

Jesus: Man of History

In my teenage years, my childhood faith was challenged by some of my friends with agnostic or atheistic worldviews. From the time I was about 11 years old, I had “believed” in the Bible, I “believed” in Jesus, I “believed” in the resurrection, I “believed” in heaven. I remember looking at the empty cross that hung in our Methodist church and thinking about how Jesus suffered, even died on that cross, a very painful death, because he loved us so much! He did that for me!! I “believed” all of this because that is what I had been taught, but I didn’t know why I believed it! Suddenly, it seemed that Christianity was almost too good to be true. I wanted to believe so badly, but I wondered if there was any evidence or proof that this wonderful story of a Savior who died for us was indeed true.

A Baptist pastor counseled me saying, “You have to have faith! You have to believe in Jesus Christ!” I told him, “I want to believe! Is there any evidence for believing in Christ?” His response didn’t offer much hope for evidence: “It is by faith that we are saved.” This was a time in my life that I really needed Josh McDowell’s book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, but it was not published until a few years later in 1972! The “Good News” about the Christian faith and the story of Jesus is that there IS logical and historical evidence that the Bible is true. Our faith is NOT a blind faith!

Since I had grown up in a Christian environment, I knew about the teachings of Jesus. The first step in re-building my faith was to make a conscious effort to accept his teachings and try to incorporate them into my own life. Whether Jesus was indeed God who became a man and died to redeem mankind from sin, or whether Jesus was just a man, or whether Jesus was just a myth, his teachings and his values seemed right to me. Be sure to see the section about “The Trilemma!” Jesus was and is much, much more than just a myth or man!!!

Next, after deciding to live my life trying to follow the teachings of Jesus, it seemed a good idea to study those teachings, which of course are found in the Bible. So I became serious about reading and studying the Bible. In Romans 10: 17, it says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In other words, if you want to grow in faith, then read or study the word of God. If you want to find God, then look for Him in the Bible, and He will find you! I speak from my own experience, because HE found ME. I say, HE found ME, because He is not the one who was LOST!

Most importantly for this section, there IS historical evidence for the Jesus of the Bible. According to Josh McDowell in *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, F.F Bruce in *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, J. Harold Greenlee in *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, and many other sources, the number of available manuscripts for the New Testament is overwhelmingly greater than any other work of ancient literature (which are accepted by scholars as trustworthy!). McDowell has an entire chapter: “Jesus, a Man of History” in which he cites secular authorities (many of which were antagonistic to Christianity), Jewish references, and Christian sources for the historicity of Jesus. Even historians who spoke scornfully of Christ and Christians did not assume or argue that they were unreal.

“The evidence is conclusive: Jesus really lived among us and accomplished powerful works that even hostile non-Christian sources do not fail to confirm. The skeptics about Jesus’ historicity are simply wrong.” (Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 1999, p. 136)

[Return to website](#)

**Dr. Robert J. Rapalje, Retired
Seminole State College of Florida
Altamonte Springs Campus
Email: rapaljer@mathinlivingcolor.com**