to angels
  - Heb. 1:5-6



# Established Facts

- Jesus claimed to be God
- The Apostles affirmed His deity
- Leaders of first generation church taught that Jesus is God
- Deity of Christ taught within a few decades of His death
- Deity of Christ completely established by the church as doctrine by end of first century AD
- Eyewitnesses did not dispute His deity



## Established Facts – 2

- The Jews understood what Jesus said:
  - **John 5:17-18**, “But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”
- The Jews considered this blasphemy





# Established Facts – 3

- Proven by the creeds (which predate the NT)
  - **Phil. 2:5-11**, “ ... who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ... “
    - Describes His Incarnation
  - **Rom. 10:9**, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
    - Validates His Lordship and resurrection
  - **1 Tim. 3:16**, “ ... God was manifested in the flesh, ..., believed on in the world, received up in glory.”
    - Part of an early church hymn



# Who Is Jesus Then?

- Four possibilities:
  - Liar
  - Lunatic
  - Legend
  - The Truth
- Only one of these can be true



# Quoting C. S. Lewis

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come away with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity



# Was Jesus a Liar?

- Did Jesus lie when He claimed to be God while knowing He was not God?
- Did Jesus deliberately deceive His listeners?
- Few hold this position seriously
- Even those who deny His deity affirm Jesus as “a great moral teacher”



## A Liar? – 2

- His teachings motivated the abolition of slavery, the modern hospital system, charitable programs for the needy, etc.
- Christ had (and is having) a positive impact on mankind like no other person
- He cannot be a great moral teacher, and deliberately lie about His identity
- Liar would not die (be crucified) for a lie





# A Liar? – 3

- God would not raise a blaspheming liar from the dead
  - The resurrection was a historical event
  - Jesus offered His resurrection as proof of His deity, **John 2:18-21; Matt. 12:38-40**
- The Deity of Christ was taught before the end of the first century
- The Apostle John would have opposed this teaching, if he thought it was heresy
- Ten of the original Apostles died a horrible death believing His claims
  - People don't die for a lie!



# Was Jesus a Lunatic?

- There is no evidence to support this view
- Evidence points to His sanity and rationality
- We see no evidence of the psychological abnormality and imbalance common in a deranged person
- No other founder of a religion claimed to be God
- Note His composure at His trial before Pilate



# Lunatic? – 2

- Some have claimed to be God, but then teach that we are all God
  - A mark of Pantheism
- Some have claimed to be God this past century (Charles Manson, David Koresh)
  - They were obviously unstable
- Jesus was unique in the way He claimed to be God
  - Jesus backed up His claims by the life He lived



# Lunatic? - 3

- Most admit that Christ was a great teacher, even if they reject His deity
  - Insane people are not good teachers
  - Christ's teaching were not those of a mad man
- Even the religious rulers of the day did not deny His miracles
  - His supernatural works provide evidence of His bold claims of deity



# Was Jesus a Legend?

- Jesus' claim to be divine and the description of His supernatural power were the invention of His enthusiastic followers, and thus are a legend
- His miracles were added to the accounts about Jesus up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century
- Archaeology has confirmed that the four Gospels were written before 70 AD





## Legend? – 2

- The Gospels were written within the lifetime of Christ's contemporaries – they would have objected if they thought heresy was being taught
- The teaching that Jesus is God predates the NT (see the ancient creeds)
- For a legend about Christ to have gained this circulation would be simply incredible
  - Think of a modern analog, e.g. John Kennedy claiming to be God – reaction?
- Legends take centuries to develop into religious dogma



# Jesus Spoke The Truth

- He was God come to earth
- **John 10:38**, “but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father *is* in Me, and I in Him.”
- Evidence – miracles, fulfilled prophecies, crucifixion, resurrection, sinless nature
- Credentials – character, sinless, power over natural forces, power over disease



# What Were Jesus' Credentials?

- His moral character coincided with His claims
  - He is unique – as unique as God
  - Jesus Christ was sinless
- **John 8:46**, “Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me ?”
  - He was met by silence
  - His enemies could find no fault



# Temptations of Jesus

- We read of the temptations of Jesus,  
**Matt. 4:1-11**
  - We never hear of a confession of sin on His part
  - He never asked for forgiveness
- The lack of any sense of moral failure on Jesus' part is completely contrary to the accounts of the saints and mystics in all ages
- As sinners, we are very aware of our failures and shortcomings



# Jesus' Witnesses

- Peter, John and Paul clearly spoke of the sinlessness of Jesus
  - **1 Pet. 2:22**, “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth”
  - **1 John 3:5**, “In Him is no sin”
  - **2 Cor. 5:21**, “[Jesus] had no sin”
- Pilate recognized Jesus' innocence
  - “I find no basis for a charge against Him” **John 18:38**
- Roman centurion who witnessed the death of Christ
  - “Surely He was the Son of God!” **Matt. 27:54**





# Jesus' Power Over Nature

- Christ demonstrated power over natural forces (Miracles)
- This could only belong to God, the Author of these forces
  - He stilled a raging storm of wind and waves on the Sea of Galilee, **Luke 8:22-26**
  - **Mark 4:35-41**, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him.”
  - He turned water into wine, **John 2:1-11**



# Jesus Demonstrated Power

- He fed 5000 people from five loaves and two fish, **Luke 9:12-17**
- He raised the dead to life, “Lazarus, come forth!”, **John 11:43**
- Jesus’ enemies did not deny His miracles
- **John 11:48**, “If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.”



# Power Over Sickness/Disease

- Jesus demonstrated the Creator's power over sickness and disease
  - He made the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, the blind to see
  - **John 9:25**, “One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”
  - **John 9:32**, “Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.”
  - But the religious leaders didn't recognize his healer as the Son of God
- 37 miracles recorded in the NT



# Jesus' Resurrection

- His resurrection from the dead
  - Five times Christ predicted He would die and that three days later He would rise from the dead and appear to His disciples
  - **Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; Mark 8:31; 10:32-33; Luke 9:22**
- If the Resurrection happened,
  - No difficulty with any other miracles
  - Validates His character
  - Verifies His power as the Creator



# We Experience Him Today

- We can experience Him today
  - Experience in itself is not conclusive
  - But combined with the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection, ...
- All the data we have corroborate the fact that Jesus Christ is God the Son
- Jesus is our Redeemer and Creator





# Conclusions

- Jesus did live on earth 2000 years ago
- Jesus claimed to be God – and IS God
- Evidence in His nature and His actions
- The Apostles believed that He was God
- Eyewitnesses have verified His birth, sinless nature, miracles, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, fulfillment of prophecies
- The church was founded based on His Truth claims
- Jesus and ten Apostles died for the Truth
- Jesus is God!