

A real man

BIG QUESTION

Was Jesus a real person?



Historians test anyone from the ancient world the same way, and Jesus passes. The record starts fast: Paul's letters come within twenty or thirty years of the cross, and Mark's Gospel around AD 70. For Alexander the Great, the oldest surviving accounts were written about 300 years after he died, and nobody doubts he lived.

The small details check out. Luke dates John the Baptist's work to “when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea,” and a stone found at Caesarea in 1961 names “Pontius Pilatus... Prefect of Judea.” In 2004, crews fixing a water pipe in Jerusalem uncovered the steps of John's Pool of Siloam.

The words were kept, too. No two hand copies match exactly, but with more than 5,800 Greek copies, a slip in one stands out against the rest.

And the Gospels keep details nobody would invent: Peter denies knowing Jesus, his friends run away, and the Messiah dies on a Roman cross. So the real question isn't whether he lived. It's who he is.

Be the scholar

Three scribes copied Mark 16:6 by hand, and each made slips. Where they disagree, go with the two that agree. Circle every slip, then write what Mark first wrote.

Copy A
You are looking for Jesus the Nazerene, who was was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.

Copy B
You are looking for Christ the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.

Copy C
You are looking for Jesus Nazarene, who was crucified. He is not here.

What Mark wrote:

How many slips did you find?

Memory verse

“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

John 20:30–31

Fill it in: “Jesus performed many other _____ in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are _____ that you may _____ that Jesus is the _____, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have _____ in his name.” John 20:30–31

I can say it! ☆ ☆ ☆ Color a star each time you say it.

★ Bonus verse

“‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah.’”
Mark 8:29



Think it through

Answer in your own words.

1. Name two writers who weren't Christians and wrote about Jesus. About when did each write?

2. Why would the Gospel writers keep stories that make Peter and the others look bad?

3. Jesus told a paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Why were the teachers shocked?

4. C. S. Lewis said Jesus didn't leave open the choice that he was just a good teacher. Why not?

Talk about it

1. Which piece of evidence would you show a friend who thinks Jesus was made up?
2. Legend, liar, lunatic, or Lord: which fits the evidence, and why?
3. Mark's Gospel takes about an hour to read. When could you read it?



Watch the video

Answers will vary. Look for: 1. Josephus 93, Tacitus 116 2. they happened; nobody invents shame 3. only God can forgive sins 4. he claimed to be God