



3. THE MYSTERY OF THE LAST EMPEROR

In answer to the question. Who was Jesus of Nazareth, Time Magazine described Him as “...*the single most powerful figure – not merely in these two millenniums, but in all human history...*” He features in rock operas like *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and in Dan Brown’s controversial historical fiction *The Da Vinci Code*.

Jesus Himself claimed to be the King of Israel, and when Pilate, the Roman Governor who tried Him, called Him this, Jesus not only accepted the title but claimed to be ruler of an empire that extended beyond this world. Pilate even had the title *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* hung on Jesus’ cross. For a Jew to accept such a title was to claim to be the Jehovah God. In Revelation 22:12,13 Jesus says, *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last*. Such a title belongs only to the Almighty God. So Jesus clearly claimed to be God. But was He? To make such a claim He would have to be lying and therefore bad, or crazy and therefore mad, or indeed who He claimed to be. So who was Jesus?

Firstly, as affirmed by many historians, Jesus of Nazareth was an historical person who lived 2,000 years ago in Palestine. Thallus, a Greek, wrote of the *Death of Jesus*, and Serapion, a Syrian, wrote of the *Execution of the King of the Jews*. Then there was Josephus, a trusted Jewish historian, followed by Tacitus who was known as the greatest historian of Ancient Rome, both of whom wrote of Jesus Christ.

But what is the evidence that Jesus is God in human flesh? In 1947 a young Bedouin boy, who was minding his family’s goats near the Dead Sea in Israel, came across some ancient pots inside a cave. The pots contained some very old scrolls. His Bedouin clan took the scrolls to Bethlehem and sold them to an antiquities dealer for \$100US. Shortly after they sold for \$500,000US, and today they are priceless! These Dead Sea Scrolls, containing the Old Testament, dated back to 100-200BC. Prior to this, the oldest copies of Old Testament documents were from about 900AD, so these scrolls were 1,000 years older. Surely scholars thought, as copies were made down through the years, errors by scribes must have been made, but on investigation they discovered when they compared today’s Bibles with the Dead Sea Scrolls that the Bible hasn’t changed significantly at all. Also these scrolls contained predictions about Jesus at least 100-200 years before He came. It is these fulfilled prophecies that reveal that Jesus was Divine.

There are prophecies of Jesus’ birth, His betrayal and His death. Beginning with the place of His birth, we find that 700 years before His birth, the Bible predicted in Micah 5:2 that He would be born in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph, Jesus’ earthly parents, lived in Nazareth, but Caesar Augustus decreed that everyone should go to their home town for a census, so they made the journey to Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Mary was a virgin, but an angel came to her and said, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God* (Luke 1:35). Born of a human mother through the Spirit of God means He is indeed Immanuel, which means *God with us*.

At the end of Jesus’ life on earth it was not only prophesied that he would be betrayed by a friend, but about 500 years beforehand the exact amount of money for which he would be betrayed was prophesied in Zechariah 11:4,12. The Bible is no common book! Zechariah even predicted how they would spend the thirty pieces of silver for which Jesus was betrayed. *So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter*. History shows that when Judas, Jesus’ betrayer, realised what he had done in betraying the Son of God, he brought the thirty pieces and threw them in the temple before the priests, who took the coins and bought the potter’s field in which to bury strangers. Bible prophecy has proven to be so precise.

Isaiah prophesied 700 years before Jesus' torture and death, saying, *I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting* (Isaiah 50:6). Who is Isaiah talking about? *Thus says the LORD* (Isaiah 50:2). Yes, Jesus is Jehovah – God in human flesh. He was beaten and will be scarred for eternity because of His love for us.

One thousand years before Jesus hung on the cross, it was written, *They pierced My hands and My feet* (Psalm 22:16). Crucifixion was only practised for a relatively short period of time, yet David in this Psalm predicted the circumstances of Jesus' death a thousand years beforehand.

Finally, we look at Jesus' resurrection. Again David says, *For You will not leave my soul in Sheol (the grave), nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption* (Psalms 16:10). The Holy One is a name for the LORD – Jehovah, God Almighty. The words on the tomb are true: THE LORD HAS RISEN. He's Alive! The Risen Jesus Is thus the LORD - God Almighty!

These Old Testament Prophecies made hundreds of years before Jesus came the first time, and the New Testament Fulfilments reveal that Jesus, The Emperor of the Last Empire, is God in human flesh. Which means: 1. His offer of eternal life is real; 2. He can help you in every situation because He is with you; 3. All God's resources are available to help you; 4. Even though others don't love you, the God of infinite love does; 5. He, being God, can forgive all your sins and take your guilt; 6. Since Jesus is really divine, He can change your life for the better. Why not put your life in such hope-filled hands right now!