

ONLY JESUS

Tiago Sonna

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Publisher: Independently published

Cover Design: Gemini

For my father-in-law Stanisław

The Historicity of the Man Jesus

If you are an atheist, Muslim, agnostic, or follower of any other religion, you will doubt the divinity of Jesus. But scientifically speaking, there is no doubt that a person named Jesus lived about two thousand years ago in ancient Judea, present-day Israel.¹ And this Jesus can be considered the person with the greatest influence and social impact in all of human history.²

About the Historical Facts

There are hundreds of Christian documents that quote and speak about Jesus.³ Many criticize these documents, believing them to be biased, although they are genuine and authentic. I therefore cite two non-Christian authors who were almost contemporaries of

Jesus to show a neutral position regarding historicity: Flavius Josephus and Tacitus.

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian who wrote extensively about the history of his people. He lived between 37 AD and 100 AD. In one of his works dated 93 AD, he mentions Jesus:

"Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he [the high priest Ananus] assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned."

— Josephus, Flavius. Jewish Antiquities. Book 20, Chapter 9, Paragraph 1.

Here we have an account of James, the brother of Jesus. This indirectly confirms that Jesus was a real person who, shortly after his death, was known as the Christ, that is, the Anointed One.

Tacitus (Publius Cornelius Tacitus) was a Roman historian, probably born in 56 AD. He was a senator and consul in Rome. He writes:

"Consequently, to get rid of the report [that Nero caused the fire of Rome], Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again

broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular."

— Tacitus. *Annals*. Book 15, Chapter 44.

Here we have one of the most convincing proofs from a non-Christian. Tacitus confirms that Jesus suffered an extreme death and furthermore confirms the authenticity of the Gospels by mentioning Pontius Pilate.

There is further historical evidence that Jesus was a real person⁴ who was born, lived, and died in the ancient Roman province of Judea. I cite only these two authors as proof from historians of the era without the lens of Christianity, to emphasize that even for non-Christians it is impossible

to deny that Jesus existed, just as it is impossible to claim that he was a myth.

Contemporary Context

To better understand the person of Jesus, let us contextualize his life here: He was born and died under the Roman Empire. His parents were probably born between 30 BC and 20 BC and also lived under Roman rule, which militarily defeated the Kingdom of Judea in 63 BC⁵ and conquered the region that today comprises modern Israel and Palestine. Thus, even Jesus' grandparents could have been born under Roman rule.

Although the official language of the Roman Empire was Latin, the international language of the time was Greek,⁶ just as English is today. This is due to the long period of Greek dominance initiated by Alexander the Great in the Levant region all the way to Egypt.

Jesus could therefore have had a basic knowledge of Greek and Latin or even spoken one of these languages. Most historians claim that Jesus spoke Aramaic as his native language and may have been raised with Hebrew or learned it later.

His Legacy

Jesus can be considered the most well-known person in the world. For Christians, He is the Son of God. For Muslims, he was a great prophet, born of the virgin Mary. These two religions today make up about 54.4% of the world's population.⁷ If we count all the people who have ever heard of Jesus, the number of people who have an idea of his person could reach 6 billion.⁸

And it all began with about 120 people in Jerusalem who were considered disciples of Jesus and claimed that He had risen from the dead. Although most of these people were persecuted and killed, the number of followers grew for almost 300 years under torture, persecution, and martyrdom in the Roman Empire.⁹

All of this is historical and statistical fact. We are not engaging any faith, theology, or philosophy here. This is data about a man who walked the earth two thousand years ago. From this one can wonder and ask: what was so special about this person that he had such a great impact on history?

His Teaching

Jesus was not a military man or soldier. He held no government position and did not come from an influential family. What we know about Him is that He was a carpenter.¹⁰ According to the Bible, He was born after a miraculous conception by a virgin named Mary,¹¹ who was betrothed to a man named Joseph.

At the age of 30, he began his ministry and, according to the Bible, performed many miracles. He restored sight to the blind, healed the paralyzed, cured diseases that were incurable at the time, and it is reported that He raised 3 people from the dead.

Jesus was also opposed to the religious movements of the time; he sharply criticized them for not living authentic Judaism and for using religion to make money or as

status. He criticized them for following laws but not believing in God.¹²

Although Jesus taught love for God and love for neighbor, his criticism of religious people led them to want to kill Him. They felt insecure and feared that the people would follow Him and that they would thereby lose their positions, or even that the Romans would come and make war against them. The solution they found was to kill Him.

But there was a problem with this. They had laws and could not kill a person without reason.¹³ They would have to find some crime in Jesus in order to be able to kill Him according to the law. Their solution was to capture Him and interrogate Him to try to get something out of Him with which they could accuse Him. They called people who gave false testimony against Jesus. The interrogation lasted until Jesus confessed

that He was the Son of God. This was blasphemy to them because in their culture it meant making oneself equal to God, and this crime was punishable by death according to Jewish law.

Jesus thus pronounced his own death sentence.

Jesus, the incarnate God, renounces his divine nature and dies on the cross in complete self-sacrifice for others. It is anti-narcissism, the opposite of all oppressive power.

The Paradox

Why Not All Religions Lead to God

Jesus claimed that he is the truth, the way, and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. In this statement we have three options. Either He is telling the truth, or He is lying, or He is mistaken, whether through delusion, naivety, or madness.

If he is lying or is mistaken, it means that He is not the way, the truth, and the life and that people can reach God in another way, or that there is no God, or that people can have God in some other way, or that people do not need God. We can thus put forward many possibilities and satisfy all the religions of the world.

However, if He is telling the truth and really is what He claims to be, the only way, the truth, and the life, and that truly no one has access to God except through Him, then all other religions and philosophies are wrong.

Truth is Absolute

If you claim that truth is not absolute, then that is your absolute truth, which contradicts itself.¹⁴ If you say that truth is relative, you set a parameter for truth and will have to define these parameters. To define these parameters you need a foundation, and this foundation must be true, otherwise it will not be credible. In this way we return to the statement that truth must be absolute.

Jesus is therefore either right or wrong. If He is right, it is not possible for other religions to

be correct, because truth is absolute and He said that He is the truth.

Was He right, or can we consider all religions as different paths to God? Or can we even consider that there is no God?

The Resurrection

Jesus claimed to be the truth, the only way, the life, and the only access to God.

Jesus did not only perform miracles – He explicitly taught Jewish monotheism: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Mark 12:29). He called God Father and declared that He was ONE with the Father: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). He claimed to be the Creator himself: "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58), a direct reference to the Creator God of the Old

Testament in Exodus ("I AM WHO I AM"). His resurrection would therefore be a seal of his identity as this incarnate God. In other words, for Jesus' followers, the resurrection was not just any miracle; it was an act of the Creator God confirming who Jesus claimed to be.

He also pronounced his own death sentence by making himself equal to God.

So either He was telling the truth and was willing to die for it, or He was crazy, mistaken, or beside himself to want to die in such a painful and humiliating way. The second option, that he was lying, we can rule out, because it is proven in psychology¹⁵ that every person changes their opinion and statement in the face of extreme suffering. So we are left with the options that He was telling the truth or was crazy, mistaken. To

analyze whether He was crazy or mistaken, we can look at the impact he had.

Although he had at least 12 close followers and disciples and 120 followers who accompanied Him for 3 years, the only mention of a rebellion against Jesus' persecutors among so many people in the face of his capture and crucifixion was Peter's cutting off of a soldier's ear when they came to arrest Him. Right after that everyone was seized with fear and followed Jesus only from a distance. Even Peter, who wanted to use force to free Jesus from the soldiers, found himself denying Him three times a few hours later. Jesus was led out of the city and hung on a wooden cross without any attempt at help from so many people who followed Him. Everyone feared death and persecution by the Jewish elite.

Three days later the tomb was empty. And then two women claimed that He had risen. Shortly after, two more disciples claimed that He had risen. 50 days later there were about 120 people saying that Jesus had risen, confirming what He had already said, that He is the resurrection and the life. And the first disciples truly believed that He had risen, saying they had seen and touched Jesus alive.

These same 120 disciples who had been hiding because they were disciples of Jesus began to speak openly and publicly about Jesus, claiming that He had risen. This led to them being killed and tortured for claiming that Jesus is Lord, which in the Jewish context meant "Jesus is God." The empty tomb and the explosive expansion of the Christian movement are historical facts that require explanation.

Here we can ask again: Were they telling the truth? Were they lying? Or were they delusional?

If it had been only self-deception or fraud, it is statistically virtually impossible that so many would have maintained this lie until death — especially when they could have simply denied it under torture. It must therefore be concluded that the disciples were telling the truth and were willing to die for it.

This message of Jesus, that He is the Son of God and that He died for the sins of humanity and rose again, spread despite persecution, torture, and death. Not only were the eyewitnesses of Jesus willing to die for Him, but the following generations did not deny Him either. The persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire lasted until the

conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity, that is, after 312 AD.¹⁶

The conclusion is: Jesus is the Son of God and rose after his death on the cross.

Trust

There are many more arguments for the historicity of Jesus. We can mention modern authors such as Simon Greenleaf, Albert Henry Ross, Josh MacDowell, and Lee Strobel, who were previously unbelievers and atheists and came to the conclusion that Jesus rose. We can go into philosophy and pay attention to the unsolved question of good and evil. We can go into quantum physics and mathematics and ask who programmed the universe. We can go into biology and be amazed at the lack of

naturalistic evolutionary theory's answer in light of genetics and the great diversity of living beings. Even if we present all the evidence that there is a Creator, or even if God spoke with an audible voice from heaven, it would not bring us to true knowledge of God. Because the hardest thing is not to believe in a being that created everything and sent his son to earth, but the hardest thing is to trust that He loves us, the hardest thing is to trust that His law is not there to take away our happiness, the hardest thing is to believe that His law is not there to condemn us but to give us life. The hardest thing is to trust that He is good and we are not. The hardest thing is trust in the face of suffering, in the face of the triumph of injustice, in the face of so much hatred.

But God became flesh, was born, suffered, and rose, and his death on the cross shows

his immeasurable love for you. Because He does not want to see you separated from the Father. From the moment you decide to trust Him, not even death will frighten you. He will stand by your side and give you peace, give you true love that no other person can give, and give you abundant life.

Take a step of faith and say: Lord Jesus, help me.

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2- H.G. Wells stated: "Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history." See: Kenneth Scott Latourette: "As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet." Cited in: McDowell, Josh. More than a Carpenter. Tyndale House Publishers, 1988. See also the full study in: "The Historical Impact of Jesus Over the Last Two

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4- In addition to Josephus and Tacitus, there are other ancient sources that mention Jesus, including Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, and references in the Talmud. See: Mykytiuk, Lawrence. "Did Jesus Exist? Searching for Evidence Beyond the Bible." Biblical Archaeology Review,

January/February 2015. <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/>

5- In 63 BC, the Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem and incorporated Judea as a client kingdom of the Roman Republic. See: "Siege of Jerusalem (63 BC)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_\(63_BC\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(63_BC)). See also: "Judaea (Roman province)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaea_\(Roman_province\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaea_(Roman_province))

6- Koine Greek became the lingua franca of the Hellenistic world and the eastern Roman Empire after the conquests of Alexander the Great. See: "Koine Greek." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koine_Greek. See also: "Languages of the Roman Empire." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_the_Roman_Empire

7- According to Pew Research Center data from 2020, Christians make up 28.8% and Muslims 25.6% of the world's population, totaling 54.4%. See: "How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020." Pew Research Center, June 9, 2025. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/06/09/how-the-global-religious-landscape-changed-from-2010-to-2020/>

8- With about 2.3 billion Christians and 2 billion Muslims who recognize Jesus as an important figure, plus other billions who know his story, the estimate of 6 billion people who have heard of Jesus is conservative. See population data in: "World Population by Religion." Population Education. <https://populationeducation.org/>

world-population-by-religion-a-global-tapestry-of-faith/

9- The persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire occurred intermittently and lasted from 64 AD (under Nero) to 313 AD (Edict of Milan). The Great Persecution under Diocletian (303-312 AD) was the most severe. See: "Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Christians_in_the_Roman_Empire

10- Jesus is described as "tekton" in Greek (Mark 6:3, Matthew 13:55), usually translated as "carpenter," but in the broader sense it means "craftsman" or "builder."

11- The virgin conception of Jesus is reported in Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38. This is a fundamental article of

Christian faith, although it is debated in secular academic circles.

12- Jesus criticized the Pharisees and scribes for their hypocrisy and legalism without genuine love for God. See Matthew 23:1-39, Mark 7:1-23, Luke 11:37-54.

13- The Jewish legal system of the time required witnesses and formal accusations for a death sentence. See Deuteronomy 17:6-7 and Talmudic discussions of legal procedures.

14- This is a classic philosophical argument about the self-refutation of absolute relativism. If someone claims "there are no absolute truths," that statement itself claims to be absolutely true, creating a logical contradiction. See discussions in: Beckwith, Francis J. & Koukl, Gregory. Relativism: Feet

Firmly Planted in Mid-Air. Baker Books, 1998.

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16- Constantine defeated Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 AD, and subsequently in 313 AD, together with Licinius, issued the Edict of Milan, which granted religious tolerance to Christians. See: "Constantine the Great and Christianity." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great_and_Christianity

About the Author

Tiago Sonna is a pseudonym. The author lives in Berlin, works in marketing, and dedicates his time to seeking God and learning about truth.

Other Books by the Author

The Lord's Prayer and an Explanation of Its Meaning

"Jesus' prayer has been repeated for thousands of years by many people around the world. But what does each word of this prayer mean? In this booklet I attempt to explain Jesus' prayer, drawing mainly on the Bible."

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