

## Talk 1 : Who is Jesus?

Imagine you have in front of you the CV of Jesus of Nazareth.  
Would you call him for interview?

### Background Documentation

Check out it's not a hoax. Did this Jesus ever exist?

- Check out Roman historians: Thalles, Tacitus, Suetonius or Pliny.
- Check out Jewish historian, Josephus, writing about the life, execution and apparent "appearing" of Jesus alive three days later.
- Check out the reliability of New Testament evidence:

Julius Caesar's <i>Gallic Wars</i>	9 Manuscripts (MSS) Earliest 900 AD
New Testament	5000 MSS in Greek 10,000 MSS in Latin 9,300 MSS in other languages Earliest 300AD and parts from 130AD
- Check out Dr Luke's research process for his account of Jesus:  
Many have undertaken an account of the things that were fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who were the first eye-witnesses and servants of the word. Therefore since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good to me 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)

In short, a wide range of sources, eye-witness accounts, stewards of the oral history, careful investigation and an orderly presentation.... a reliably researched historical record.

### Character References

Who are the people who offer us insight into the character of Jesus?

1. His friends after 3 years with him speak of his integrity – *without guile* is the phrase of Peter his closest friend.
2. His enemies need to rig the trial with perjured witnesses to convict him.
3. People on the edge of society were at ease in his company.
4. People from non-Jewish religious backgrounds trusted him and came to him.

### Mental Health and Stability

Was Jesus mentally unbalanced? He made claims that sound like a megalomaniac.

- Jesus made direct claims about himself to people looking to him to know God:  
*He that has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)*  
*No one comes to the Father except by me. (John 14:6)*

People can have encounters with God in many ways, but Jesus claims to offer us the way to know God in a relationship as child to Father.

- Jesus made indirect claims in his seeming to act as only God would act.  
He healed a paralysed man by forgiving his sins as only God can. (Mark 2:1-12)
- Jesus appears to have been consistent, stable and robust under stress – all signs of mental health.

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be insane or the Devil from Hell.... Let us not come up with some patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left us that open to us. He did not intend to." (C S Lewis, quoted in Questions of Life, p31)

### Career Path

When we track his career path, three elements stand out for attention:

1. *The life he lived* – a role model of humanity for millions across 2000 years.
2. *The miracles he performed* - signs of "God in close-up" at work in the world.
3. *The death he died* – the courageous climax and purpose of his life. More next week!!

## **Distinctive Contribution**

What may be the distinctive contribution of this man to our company (small "c")?

The unique claim is that he has been raised from the dead and is our contemporary.

- Did he die? A skilled soldier's spear made sure of it.
- Did he escape? The tomb was closed, sealed and guarded.
- Was his body stolen? Enemies wanted him dead and friends were too scared.
- Who saw him? Individuals and groups over a period of six weeks.
- So what? People are changed by him – right down to today!

In the light of this CV would you give Jesus of Nazareth a personal interview?