

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 2/26/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, February 27 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, ask GOD to bless you. Pray that GOD bless you according to GOD's will. Then pray that the HOLY SPIRIT guides you to use these blessings to bless others.*

This morning, I read an article titled, "Other than the Bible, What Proof is there that JESUS was Real? It's a great question and helpful for us to think about. Is JESUS just a figure in the Bible, albeit a significant one in the history of the world? Can we confirm HIS existence beyond the writings of a few people collected in the New Testament? Here are some other sources that help us to know beyond just what the Bible says that JESUS was indeed a historical person.

Several ancient scholars and historians have referred to JESUS. Perhaps most notable is Flavius Josephus who names JESUS twice in his "Jewish Antiquities." One of these references tells of the crucifixion of "JESUS, who is called CHRIST," and mentions that claims that he rose from the dead. Josephus also catalogues other historical figures of the time in Palestine including Pontius Pilate and members of the Herod line. Another Roman historian, Tacitus, tells of JESUS in his work "Annals of Imperial Rome," highlighting HIS execution by crucifixion upon the order of Pilate. These historical references give suitable credibility to the existence of JESUS.

Archaeological evidence, while not directly proving the existence of JESUS, helps to support the biblical narrative of JESUS. We know of Roman executions just as they are described in the Gospels, the site of the house of Caiaphas where JESUS was tried before being taken to Pilate, and the home in which the disciples met after the resurrection and the likely site of JESUS' Last Supper. Archaeologists argued against JESUS having preached in the synagogue in Capernaum because the ancient synagogue located there was dated to the third century until some necessary recovery work was discovered and an older synagogue under the existing ruins that dated to the time of JESUS, supporting the narrative of HIS first sermon preached there.

There are even non-Christian sources that make reference to JESUS. The Roman governor Pliny the Younger wrote to Emperor Trajan around 112 AD about early Christians worshiping JESUS as a god. JESUS was known and worshiped by early Christians in the first century further supporting the historical existence of JESUS. There are also references to Jews being expelled from Rome for worshiping JESUS.

In general, there is tremendous consensus among scholars who specialize in the study of the New Testament and its historical setting that JESUS was a real person who lived in the time frame presented in the New Testament. Even those who are critical of the claims about JESUS as GOD or SAVIOR do not dispute HIS existence. The bottom line, though, is that it is up to each of us to decide what we believe about JESUS and if it is what the Bible presents about HIM, then we also are called to share that story with others.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey