

“Why I Believe in Jesus”

Message 4 of 5 in the Sermon Series “Key Questions: God, Creation, Scripture, Jesus, the Resurrection”

Acts 17:29-31 | Pastor Christian Newsome

1 Peter 3:15—“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...”

Acts 17:29-31—“Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Proof #1: The Claims About Jesus in Jewish Prophecy.

“In Jewish Scriptures, which Christians call the Old Testament, there are several dozen major prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, who would be sent by God to redeem his people. In effect, these predictions formed a figurative fingerprint that only the Anointed One would be able to match...more than four dozen major predictions in all. Isaiah revealed the manner of the Messiah’s birth (a virgin); Micah pinpointed the place of his birth (Bethlehem); Genesis and Jeremiah specified his ancestry (a descendent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from the tribe of Judah, the house of David); the Psalms foretold his betrayal, his accusation by a false witness, his manner of death (pierced in the hands and feet, although crucifixion hadn’t been invented yet), and his resurrection (he would not decay but would ascend on high); and on and on.”

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1998]. p. 241-242

John 5:39—“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me...”

Luke 24:27—“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Acts 26:22-23—“To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

Acts 28:23—“From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.”

2 Timothy 3:15—“...from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

“What is truly amazing about these Old Testament predictions is that there is no way they could be made by ‘intelligent guesses’ or by reading the ‘trend of the times’ or even by ‘reading minds,’ methods used by some present-day forecasters. Even the most liberal critic of the Old Testament admits to the completion of the prophetic books by some four hundred years before Christ...when there are dozens of these prophecies converging in the lifetime of one man, it becomes nothing less than miraculous.”

Normal Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* [Baker: Grand Rapids, 1976], p. 341

The Claims about Jesus from ‘extra-biblical’ history:

1. Jesus became a man. [creeds/Barnabas]
2. Lived on earth in human history. [Ignatius]
3. Came from the tribe of Judah. [Justin]
4. Was of the lineage of Jesse and David. [creeds/Justin/Ignatius]
5. Romans collected taxes through census that required people to travel to their hometown nearly every fourteen years. [archeology]
6. Jesus was born of Mary. [Ignatius]
7. Mary was a virgin. [Ignatius/Justin]
8. Jesus had a brother named James. [Josephus]
9. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and his birth could be verified in the records of Cyrenius, the first procurator of Judea. [Justin]
10. Jesus was seen by Arabian magi who first visited Herod. [Justin]
11. Jesus was from the town of Nazareth. [creeds]
12. Jesus was baptized by John. [Ignatius/creeds]
13. Jesus chose apostles. [Barnabas/Justin]

14. Jesus ministry began in Galilee and extended to Judea in Palestine. [Tacitus/Lucian/Acts of Pilate/creeds]
15. Jesus was known as wise, virtuous, and ethical. [Josephus; Mara Bar-Serapion]
16. Jesus made disciples from both Jews and Gentiles. [Josephus; Talmud; creeds]
17. Jesus performed miracles. [creeds; Acts of Pilate, Quadratus; Barnabas; Justin]
18. Some eyewitness of the resurrection were still alive. [Quadratus]
19. Pilate filed a report with Rome with details about Jesus. [Justin]
20. Jesus fulfilled Jewish prophecy. [Josephus]
21. Jesus made future prophecies. [Phlegon]
22. Jesus predicted his own resurrection. [Justin]
23. Jesus was worshipped as a deity. [Pliny; Lucian]
24. Some believed Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. [Josephus]
25. Some called Jesus 'King.' [Mara Bar-Seraion]
26. Jesus was rejected by the Jews, even after his resurrection. [Justin]
27. Jesus major teaching was called the gospel and imparted to his apostles. [Clement; Barnabas]
28. The apostles preached the Kingdom of God everywhere. [Clement]
29. The Jewish leaders determined that Jesus was guilty of teaching spiritual heresy and leading Israel into apostasy. [Talmud]
30. Jesus was put to death as a result of his teaching. [Lucian]
31. Jesus died at the hands of the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate. [Talmud; Ignatius]
32. Specifically, Jesus was crucified. [Josephus; Talmud; Lucian]
33. Jesus was crucified during the reign of Roman Emperor Tiberius. [Tacitus; Phlegon]
34. Jesus was crucified on Passover Eve. [Talmud]
35. Jesus was nailed to a cross by his hands and his feet. [Tacitus; Ignatius; Justin]
36. Jesus executioners gambled for his garments. [Justin]
37. Darkness covered the land during the crucifixion. [Thallus; Phlegon]
38. Jesus was on the cross until it was removed by evening and buried. [Justin]
39. Jesus friends left him and denied him at the time of his death. [Justin]
40. Sources claim Jesus was raised from the dead. [Clement; Ignatius; Justin]

The 12 "Non-Disciples" Life & Country: [Historians]

- Justin [100 AD - 165 AD: Judea/Italy]
- Ignatius [50's to 80's AD - 108 to 140 AD: Syria]

- Thallus [Writings dated to 50's AD]
- Phlegon [2nd Century: Turkey]
- Tacitus [56 AD - 120 AD]
- Talmud [70 AD - 500 AD]
- Josephus [37 AD - 100 AD: Jerusalem]
- Lucian [125 AD - 180 AD: Syria/Egypt]
- Clement [30's to 40's AD - 100 AD: Crimea, Rome]
- Mara Bar-Seraion [73 AD - 256 AD: Syria]
- Pliny [61 AD - 113 AD: Italy]
- Quadratus [248 AD: Rome]

“We have examined a total of 45 ancient sources for the life of Jesus, which include 19 early creedal, four archeological, 17 non-Christian, and five non-New Testament Christian sources. From this data we have enumerated 129 reported facts concerning the life, person, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, plus the disciples’ earliest message...There can be little doubt that this is a substantial amount of pre- and non-New Testament material for Jesus’ existence and for numerous facts about his life. Much of ancient history is based on many fewer sources that are much later than the events that they record...While some believe that we know almost nothing about Jesus from ancient, non-New Testament sources, this is plainly not the case. Not only are there many such sources, but Jesus is one of the persons of ancient history concerning whom we have a significant amount of quality data His is one of the most mentioned and most substantiated lives in ancient times.”

Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* [College Press: USA, 1996], p. 244-251

Proof #2: The Claims by Jesus in His Ministry.

“I AM” – The personal name that God gave his people to know him by.

John 8:58-59—“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.”

The Seven “I AM” Statements of Jesus:

- 1) “I am” [Yahweh] the bread of life. *Jn. 6:35*
- 2) “I am” [Yahweh] the the light of the world. *Jn. 8:12*
- 3) “I am” [Yahweh] the door for the sheep. *Jn. 10:7*
- 4) “I am” [Yahweh] the good shepherd. *Jn. 10:11*
- 5) “I am” [Yahweh] the the resurrection and the life. *Jn. 11:25*
- 6) “I am” [Yahweh] the way, the truth and the life. *Jn. 14:6*
- 7) “I am” [Yahweh] the vine. *Jn. 15:1*

Luke 5:20-25—“And when he saw their faith, he said, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’ ²¹And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ ²²When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, ‘Why do you question in your hearts? ²³Which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Rise and walk”? ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the man who was paralyzed—‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.’ ²⁵And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God.”

“There are only five ways to account for Jesus’s claims to be God. The first is to simply say that we don’t care and feel no need to try to work it all out. The second, most common way to account for Jesus’s life and claims is to insist that Jesus was a great teacher of wisdom and that this is the main way he should be regarded. The third way people account for the conundrum of Jesus’s claims and character is to argue that he never really claimed to be divine, that these statements of deity were put into his mouth (by some later writer at a later time). The fourth possible way to account for things is to say, perhaps sadly, that anyone who makes the megalomaniacal-sounding statements that Jesus did would have to be either mentally ill (if he believed them) or a fraud (if he did not). The final reason, however...is that the resurrection proved that Jesus was God.”

Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God* [Viking: New York, 2016], p. 237-242

“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 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. 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 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*

Proof #3: The Power From Jesus in His Ministry.

Jesus’ miracles operated in the four areas of our world most broken:

1. Creation [cf. Mk. 4:35-41; Mk. 11:12-25]
2. Humanity [cf. Lk. 7:22 - blind, lame, lepers, deaf]
3. Spirituality [cf. Lk. 8:43-48; Jn. 4:4-30; Jn. 8:1-11]
4. Eternity [cf. Jn. 11:25-26; 1 Cor. 15:20; Jn. 17:3]

The purpose of the “proofs” about Jesus are so that YOU might experience the power of Jesus.

John 20:31—“these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”