

FOUNDATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Systematic Theology Course

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The Doctrine of Christ

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Historicity of Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ as Jehovah

Volume 6 - Unit 1

I. The Historicity of Jesus Christ

A. Pagan Writers

1. Tacitus (Annals, XV, 44)

Concerning Nero . . . "But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration. Hence, to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal 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 . . . "

2. Suetonius (The Lives of the Caesars:)

Nero: "Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition. "

Claudius: " . . . the Emperor Claudius expelled from Rome the Jews who were constantly causing tumults on the instigation of one Chrestus. "

3. Pliny (In a letter to the Emperor Trajan)

"They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt or their error was that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor to deny a trust when they should be called on to deliver it up . . . "

4. Lucian (The Passing of Peregrinus)

" . . . the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world

Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. "

5. Mara Bar Serapion (To his son)

"Or (what had) the Jews from the execution of their wise King, who at that time was taken away from them in the kingdom? . . . The Jews were destroyed and undone, and driven out of their realm, and now live dispersed everywhere . . . The wise King is not dead, by virtue of the new law he has given. "

B. Jewish Writers

1. Flavius Josephus (Antiquities)

The High Priest Ananus "had the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, named Jacobus, and some others, accused of transgression of the laws, and stoned. " (XX 9, 1)

"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 among 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 at this day. " (XVIII 3, 3)

2. Jewish Talmud

Scattered references regarding Jesus as the son of an adulteress, a transgressor in Israel who practiced magic, a traitor, the founder of a godless sect, one who led the people astray, one who was hanged on Passover Eve, and one whose disciples healed the sick in his name. (Cf. Talmudic Tract Bab. Sanhedrin f. 43a; f. (7a, etc.)

C. Other World Religions

D. New Testament Witness

E. Consensus

II. The Person of Jesus Christ

A. Deity

1. Jesus as Jehovah

a. The sacred name

b. The claims of Jesus

(1) The "I Am" (John 8:58)

(2) The Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:11, 22:13, Isaiah 44:6)

(3) The Light (John 8:12, cf. Psalms 27:1, Isaiah 60:19-20)

(4) The Shepherd (John 10:11, cf. Psalms 23:1, Ezekiel 34:15)

(5) The Bridegroom (Mark 2:19, Matthew 25:1-13, cf. Hosea 2:16, Isaiah 62:5)

(6) The Forgiver of Sins (Mark 2:10, Luke 5:21, cf. Jeremiah 31:34, Psalms 130:4)

c. Statements of New Testament writers

(1) Matthew 3:3 (cf. Isaiah 40:3)

(2) Luke 1:76 (cf. Malachi 3:1)

(3) John 19:37 (cf. Zech 12:10)

(4) I Peter 2:7-8 (cf. Isaiah 8:13-14)

(5) Romans 14:10-11 (cf. Philemon 2:10, Isaiah 45:23)

d. Objections

(1) John 1:1 ("a God" ?)

(2) Revelation 3:14 ("arche")

We are suggesting something a little different in this volume. The memory assignment for the first 7 units will be the 7 verses of Philippians 2:5-11, which incorporate most of the key doctrines of Christology. Make a 7-week project of it. Note several translation changes which bring out the meaning of the original text more fully.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - Philemon 2: 5-11 – “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was in the form of God, thought it not something to be equal with God, but emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto the extent of death, even a cross-death. Wherefore, God also has highly exalted him, and given him the name which is above every name (i.e. Jehovah), that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (i. e. Jehovah), to the glory of God the Father.”