

# Why Believe In Jesus

Romans 1:16 -32

Why should I believe in Jesus? Although we do not often hear this question, it is often the thought that produces much of the lack of devotedness to God today. We might come to church; we might not. If we come, we will just come and do no more. The depth of our faith along with what we believe defines our Christian lives. Let us say it in another way.

What we believe about Christ determines not only whether we are a Christian but how devoted we are as a Christian.

What is it that you believe about Jesus? John often uses the verb “to trust” or “to believe” or “to put our faith in” (They all are from the same Greek word). We must ask ourselves as John does, “What kind of faith do you have?” It is about believing in Jesus, **not belief but believing.**

The verb “to believe” is used 60+ times in John. The noun form for “belief” or “faith” is conspicuously absent. Belief is not a doctrine that we know but a person we trust. It is active believing that produces the significant changes in our lives. Our present generation is upset with the generation that has had the right doctrine but the wrong life. The divorces, hatred and problems that their parents produced have made them reject Christianity. To them it is sterile without life.

Throughout the Gospel of John we have a great opportunity to know what it is to really believe in Jesus Christ and see what changes in our lives will come from believing. Here are three questions we should ask ourselves.

- Why should I believe in Jesus?
- Why is this important?
- What difference will it make in my life?

It begins by looking at the uniqueness of Jesus as a religious figure. Of all the religious figures throughout history, and throughout the world, Jesus is unique for several reasons. Some of those reasons include the following:

## **Prophets foretold the life of Jesus.**

The Bible has several prophecies foretelling the life and mission of a Messiah, including that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, be a descendant of King David, suffer for the sins of others and bring salvation to people throughout the world. These prophecies were written long before Jesus was born. It is no surprise that Christians believe that Jesus fulfills these prophecies. But even non-Christians must admit that no other person in history can even claim to have fulfilled these prophecies.

## **Prophets foretold when the Messiah would appear.**

The prophets Jeremiah and Daniel offer clues as to when the Messiah would appear. Both prophets lived about 2600 years when the Babylonians invaded the Holy Land, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and forced many Jews into exile.

In Jeremiah 23:3-6, the prophet indicates that the Messiah would appear sometime after the Jews returned from their exile. The Jews began returning to their homeland from Babylon about 2500 years ago and rebuilt their Temple. In Daniel 9:24-27, Daniel indicates that the Messiah would appear before the second Temple was destroyed. And the second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, more than 1900 years ago.

Jesus, of course, did appear during that interval, and he did proclaim that he was the Messiah that the prophets had spoken of. If Jesus is not the Messiah, then who is? Is it possible that another Messiah appeared and no one noticed? Is it possible that the Messiah hasn't appeared yet, but will in the future? If so, how are we to make sense of these two prophecies from Jeremiah and Daniel?

## **There is evidence all around us that Jesus is the Messiah that the Biblical prophets spoke of.**

Some of the Bible's Messianic prophecies speak of a worldwide impact of a Jewish Messiah. Isaiah 49:6 (NIV translation), for example, says, "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Is it merely a coincidence that Christianity, with its promise of salvation to anyone who accepts Jesus as their savior, was the first religion to be evangelized to people (Gentiles) all over the world?

## **Jesus said His words would spread worldwide and never be forgotten.**

In Luke 21:33, Jesus said that regardless of what happens in the world, His words will never be forgotten. Here we are 2000 years later and the words of Jesus are all around us. More people in the world follow the teachings of Jesus than of any other person in history. The Bible is the most widely published and most widely circulated book in the history of the world. Of all the people who have ever lived, could any of them have made this claim more convincingly than Jesus - that His words would never be forgotten?

As quoted in Matthew 24:14, Jesus said that His teachings (the Gospel) would be

preached throughout the world. And, the lessons of Jesus have been taught to people in every country. This feat was accomplished long before the worldwide availability of radio, television or the Internet. Can any other religious figure make this same claim? Has any other religious figure ever made such a claim? Jesus did make that claim. And Jesus' claim has been fulfilled.

### **The fulfillment of some of Jesus' prophecies can be seen today.**

Jesus said that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed, that the destruction of the Temple would be so complete that not a single stone would be left on top of another, that the Jews would be forced out of their homeland and into all the nations of the world, and that the church would prevail despite intense persecution. With our own eyes, we today can see the evidence that these prophecies have been fulfilled.

In Matthew 24:1-2, Jesus says that the Temple would be destroyed and that not one stone would be left standing on top of another. Ancient historians have described the Temple as a massive stone structure. Josephus claimed that some of the stones were about 37-foot long, 12-foot high, and 18-foot wide. (In meters, that's about 12-by-4-by-6). The Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Temple's destruction was so complete that today people can only speculate as to its precise location on the Temple mount in Jerusalem.

In Luke 21:24, Jesus says that Jerusalem would be destroyed and that the Jews would be taken as captives to all the nations. When the Romans destroyed the city in 70 AD and again 135 AD, many Jews were taken as slaves to different parts of the Roman Empire.

Subsequent persecutions in those countries forced many Jews to seek new countries to live in. Eventually, the Jews were forcibly scattered throughout the world. Even today, the majority of Jews live outside of Israel.

In Matthew 16:17-18, Jesus tells Peter that even the gates of Hell will not overcome the church. Despite intense persecution during the first three centuries, Christianity became the first religion to spread to countries all over the world. Today, Christianity is the world's largest religion. The church not only survived, it thrived to an extent unmatched by any other religion in history.

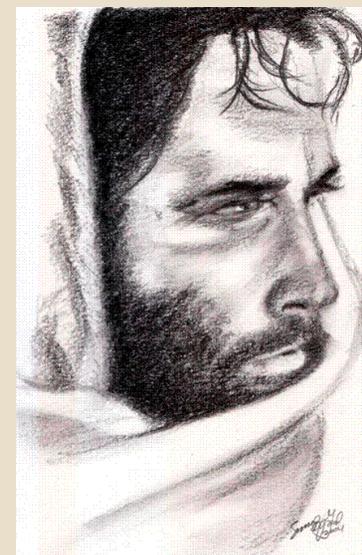
### **Jesus prophesied His own death and resurrection.**

In the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus prophesied His own death and resurrection. Of course, a non-believer could argue that there is no physical evidence to prove that Jesus was resurrected. But, if Jesus had not been resurrected, then why did His followers continue to believe in Him? Certainly, there have been many false messiahs throughout history, but would any of them have been taken seriously if they had falsely prophesied their own resurrection?

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