The Historical Existence of Jesus: Gospels

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**Foundational Scripture:**

**Intro**:

* The historical existence of Jesus does not just depend on corroboration from extra-biblical sources. While they do give us an objective point of view on whether or not the one called Jesus Christ existed, they do not form the only basis on which we should believe in His existence. The biblical account and in particular the NT, which we have proven to be true, provides the most substantial evidence for Jesus having existed. One should not dismiss the NT as evidence supporting Jesus’ existence simply because Christians wouldn’t have recorded the events from a less accurate point of view or with a more fictitious direction.

**Christian Sources:**

1. **NT Gospel Accounts**
	1. Concerning the gospels, NT scholar Craig Blomberg says, *“By far the most important historical information about Jesus of Nazareth appears in the four Gospels of the New Testament”* (Blomberg, *Jesus of Nazareth*). The authors of the gospels write in such a way where they assume the existence of Jesus and seek to persuade their audiences that He is God.
	2. Having done this, the gospels take on a nature similar to that of the Genesis account which begins by assuming the existence of God (Gen. 1:1). The bible never engages in a back and forth argument for God’s existence but it suggests there is ample evidence elsewhere (Rom. 1:20-21).
	3. Likewise the gospels assume the historical existence of the man Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:1, 18; Mk. 1:1, 9; Lk. 2:40, 52; Jn. 2:1-2). The authors do not just assume Jesus’ existence but they boldly claim complete accuracy and reliability (Lk. 1:1-4; Jn. 21:24) based on the evidence provided.
	4. The fact that 4 different authors thought it necessary to record these events and that the narrative in all four complement and corroborate one another indicates a high level of historical accuracy of the events which took place and it also suggests evidence of divine power at work.
	5. If Jesus was just some myth or some legend, then why would He be connected to so many characters we know for a fact historically existed such as Pontius Pilate, Herod the Tetrarch, Caiaphas, Annas etc.? For one to suggest that all these characters existed and to deny Jesus’s existence on the mere basis of religion would be utterly prejudicial and essentially childish.
	6. Princeton scholar James Charlesworth suggests, *“It would be foolish to continue to foster the illusion that the Gospels are merely fictional stories like the legends of Hercules and Asclepius. The theologies in the New Testament are grounded on interpretation of real historical events, especially the crucifixion of Jesus, at a particular time and place”* (Charlesworth, *HJBA*).

**Conclusion:** The gospel accounts are crucial in providing evidence for Jesus’s historical existence. The fact that there is an assumption of His existence and there is no concerted effort by the authors to go on the defensive suggests that they felt the evidence could and should speak for itself. In addition to that, Jesus’ historical existence is not the focal point of the narrative. He did exist and they did not want to waste any time trying to argue a ludicrous point. Instead, the devoted time and attention to what really mattered and that was His deity and the purpose for which He came in the first place: **To redeem man from sin and to reconcile our relationship to God the Father!**

**Sources:**

Blomberg, Craig L. *“Jesus of Nazareth: How Historians Can Know Him and Why It Matters,” in Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith, edited by Douglas Groothuis.* Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011.

Charlesworth, James*. “The Historical Jesus and Biblical Archaeology: Reflections on New Methodologies and Perspectives,” in Jesus and Archaeology*, edited by James H. Charlesworth, 690–93. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006.

McDowell, J. *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999.