

Lord? Liar? Lunatic? Legend?

Who Was Jesus Christ?

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 56

"I am trying to prevent anyone from 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, or you can spit at Him, and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord 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."



Who was He? (John 7:12; Matt. 16:13-16)

Jesus can't be just a "good moral teacher" and make the claims he made.

John 3:15,16,36; 5:24; 6:40; 10:28	Source of eternal life
John 5:18,23; 10:30,33	Equal with God
John 8:58	Preexistence
John 11:25,26	Lord of life over death
John 14:6	The only way to God/heaven
Mark 2:1,2	Able to forgive sins
John 8:24	Unbelief results in hopelessness

- Did Jesus actually exist? If so...
- Was he lying?
- Was he crazy or deceived about himself and his identity?
- Or was he really God in human form and Savior of the world?

Legend? (Was Jesus a historical person? Yes!)

Historical references to Jesus as a real person who walked the earth.

Thallus/Phliegon (52 A.D./140A.D.)(None of his works survived.)

Julius Africans (221 A.D.)(*Chronograph* 18.1)

"Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun... and it was at the season of the Paschal full moon that Christ died..."

Origen (*Against Celsius*)

"...with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified... (2.33)

"Phliegon... ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events..."

"...adducing the testimony of Phliegon, who relates that these events took place at the time when our Savior suffered." (2.14)(2.59)

Philopon (6th century)

"...about this darkness... Phliegon recalls it in the *Olympiads*."

Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.9.1; 18.3.3)(93 A.D.)

"...the Sanhedrin brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ..."

"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon hearing his accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared." (There is some debate on this passage, yet there is strong evidence for its authenticity.)

Pontius Pilate (works did not survive)

Justin Martyr (150 A.D.)(*First Apology* 35. 7-9)

"...the words, "They pierced my hands and feet," refer to the nails which were fixed in Jesus' hands and feet on the cross; and after he was crucified, his executioners cast lots for his garments, and divided them among themselves. That these things happened you may learn from the 'Acts' which were recorded under Pontius Pilate."

"that he performed these miracles you may easily satisfy yourself from the 'Acts' of Pontius Pilate."

Pliny the Younger (112 A.D.)

"...they worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, and cursed Christ..." (mere professing Christians who recanted under torture from Rome)

Cornelius Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44) (116 A.D.)

"Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus..."

- Tertullian made mention of the census at Jesus' birth which was recorded in the official archives of the reign of Augustus (yet none of his works survived).
- Very little non-biblical material on any subject survived from the first century. (2nd hand accounts)
- Historical references take Jesus as historical fact/no dispute. Even the most bitter opponents of Christianity never express any doubt as to Jesus having really lived.
- Most of eyewitness historical accounts of Jesus were believers/followers of Christ. (1st hand accounts)

Liar: (He knew he wasn't God)

- Deceiver/con artist (people believed in him for their eternal destiny)
 - He couldn't back up claims and he knew it.) (John 14:6;11:25)
- Hypocrite (Then: he said one thing - yet lived a lie).
- He was a Fool (He died for what he knew wasn't true)(Mark 14:61).
 - * Questions:
 - A. Would a good moral teacher knowingly mislead people? NO!
 - B. Could an impostor consistently maintain pure character? NO!
 - * Conclusion: These views are not consistent with Jesus, what people thought of him after the resurrection, or how he impacted people's lives for good generations later.

Lunatic: (Crazy madman)

- Self Deceived (Koresh)
 - (He thought he was God but was greatly mistaken.)
- Insane/Schizophrenic (Manson)
 - Question: Was Jesus ever abnormal, or inconsistent? NO!
 - Conclusion: Jesus composure and poise was consistent with what he taught and he demonstrated complete mental soundness.

LORD GOD: (Acts 2:36)

- A. Jesus claimed to be God or equal with God.
 - John 8:58 (John 4:26; Mark 14:61-64; Exodus 3:14)
 - John 5:18; 8:24; 10:30,33; 14:9,10
 - B. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah.
 - John 4:26; Matthew 26:62-64 (Mk. 14:61-64)
 - C. Jesus claimed things only true of the Messiah
 1. "My Father"
 - Psalms 2:7; 89:26; 2 Samuel 7:14
 - Luke 2:49; John 10:28-30
 2. Things he would do (Matthew 11:5; Is. 35:5,6; 61:1)
 3. Title "Son of Man" (Daniel 7:13,14)
 4. He fulfilled Isaiah 52:13-53:12 perfectly.
 - D. Jesus forgave sins
 - Mark 2:5-12 (Luke 7:48)
 - John 8:24
 - E. Jesus accepted worship
 - Luke 4:8; Acts 14:11-15
 - John 5:23; Hebrews 1:6
 - Matthew 14:33; 28:9; John 9:38; Luke 24:52
- Ultimate Proof: The Resurrection - Acts 17:29; Romans 1:4