

EXPLORATION: BIBLE

Important Archaeological Finds of the Bible #5—Did JESUS Exist?

Believe it or not, there are those who claim Jesus never existed. Search “Did Jesus Exist” on the internet and you will find dozens of sites that purport what is termed, “The Jesus Myth.” Millions of people have visited these sites. So, is there any validity to their claims?

Today we will examine archeology that proves Jesus did indeed exist in the 1st Century A.D. just as the Bible states. The evidence for His existence is deeply woven into the history and archeology of Israel.

FIRST, we have an ancient inscription carved into the wall of a cistern in Israel that literally says, “Jesus was here.”



This short inscription begins with a simple cross and in Greek reads ΙΕΣΟΥ ΕΩΔΕ – “Jesus was Here.” Beneath the inscription is an ancient Christogram – the Tau-Rho/Christ symbol. This inscription dates to the early 2nd Century A.D. (Photo: BeitLehi.org, Fair Use Act)

The site where this inscription was found is named Beit Loya (renamed Beit Lehi by an LDS excavation team). It was a city established in the Hellenistic/Greek era, around 300 B.C., and was located on the Roman road that led from Bethlehem to Egypt. Because it was a day’s journey from Bethlehem, it was touted as the site where Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus would have spent their first night as they fled the wrath of King Herod who killed the babies in Bethlehem. Hence, “Jesus was here.”

SECOND, the earliest Christian symbol found in archeology is in the city of Nazareth, next to the home of the virgin Mary. In the late first or early second Century A.D. this spot was commemorated as the place where the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would, as a virgin, give birth to the Messiah. Today a modern church known as the Church of the Enunciation, is built over the ruins of several previous churches. The earliest church is a Judeo-Christian synagogue (1st—2nd Century A.D.), followed by a Byzantine Church (4th Century), followed by a Crusader Church (12th Century). These churches, each built over the ruins of the previous church, signifies one thing – Jesus was miraculously conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, thus Jesus existed.

In the mosaic floor of the earliest church (the Judeo-Christian Synagogue) is a beautiful Christogram. This Tau-Rho Cross is the earliest Christian symbol found in archeology.



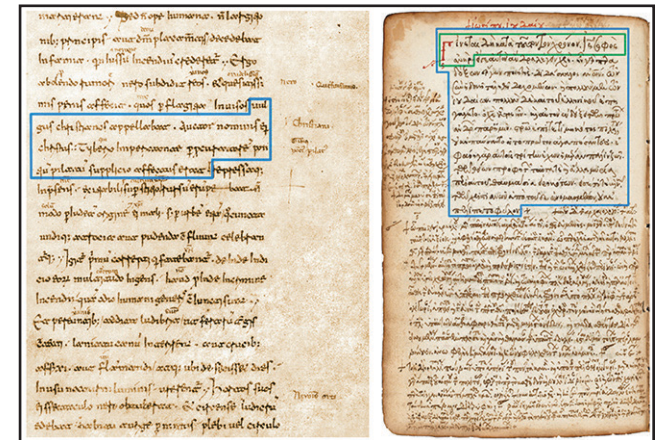
This Christogram, was created by the Jewish Christians we read about in our Bible. The men who created this mosaic floor were either the Apostles themselves or the disciples of the Apostles. This archeology screams – Jesus Existed! (Photo by Chip Thompson, 2018)

FINALLY – The last proofs we will consider are the ancient written accounts of Jesus. We have in our Bibles, four eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus Christ. You can read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that describe in detail the life Jesus lived in the 1st Century A.D. We can prove each of these accounts were written in the first century so, grab your Bible and read the four gospels. One thing is clear, these first century authors totally believed Jesus existed!

We also have first century, non-biblical, non-Christian, Roman historians who mention Jesus in their records such as: Tacitus (14-70 A.D.) and Flavius Josephus (37-100 A.D.)

Tacitus wrote: “... whom the crowd called ‘Chrestians.’ The founder of this name, Christ, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate ...”

Josephus wrote: “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day.”



On the left is: Book XV of Tacitus’s Annals, and on the right: Josephus, Antiquities, Codex Parisinus gr. 2075, 45v. The quotes from above are highlighted in each text. (Did Jesus Exist? By Lawrence Mykytiuk, Jan/Feb BAR magazine, 2015, by permission as a BAS member.)

Aside from the physical evidence, it is undeniable that Jesus Christ has affected our world in greater ways than any other person who has ever lived. The world’s calendar (the Roman calendar) centers on the birth of Christ in year 0 between 1 B.C. (Before Christ) and 1 A.D. (After the Year of Our Lord). The largest world religion is Christianity with 2.4 billion people who believe that Jesus existed. Much good has been done in the name of Jesus Christ - billions in humanitarian aid have been donated to poor and hurting people. Much bad has been done in the name of Jesus – wars were fought over Christian ideals. Whether you believe Jesus affected the world for GOOD or BAD, it seems naïve for anyone to claim that the person named Jesus Christ never existed.