**CREEKSIDE’S TEACHING NOTES** forSunday, January 22, 2017

**STUMBLING OVER JESUS**

**“Did Jesus Really Exist?”**

"Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him."

Bertrand Russell, Why I am Not a Christian

“The reality is there is not one shred of secular evidence there ever was a Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and Christianity is a modern religion. And Jesus Christ is a compilation from other gods: Osiris, Mithras, who had the same origins, the same death as the mythological Jesus Christ.”

Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists, declared this on CNN

**WHY WE BELIEVE JESUS REALLY DID EXIST**

**1) THE BIBLICAL RECORD:**

**Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.**

Luke 1:1-4

**2) THE EXTRA-BIBLICAL RECORD:**

**CORNELIUS TACITUS (55 - 120 A.D.)** was a Roman historian who lived through the reigns of over half a dozen Roman emperors. Considered one of the greatest historians of ancient Rome. He writes, *"Christus, the founder of the* [Christian] *name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius. But the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also."* [Annals XV, 44](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078&layout=&loc=15.44)**PLINY THE YOUNGER (63 - 113 A.D)** admits to torturing and executing Christians who refused to deny Christ. Those who denied the charges were spared and ordered to exalt the Roman gods and curse the name of Christ. Pliny addresses his concerns to Emperor Trajan that too many citizens were being killed for their refusal to deny their faith.

*"I asked them directly if they were Christians...those who persisted, I ordered away... Those who denied they were or ever had been Christians...worshiped both your image and the images of the gods and cursed Christ. They used to gather on a stated day before dawn and sing to Christ as if he were a god... All the more I believed it necessary to find out what was the truth from two servant maids, which were called deaconesses, by means of torture. Nothing more did I find than a disgusting, fanatical superstition. Therefore I stopped the examination, and hastened to consult you...on account of the number of people endangered. For many of all ages, all classes, and both sexes already are brought into danger..."* [Pliny's](http://www.tyrannus.com/pliny_let.html) letter to Emperor Trajan

**FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS (37 - 100 A.D.)**was a first century Pharisee and historian of both priestly and royal ancestry who provided important insight into first-century Judaism*.* Josephus was born only three years after the crucifixion of Jesus.

*"So* [Ananus] *assembled a council of judges, and brought before it the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ,whose name was James, together with some others, and having accused them as lawbreakers, he delivered them over to be stoned."* [Antiquities XX 9:1](http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/taofj10.txt)(Edwin Yamauchi of Miami University suggests that even if we didn’t have any of the NT we would still know a great deal about Jesus.))

“We would know that 1) Jesus was a Jewish teacher; 2) many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms; 3) some people believed he was the Messiah; 4) he was rejected by the Jewish leaders; 5) he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; 6) despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by AD 64; and 7) all kinds of people from the cities and countryside – men and women, slave and free – worshipped him as God.”

(The Case for Christ, Strobel p. 115)

**3) THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS:**

Nothing in Christianity is original.

The DaVinci Code

Christianity began as a cult with almost wholly Pagan origins and motivations
 in the first century.

Tom Harper

At first blush, the parallels between the story of Jesus and the myths of ancient gods appear to be striking. For instance, writers have said that the pre-Christian god Mythras was born of a virgin in a cave on December 25, was considered a great traveling teacher, had twelve disciples, promised his followers immortality, sacrificed himself for world peace, was buried in a tomb and rose again three days later, instituted a Eucharist or “Lord’s Supper,” and was considered the Logos, redeemer, Messiah, and “the way, the truth and the life.”

Lee Strobel, The Case for the Real Jesus p. 159

**The problem is that little, if any of that, is accurate.**

**4) THE INFLUENCE OF JESUS:**

**“Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries. … It is from his birth that most of the human race dates its calendars, it is by his name that millions curse and in his name that millions pray.”18**

Yale historian Jaroslav Pelikan