

## *The controversy: Is Jesus real?*

### **Controversy?**

There was this guy called Jesus in the Christian Bible. They say he lived just over 2000 years ago from about 7 B.C. to 33-36 A.D. He lived about 33 years, but in those days the records are sketchy. The Bible mentions Jesus in all the New Testament books but one 3<sup>rd</sup> John. In a way these are historical records. Many references to the time of Jesus come down to the leaders in that day like Pontius or Tiberius. Attaching historical markers to Jesus time period is one way to know when he lived.

The controversy is the name Jesus. The Old Testament said the messiah would be called Emanuel not Jesus. This messiah would save the people of God. Jesus means saviour as does Joshua in the Old Testament. Most scholars say that Emanuel is a title more than a name just as Cesar is a title and not the name of the roman emperors. Jesus is a very common name in that time period. How many guys named David are there in our cities today? Jesus could be mistaken for just another guy.

In Matthew 13, the crowds say “Isn’t Jesus a carpenter’s son?” People in that day wondered if Jesus was who he claimed to be. How many leaders challenged Jesus on his authority? Even Satan in Matthew 4 challenged Jesus to be God. The record of Jesus seems to be limited to this book called the Bible. Who really knows if these are just Jewish or Greek stories, and if Jesus really existed at all? The Jewish historian Josephus mentions Jesus in his writings. The Roman historian Tacitus also mentions Jesus as being crucified. Did this Jesus exist or is he a well-made up icon?

The controversy will rage on. The name Jesus has started wars, killed people, and made people enemies. Jesus said in the Bible that he will cause division and that has certainly

happened. Can you think of one name that has caused so much trouble? Can you think of one name that is fictional and controversial enough to kill? If Jesus did not exist then why does Christianity exist today? Many false claims like the world being flat have come and gone through the centuries yet this Jesus remains. What do you believe?

### **Maybe?**

What happens if the person of Jesus is real? C.S. Lewis wrote “**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 the 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.**” That is it in a nut shell. The discussion on Jesus is always hotly debated, but why? Isn't he mythical, fictional, or just a man?

Maybe there is truth to this Jesus claim? How could one man create a following that lasts over 2000 years? You have to really think about that. How many nations have come and gone throughout the centuries? Do we have Hitler, Napoleon, or Julius Cesar followers? How can Jesus be Jewish but not loved by the Jews? Why do we have any existence at all about Jesus? Wouldn't someone destroy all the writings and followers through 2000 years?

Maybe there is more to this name of Jesus than we know. If Jesus was so important then why is he not officially recorded? If you looked into Roman history you will find very little real evidence recorded about that culture. They did not really do that sort of thing just like the others cultures. Hieroglyphics in Egypt tell us something but they are not the Encyclopaedia Britannica. So many common people have come and gone in this world. Another common boy with the name of Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He grew up as one of thousands of Jesus' in that day. What made this man special? One historian in 200 A.D. called Jesus a magician or demon of magic. Why was that?

Maybe there is more to the actions of this Jesus. He did some things called miracles in those days. Is this common Jesus more than just a carpenter's son? If he said he was the Christ (Jewish Messiah) then how did he die? God's saviour of his people does not die: he saves. Maybe this is all wrong and this guy names Jesus died while claiming to be something he was not. Still, how does one guy who died become a wrecking ball for religion without his own writings? People wrote about him. He is connected to the Jews who ignored him. His friends ran away and let him die on a cross. How is it possible to have over a billion people following a common dead guy from 2000 years ago? Seems weird or maybe just maybe there is more to this Jesus than we think. What do you believe?

### **Yes?**

I don't have the space to list all the references to Jesus in the Old Testament. The name Jesus is not mentioned specifically in the Old Bible, but the Christ, Messiah, Son of man, and special offspring of Eve, Abraham, and David is. There is supposed to be a saviour of God's children. What I find interesting is the connections. You would have to be a very smart person to take all the obscure references to the messiah and write a fictional story of a guy called Jesus. Within that you would have not called him Jesus at all, but Emanuel.

That leans me towards "Yes" Jesus is real. It is just so elaborate and confusingly connected to tie all the references to the Messiah into Jesus. Why bother? Do you think you could make a cult and see it grow into billions of followers? Has it ever been done before or since Jesus? The only one is the Jewish God and Jesus connects himself to that as well. The Jesus cult says it's in agreement and connected to the Jewish cult. Why didn't the Jewish people crush that cult of Christians? They tried but failed at every turn. What's up with that?

The facts say Jesus might not exist because of lack of evidence. Did you know that there are only about 5 old sources that say Napoleon existed? “Jesus” references that are very old range in the 5000’s. Why do people immediately agree Napoleon existed but not Jesus? This Jesus affects people positively and negatively. What other name does that? Do we argue if Hitler existed, but we argue if he killed anybody and that was only 65 years ago? I say Jesus existed because that name causes more trouble than any other. His way and teaching is still changing people to be like him today. How could fictional characters like Homer Simpson change lives? Yet, this Jesus does? People quit drinking, leave families, and move to another country to act like and talk lovingly about Jesus. Isn’t he just a myth?

What is amazing is the teachings of Jesus. If he did not exist then who came up with this stuff. If it was someone else then why not take credit for great advice. Even Mohamad of Islam learned what Jesus believed. The things Jesus told in Parables about are Genius. If not him: then who would not want to put their credit to that. Do other philosophers have that type of following? Why do people give their lives and money to the ways of Jesus? Just to say Jesus did not exist is nuts because there is clearly something different about this guy. What do you believe?

**No?**

There is no evidence that Jesus existed. People say there is no evidence that 6 million Jews died in WW11. In Turkey, the government refuses to say 2 million Armenians died on their soil between 1915-1923. Did Socrates the Greek philosopher exist? Descartes says “I think, therefore I am.” Forever we humans have discussed out existence. There are those that say history happened and those who say it did not. There is really no proof that Jesus existed.

There is no proof that George Washington existed either. Maybe the Fathers of confederation made him up. Do we really physically know the truth? What a great hoax on the American people? There are Muslims that believe the Jews make up stories to gain sympathy in the world sympathy against Islam. There are Americans that believe the government caused 9/11 to justify going to war in the Middle East. There is possibly no proof either way. We saw buildings fall with our own eyes on September 11, 2001, but was it real? Some also say that going to the moon in 1969 never really happened, and Elvis is really alive on an island somewhere and never died in 1977. What do you believe?

There was an article in the New York Times that discussed what our children are taught on reality. The old way says that we know things because they were passed down or make common sense. The new way says nothing is real because it's only an opinion and not physical fact. It is easy to say Jesus never existed because we have no physical proof. Nobody these days has really met or seen Jesus. The stories written might be false to fuel the Christian church. What makes Jesus real at all?

I have seen People moved by the words of Jesus. I have seen people change their ways because of the love of Jesus. The Spirit of God seems to make people do strange things like give money, change their ways, and act different. One day you drink, swear, and hate God. Another day, you love praying, reading the Bible, and serving in the community. The Love of God and Jesus seems to be invisible but visibly we do see people changed by something seemingly related to Christianity. What do you believe?