The Historical Existence of Jesus: General Epistles

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**Foundational Scripture:**

**Intro**:

* The General Epistles (Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude) spend a considerable amount of time encouraging Christian audiences concerning Jesus and their faith, which was established via His death and resurrection. The implications of the messages in these letters is such that we cannot escape the blatant assumption of a historical Jesus. Either the authors are the worst liars and writers to ever live or Jesus lived and walked this earth as they all claim and support. If the bible is true, then there is only one logical, indisputable solution! This lesson is done and presented so that one can find the answer objectively for him/herself based on the message of the **General Epistles.**

**What the General Epistles say about Jesus:**

1. **He was the Master Teacher**
   1. The epistle of James, while it does not explicitly make mention of the historical existence of Christ, does allude to His teachings and declarations made in the gospel narrative several times throughout the letter (Jam. 1:22-25 cf. Matt. 7:24-27; Jam. 5:12 cf. Matt. 5:34-37).
   2. James, as well as the other authors of the general epistles demonstrate rather prolifically Jesus’ historical existence through various allusions to His teachings and statements from the gospel accounts. The saints who were connected to Jesus were admonished to live according to His teachings, the teachings of a real person.
2. **He was human**
   1. The epistles of John (1, 2, 3 John) seek to emphasize a historical Jesus who was human. The emphasis arose primarily because of a false doctrine that begin to percolate among the Christians in the late 1st century spilling over into the second.
   2. To counter these false notions about Christ, he wrote about Christ’s humanity from personal experience and also thirdhand inspiration (1 Jn. 1:1-3; 4:2; 2 Jn. 1:7). John’s position for arguing Christ’s humanity was not to argue for His existence per se, but in the process it demonstrates a Jesus who truly walked the face of the earth.
3. **He experienced many sufferings**
   1. Perhaps the largest portion of the general epistles is devoted to the telling of the suffering of Jesus. The sufferings of Christ are not emphasized to garner pity, attention or even credibility but instead it is exegetically presented as the foundation to the faith and the reason as to why Christians should live holy and why outsiders should desire to become saints.
   2. Hebrews and 1 Peter dominate the idea of a real Jesus who was tortured and brutally killed because of “false claims” and “blasphemy” as attested to by real people who lived during the same time as Jesus. These epistles tie Jesus’ suffering to a divine mission with a salvific conclusion (Heb. 2:9-18; 9:11-17, 28; 1 Pet. 2:21-25; 4:1).
   3. Their purpose, to be sure, is to solidify the faith of believers in a call to serve, suffer, sacrifice and be self-less as their Lord and Savior exemplified while He lived on the earth. Why would the authors devote so much time and emphasis on following the example of a person who never lived or maybe existed?
   4. The extent to which Jesus suffered and died and the details contained within the epistles concerning such things can only lead one to the logical conclusion that there was in reality a man named Jesus who the authors sought to present in a light that reflected the truth of the historical events which took place before the eyes of thousands of people.
   5. What’s more, at the very least 7 authors wrote describing the exact same sufferings Jesus experienced while on earth. Each one of them independently investigated and presented their claims on the basis that they had factual evidence to support such information. The odds of all authors being on the same page presenting a suffering Jesus and His existence would be next to impossible­­– unless of course, they presented actual historical events reflecting the naked truth.

**Sources:**

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