

APOLOGETICS student

Did Jesus Exist? JDG 11/21/21

DID JESUS even EXIST?

Philosopher Bertrand Russell

"Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him."

[*Why I Am Not a Christian*, 1927. Bertrand Arthur William Russell, 3rd Earl Russell was a British polymath. As an academic, he worked in philosophy, mathematics, and logic. His work has had a considerable influence on mathematics, logic, set theory, linguistics, artificial intelligence, cognitive science, computer science, and various areas of analytic philosophy, especially philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of language, epistemology and metaphysics. [Wikipedia](#)]

Is it important to "prove" the existence of Jesus?

If Jesus was not a true historical figure, how would that affect the truth claims of the Gospel?

Is then the truth and efficacy of the Gospel and Christian faith dependent upon a real and historic Jesus? Can the Gospel be a real Gospel without a real Christ? (See 1 Cor 15:12–17)

SECULAR HISTORICAL AUTHORITIES

Roman Historian Cornelius Tacitus (c. A.D. 55–120 ... called the greatest historian of ancient Rome)

Concerning the reign of Nero and the belief that he was the one who ordered the conflagration (the fire of Rome) ... *"Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punishment with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberias: 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."* (Annals XV, 44)

Greek Satirist Lucian of Samosata (born 125 A.D. died after 180 A.D.)

"The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. . . . You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explained the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property." (Lucian, *The Death of Peregrine*, 11–13)

Secular Writer Thallus (wrote around A.D. 52 a history of the Eastern Mediterranean world from the Trojan War to his own time)

As penned by 3rd Century Christian Julius Africanus about the darkness that covered the land during the afternoon hours when Jesus was crucified ... *"Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun—unreasonably, as it seems to me (unreasonably, of course, because a solar eclipse could not take place at that time of the full moon, and it was at the season of the Paschal full moon that Christ died)."* (Julius Africanus, *Chronography*, 18.1)

JEWISH HISTORICAL REFERENCES

From the Babylonian Talmud (a vast collection of Jewish laws and traditions)

Concerning the crucifixion of Jesus ... *"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 astray. Anyone who knows anything in his favor, let him come and plead on his behalf.' But, not having found anything in his favor, they hanged him on the eve of Passover."* (Sanhedrin 43a; cf. t. Sanh. 10:11; y. Sanh. 7:12; Tg. Esther 7:9)

Concerning the virgin birth ... *"R. Shimeon ben Azzai said [concerning Jesus]: 'I found a genealogical roll in Jerusalem wherein was recorded, Such-an-one is a bastard of an adulteress'"* (b. Yebamoth 49a; m. Tebam. 4:13). And *"His mother was Miriam, a woman hairdresser. As they say . . . 'this one strayed*

"Even if we did not have the New Testament of Christian writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger that:

- 1) Jesus was a Jewish teacher;
- 2) many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms;
- 3) he was rejected by the Jewish leaders;
- 4) he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius;
- 5) despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by A.D. 64;
- 6) all kinds of people from the cities and countryside—men and women, slave and free—worshipped him as God by the beginning of the second century"

[Edwin Yamauchi, professor of history at Miami University, JUF, 221, 222]

MATCHIING THE EVIDENCE

Matthew 1:21 ...

Matthew 16:16 ...

Mark 6:3 ...

Matthew 12:14 ...

Luke 23:23–24 ...

John 19:16 ...

✠ LUKE 24:36–99 (ESV) ✠

AS THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT THESE THINGS, JESUS HIMSELF STOOD AMONG THEM, AND SAID TO THEM, "PEACE TO YOU!" BUT THEY WERE STARTLED AND FRIGHTENED AND THOUGHT THEY SAW A SPIRIT. AND HE SAID TO THEM, "WHY ARE YOU TROUBLED, AND WHY DO DOUBTS ARISE IN YOUR HEARTS? SEE MY HANDS AND MY FEET, THAT IT IS I MYSELF. TOUCH ME, AND SEE. FOR A SPIRIT DOES NOT HAVE FLESH AND BONES AS YOU SEE THAT I HAVE."