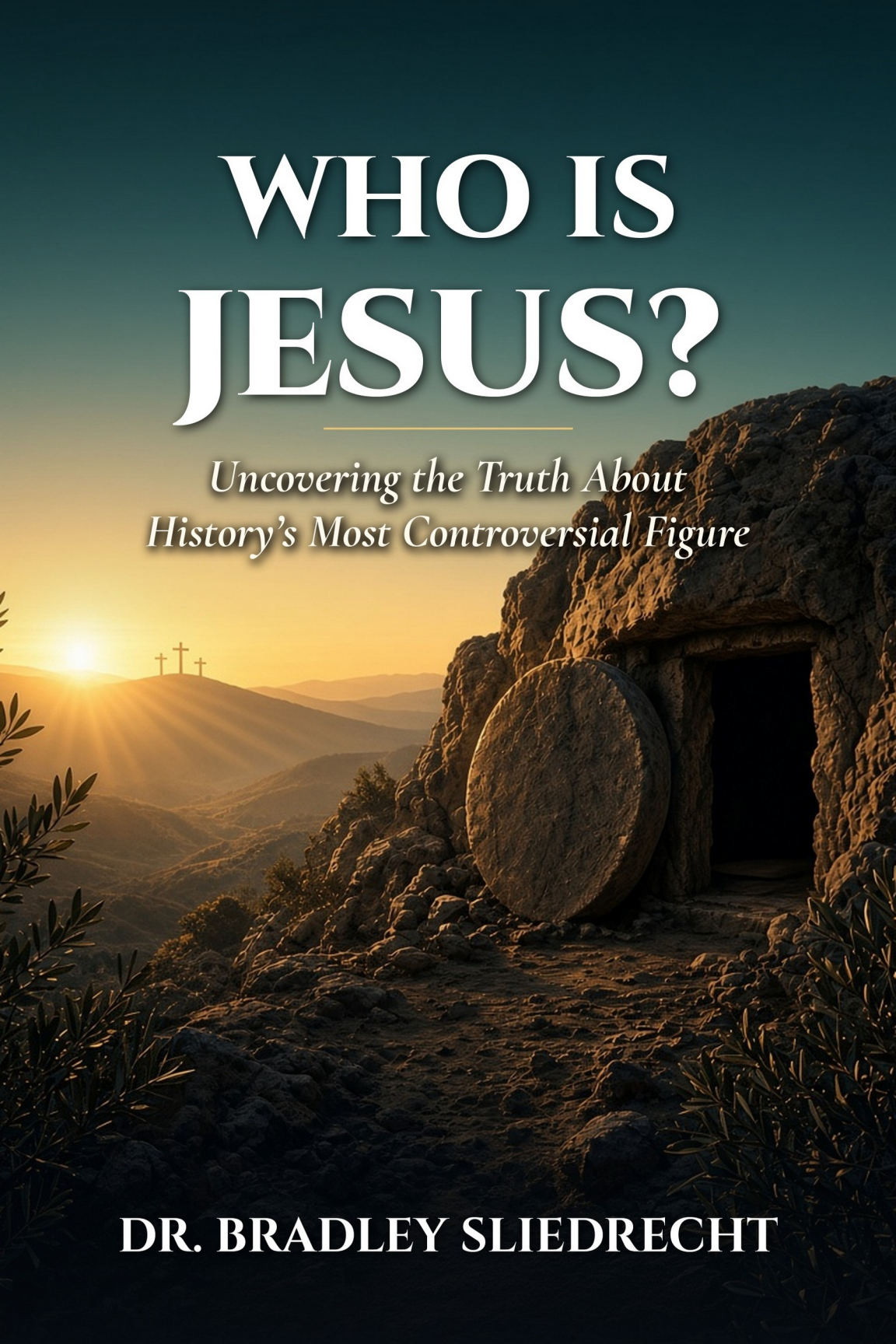

WHO IS
JESUS?
Uncovering the Truth About
History's Most Controversial Figure
DR. BRADLEY SLIEDRECHT

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Dr. Bradley Sliedrecht

Life & Hope Street Ministries

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Quotations from ancient and other non-biblical sources are taken from the translations named in the text and listed under "Notes on Sources" at the back of this booklet.

This book is written to teach and proclaim biblical truth concerning the person of Jesus Christ. Readers are encouraged to examine the Scriptures carefully and test all teaching in light of God's Word.

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CHAPTER 1

Jesus of Nazareth – Historical or Myth?

He's the most talked-about figure in history. His name has been whispered in reverence and shouted in rage. Some call Him Saviour. Others call Him myth. But regardless of where you land, this question deserves an honest answer: Did Jesus of Nazareth really exist?

In a time when social media memes spread faster than facts, it's not uncommon to hear people claim, "There's no evidence for Jesus outside the Bible." But is that true? Or have we just stopped looking?

A Man of History, Not Legend

Let's begin with the basics. Serious historians—Christian and non-Christian alike—do not deny that Jesus existed. In fact, Bart Ehrman, a prominent secular scholar and critic of Christian theology, writes:

> *"The reality is that every single author who mentions Jesus—pagan, Christian, or Jewish—was fully convinced that he at least lived. Even the enemies of the Jesus movement thought so; among their many slurs against the religion, his nonexistence is never one of them."*
>
> (Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?*, HarperOne, 2012, 171–72)

So if even skeptics agree He existed, where does that evidence come from?

Voices from Rome: Tacitus and Pliny the Younger

One of the most compelling references to Jesus comes from **Tacitus**, a Roman historian writing around AD 115. In his *Annals* (15.44), he recounts how Emperor Nero blamed Christians for the fire that devastated Rome:

> *"Christus, from whom the name [Christian] had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus..."*
>
> (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44)

Tacitus was no fan of Christians. He called the movement "a most mischievous superstition." But that's what makes his testimony powerful. He confirms:

- Jesus was called "Christus"
- He was executed under **Pontius Pilate**
- His followers were numerous enough in Rome to become a scapegoat

A Roman governor, **Pliny the Younger**, writing to Emperor Trajan around AD 112, reports that Christians "were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god." (Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96)

That's remarkable. A Roman official—who had no sympathy for this group—recorded that Christians worshipped Jesus as God just decades after His death.

A Jewish Voice: Josephus

We also find a Jewish source worth noting: **Flavius Josephus**, a first-century Jewish historian. In his *Antiquities of the Jews* (18.3.3), he writes:

> *"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man... He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles... And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross..."*
>
> (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.3, trans. William Whiston)

This passage is often disputed because later Christian editors may have embellished it. However, most scholars agree that Josephus originally wrote about Jesus, His wisdom, His crucifixion under Pilate, and His impact. A more neutral version of the text, likely closer to what Josephus wrote, still supports Jesus' historical existence.

From the Jewish Rabbinic Tradition

Jesus also appears to be mentioned in the **Babylonian Talmud**, a collection of Jewish rabbinic writings compiled centuries after His life but preserving earlier traditions.

> *"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy...'"*
>
> (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a, Soncino edition)

This reference, though hostile, aligns with the Gospel accounts—Jesus was crucified around Passover, was accused of sorcery (miracles?), and was said to lead people astray. We should hold it carefully: it was written down centuries later, and scholars debate whether this "Yeshu" is Jesus of Nazareth, so it is supporting evidence, not proof. But if it does refer to Him, its dismissive, even mocking tone shows one thing: the rabbinic tradition never denied that Jesus lived. It rejected Him—but not His existence.

Myths Don't Die on Crosses

Unlike mythical gods of ancient lore, Jesus lived in a specific time and place: during the reign of Tiberius, under Pontius Pilate, in the land of Judea. Myths don't get crucified by Roman governors. They don't gather followers willing to die for a memory.

And this is what separates Jesus from legends: His story intersects history. It intersects empires, cultures, and documentation.

So, did Jesus really exist? The answer is as clear as the records that remain. His existence is not a matter of faith—it's a matter of **fact**.

What Now?

If He really lived, what does that mean for you?

That's the question that haunts history. If the man lived—and died—what was so powerful about His life that it still draws people to their knees today?

In the next chapter, we'll ask a deeper question: Was He just a man—or something more?

CHAPTER 2

Was He More Than a Man?

Millions admire Him. Billions invoke His name. But admiration is not the same as worship—and history records something extraordinary: within just a few years of His death, Jesus of Nazareth was being worshipped as **God**.

How does a man, crucified in disgrace by Rome, become the object of worship in the very empire that killed Him?

That's not the path of a philosopher. That's not the fate of a fraud. That's the mark of something—and someone—entirely different.

What Did His Followers Believe?

Let's start with those who knew Him best. Within 20 years of Jesus' death, as Paul's letters show, believers were already praying to Jesus and worshipping Him as Lord (1 Corinthians 16:22; Philippians 2:9–11). The church would spell out its fuller creeds later, but this devotion was there from the earliest years. One of the best-known examples is the hymn in Paul's letter to the Philippians (2:6–11),

usually dated around AD 60, which many scholars believe preserves an even earlier hymn:

> *"Who, being in very nature God,*
> *did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*
> *rather, he made himself nothing*
> *by taking the very nature of a servant,*
> *being made in human likeness."*
>
> (Philippians 2:6–7, NIV)

While this comes from the New Testament, it reflects **what believers were already proclaiming**—not decades later under Roman influence, but from the very beginning.

The Roman Reaction: Worship or Madness?

Non-Christian Roman sources also confirm early worship of Jesus. As we saw in the previous chapter, **Pliny the Younger**, writing around AD 112, reported that Christians would meet before dawn and "sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god." (Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96)

This is a Roman governor, not a pastor. And he's describing people worshipping Jesus as divine—about 80 years after His death.

Think about it: what would drive monotheistic Jews—who would never worship a man—to risk everything by worshipping Jesus?

Hostile Witnesses: When Enemies Admit What You Believe

If Jesus was just a good teacher, why did so many die rather than deny Him?

His opponents accused Jesus of **blasphemy**—that is, claiming to be God (John 10:33). The **Talmud** remembers Him as a sorcerer who led Israel astray—why? Because He claimed too much, not too little.

Even early pagan critics, like the Greek philosopher **Celsus** (writing around AD 175–180), mocked Christians for believing that a crucified Jew could be God. Their ridicule, ironically, confirms what Christians actually believed. Origen preserves Celsus' complaint:

> *"But they pay excessive reverence to one who has but lately appeared among men, and they think it no offense against God if they worship also His servant."*
>
> (Celsus, quoted in Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.12, trans. Frederick Crombie; Origen wrote c. AD 248)

Mockery only makes sense if the claim was being made—and was dangerous enough to threaten the religious and political systems of the day.

Lord, Liar, or Lunatic?

The famous trilemma made popular by author C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* still forces a reckoning:

- If Jesus claimed to be God, He was either telling the truth,

- Or He was lying,
- Or He was mentally unstable.

Good teachers don't claim to be the eternal Judge of mankind. Enlightened prophets don't invite others to worship them. And yet Jesus repeatedly said things like:

> *"Before Abraham was born, I am!"*
>
> (John 8:58, NIV)

That wasn't poetic language. The Jewish leaders knew exactly what He meant—and they picked up stones to kill Him.

But here's the twist: even non-Christians began to record and report this unusual claim, that Jesus' followers worshipped Him, prayed to Him, and considered Him Lord over life and death.

If the early church had invented this belief, we would expect it to appear only after a long development. But instead, we find **worship of Jesus**—prayer, hymns, and devotion to Him as Lord—right from the start, long before the later creeds put it into fuller words.

The Case for Divinity

Let's summarize the key historical points outside the Bible:

- Pliny confirms that Christians worshipped Jesus "as to a god"
- Tacitus confirms His execution under Pilate, placing Him in time and space
- Celsus and other critics confirm that Christians believed outrageous claims about His divinity

- The Talmud, if it refers to Him, records that He was accused of sorcery—aligning with claims of miraculous power
- Martyrs died not for an idea, but for a person they believed was **divine** and **alive**

So What?

If Jesus was just a moral teacher, then the early church went terribly wrong. If He was a fraud, He fooled not only His followers but also the centuries that followed. But if He was who He claimed to be, then the question is no longer "Was He more than a man?" but rather, What are you going to do about it?

CHAPTER 3

Did He Really Rise from the Dead?

If Jesus stayed dead, He's just another failed messiah.
If He rose, everything changes.

Resurrection is the hinge on which the Christian faith turns. And for centuries, skeptics and seekers alike have asked the same question: Did Jesus really rise from the dead—or is it just a spiritual metaphor?

You might be surprised to know that the **evidence for the resurrection** doesn't begin with blind belief. It begins with history—undeniable, stubborn history.

The Minimal Facts Approach

Let's start with what most historians, including skeptics, agree on. This method, called the **Minimal Facts Approach**, was developed by Dr. Gary Habermas and is widely used in discussions of the resurrection. It focuses only on facts that are:

1. **Strongly supported by evidence**
2. **Accepted by most historians, including skeptics, or by many scholars**

Here are **five** facts commonly used in this approach. The first three are accepted by most historians, including skeptics; the last two are accepted by many scholars:

1. **Jesus died by Roman crucifixion.**
2. **His disciples had experiences they believed were appearances of the risen Jesus.**
3. **The Church's greatest persecutor, Paul, became a Christian after claiming to see the risen Jesus.**
4. **James, Jesus' brother, whom many scholars regard as a skeptic during Jesus' lifetime, became a believer after the resurrection.**
5. **The tomb was found empty** (accepted by many scholars, though not all).

Let's examine how these facts are supported—not just biblically, but historically.

Jesus Was Crucified — No One Disputes It

Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, and it was public. Tacitus, writing as an outsider and Roman official, stated:

> *"Christus... suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus."*
>
> (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44)

The **Jewish Talmud** agrees, stating:

> *"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged..."*
>
> (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a, Soncino edition)

The word "hanged" can describe crucifixion; the New Testament uses the same language for the cross (Luke 23:39; Galatians 3:13). So even the **hostile sources** acknowledge His execution.

The Disciples Believed He Rose

You don't have to believe the resurrection to believe they believed it. That's a critical distinction.

Pliny the Younger reported that Christians sang a hymn "to Christ as to a god" just decades after His death.
Lucian of Samosata, a second-century satirist, mocked Christians for "worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws," and for being convinced "that they are going to be immortal and live for all time" (Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus* 13, trans. A. M. Harmon).

Even critics had to acknowledge the rapid, passionate spread of belief in Jesus' resurrection. Something radical happened between Good Friday and what the early church called the Lord's Day.

Paul: From Murderer to Missionary

Paul, also known as Saul of Tarsus, had no reason to follow Jesus—he despised Him. He persecuted the early Christians with zeal. Then suddenly, he claimed to have seen the risen Jesus, and everything changed.

Paul's conversion is recorded not just in Acts, but in his **own letters**—written before the Gospels. In **1 Corinthians 15**, he reports a creed that many scholars date to within five years of Jesus' death:

> *"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve."*
>
> (1 Corinthians 15:3–5, NIV)

This creed predates Paul's writing. It wasn't made up later. It was **already circulating** among early Christians, just years after the resurrection.

James: The Skeptic Who Changed His Mind

The Gospels tell us that **Jesus' brothers didn't believe in Him** during His life (John 7:5). But something changed. James, His brother, became a leader in the Jerusalem church and died for the faith.

What could transform a sibling skeptic into a bold believer—except an encounter with someone he knew had died… and now lived?

The Empty Tomb

This is the most debated of the five facts. But here's what we know:

- Women were the first witnesses in the Gospel accounts—an unlikely choice if the story were fabricated, since women's testimony wasn't highly regarded in the ancient world.

- Jewish authorities **never produced a body**. Instead, they accused the disciples of stealing it (Matthew 28:11–15)—an admission that the tomb was, in fact, empty.
- The site of Jesus' burial was known—Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, a public figure.

Theologian William Lane Craig argues that the disciples could not have proclaimed the resurrection in Jerusalem—the very city where Jesus was executed and buried, and only weeks after the crucifixion—if His body still lay in a known tomb.

In short: **the body was gone**, and everyone knew it.

Alternative Theories Fall Short

Over the centuries, skeptics have offered various theories:

- The disciples stole the body
- Jesus didn't really die (the swoon theory)
- It was all a hallucination
- The story was legend

But each theory crumbles under scrutiny. Hallucinations are private experiences; they are not normally shared by whole groups. Swoon victims don't roll away stones and inspire worship. And the resurrection was proclaimed within a few years, while eyewitnesses were still alive—leaving little room for legend to replace the facts, especially in a hostile environment.

What's the Most Logical Conclusion?

The resurrection was not just a private belief—it reshaped the Roman world. It turned cowards into martyrs. It launched a global movement that outlasted empires. History can establish that Jesus lived, that He was crucified, and that His earliest followers proclaimed that He had risen. That He truly rose is the central Christian claim—and it remains the most reasonable explanation for the facts we know.

As British scholar N.T. Wright put it:

> *"The early Christians did not invent the empty tomb and the meetings or sightings of the risen Jesus... Nobody was expecting this kind of thing; no kind of conversion experience would have invented it, no matter how guilty (or how forgiven) they felt, no matter how many hours they pored over the scriptures."*
>
> (N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 2003)

So What?

If Jesus rose from the dead, then His claim to be **God** carries the weight of history, not just theology. If the tomb is empty, then hope is real. Forgiveness is possible. And death is not the end.

The question now isn't just, "Did He rise?"
The real question is: What will you do with the risen Christ?

In the next chapter, we'll ask another difficult question: If the evidence is this strong, why did the very people He came for—His own—reject Him?

CHAPTER 4

Why Did Many Reject Jesus as the Messiah?

If Jesus really fulfilled prophecy, performed miracles, and rose from the dead—why didn't more of the very people He came from, and came for, believe in Him?

It's one of the most perplexing questions in all of history.

Jesus was Jewish. His disciples were Jewish. His mission began with "the lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). So let's be clear from the start: the problem was never with "the Jews" as a people. Jesus, the apostles, and the first thousands of believers in Jerusalem were all Jewish, and the opposition came mainly from the religious leadership. And yet, within a generation, most of that leadership had rejected Him, and the early church became increasingly Gentile.

Was it blindness? Betrayal? Or something deeper?

What Kind of Messiah Were They Expecting?

To understand why so many did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, we need to step into their world—into the world of **Second Temple Judaism**.

By the time Jesus arrived in Roman-occupied Judea, many Jewish people were longing for a **Messiah**, a term meaning "Anointed One." Their hopes were not all the same, but they were shaped by centuries of oppression, exile, and occupation.

Many weren't looking for a **suffering servant**. They were looking for a **military king**—a new David who would:

- Defeat the Roman Empire
- Cleanse and restore the Temple
- Establish national and political freedom
- Reign in visible glory over all nations

This was a widespread popular hope, and it was deeply political—though not the only one, since some looked for a priestly or prophetic figure. Scholars such as **Geza Vermes** (*Jesus the Jew*, 1973) describe the popular messianic hope of the time as centred on a human, Davidic king who would free Israel from foreign rule—not on a divine Saviour.

So when Jesus came teaching about loving your enemies, turning the other cheek, and a Kingdom not of this world, it clashed violently with what many expected.

Prophets Who Bleed Are Easy to Ignore

Jesus did fulfill messianic prophecies—but He didn't fit the **popular** mould. He didn't overthrow Rome. He didn't purify the Temple with swords. He didn't call for violent revolution. Instead, He wept over Jerusalem. He healed on the Sabbath. He forgave sins.

The religious elite, especially the Pharisees and Sadducees, viewed Him as dangerous—both theologically and politically.

- **The Pharisees** believed in strict obedience to the Law and oral tradition. Jesus challenged both, especially their hypocrisy.
- **The Sadducees** controlled the Temple and cooperated with Rome to keep peace. Jesus disrupted their system.

His actions threatened the religious and political status quo. According to the Gospel of John:

> *"If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation."*
>
> (John 11:48, NIV)

This wasn't just about belief. It was about **survival**—as a people, a faith, and a fragile power structure under Roman rule.

A Messiah Who Suffers?

Jewish scriptures like **Isaiah 53** speak of a suffering servant. But many Jewish interpreters, especially from the Middle Ages onward, have read this as referring to Israel itself, or to an anonymous righteous one—not the Messiah.

The idea of a **crucified** Messiah was scandalous. In fact, the Torah says:

> *"Anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse."*
>
> (Deuteronomy 21:23, NIV)

So how could a man cursed by hanging on a Roman cross possibly be God's chosen one?

As **Paul**, a former Pharisee, would later admit:

> *"We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles."*
>
> (1 Corinthians 1:23, NIV)

The cross was too much. It was offensive, unthinkable, and incompatible with expectations.

Rabbinic Reactions and Jewish Writings

After the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, Judaism had to redefine itself—and Christianity had to clarify its distinction.

Early rabbinic writings began to distance Jewish identity from the followers of the Nazarene. The **Talmud**, compiled later, refers to Jesus (Yeshu) only briefly and harshly, accusing Him of sorcery and of leading Israel into apostasy. For example:

> *"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged... because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy..."*
>
> (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a, Soncino edition)

This reflects not just theological disagreement but a deeply **wounded history**—one shaped by internal division, Roman violence, and fear of heresy.

A Rejection That Was Foretold

Ironically, the rejection of Jesus by many of His own people was **prophesied** in the very Scriptures they cherished.

> *"He was despised and rejected by mankind,*
> *a man of suffering, and familiar with pain...*
> *he was despised, and we held him in low esteem."*
>
> (Isaiah 53:3, NIV)

That is the Gospel's theological explanation: Scripture foretold that the Messiah would be rejected (John 1:11; 12:37–38). Historically, there were also other reasons many Jewish communities did not accept Christian claims about Jesus: a crucified Messiah did not fit most expectations, Israel had not been visibly restored, and as the church became largely Gentile, its message seemed more and more foreign. And yet, this rejection did not stop the message—it became the very soil from which the global church would grow.

Not All Rejected Him

It's important to remember: **many Jews did believe**. Jesus' first followers were Jewish. Thousands in Jerusalem converted (Acts 2). Paul, Peter, James—all Jews.

The opposition came mainly from the **religious system** and its **leadership**, and from the deep offence of a crucified Messiah.

So What?

Why does this matter today?

Because Jesus wasn't rejected for being untrue—but for being **unexpected**.

And the same happens now.

People reject Jesus not because He failed to rise—but because He refuses to conform. He won't play politics. He won't serve ideologies. He won't be used.

He is not the Messiah we create. He is the Messiah who came.

And the question remains: Will you reject Him too—or will you let Him redefine everything?

In the next chapter, we'll bring this closer to home. If Jesus is real—if He is risen and Lord—what does that mean for the world today? And for you personally?

CHAPTER 5

Jesus and the World Today

Walk through any city in the world and ask people, "Who is Jesus?" You'll hear answers like:

- "A good teacher."
- "A prophet."
- "A revolutionary."
- "A myth."
- "The Son of God."

The diversity of responses is staggering. And yet, few figures in human history evoke as much emotion or curiosity as Jesus of Nazareth. The world is still trying to figure Him out.

But here's the twist: most people aren't rejecting the **real** Jesus. They're reacting to a version of Him—domesticated, misunderstood, or conveniently reimagined.

So who is Jesus in today's world?

The Islamic Jesus: Honoured, But Not Divine

In **Islam**, Jesus (Isa) is highly respected. The Qur'an calls Him a prophet, born of a virgin, a miracle worker, and even "the Messiah."

But He is not considered divine. Muslims believe He was not crucified but taken up to heaven, and many believe He will return one day to confirm Islam as the final truth.

> *"They slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them..."*
>
> (Qur'an 4:157, trans. Marmaduke Pickthall)

The Islamic Jesus is admirable—but incomplete. He lacks the cross, the resurrection, and the claim to deity. It's a version that reveres His ethics while rejecting His identity.

The Secular Jesus: Safe and Sanitized

In the secular West, Jesus is often reduced to a **moral philosopher** or social reformer. He's portrayed as a soft-spoken teacher who loved the poor, opposed oppression, and promoted peace.

This version fits well in TED Talks and university classrooms. But it strips away His **authority**, **miracles**, and most of all—His claim to be **God**.

Why? Because a Jesus who teaches love is comforting. A Jesus who calls for repentance and claims to be the Judge of all the earth? That's uncomfortable.

The Spiritualized Jesus: One of Many Paths

In New Age and progressive spiritual circles, Jesus is often placed alongside Buddha, Krishna, or other enlightened masters. He becomes part of a buffet of spiritual wisdom—a wise soul pointing the way to inner peace.

But Jesus never claimed to be one path among many. He said:

> *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
>
> (John 14:6, NIV)

You can respect Him. You can reject Him. But you can't honestly say He left the door open for other saviours.

The Political Jesus: A Tool, Not a King

In our polarized age, Jesus is often co-opted to support political ideologies. To some, He's the champion of social justice. To others, the defender of traditional values.

But Jesus defies all sides. He wasn't a revolutionary trying to overthrow Rome, nor a conservative trying to preserve tradition. He called for a **Kingdom not of this world**, where the greatest is the servant, and the last will be first.

Jesus wasn't seeking votes. He was seeking hearts.

The Global Jesus: Still Changing Lives

Despite distortions, the **real Jesus** continues to change lives across the world. Some of the fastest-growing churches today are in Iran, China, and Africa.

- In **Iran**, people keep coming to faith in Jesus despite persecution.
- In **China**, underground churches flourish even under tight government control.

- In **Africa**, revival movements carry His name into the remotest villages.
- In **Western nations**, many are rethinking faith—not out of tradition, but out of a hunger for truth that works in real life.

Jesus isn't just a relic of the past. He is a force in the present—unpredictable, undeniable, and uncaged by culture.

So Why Does This Matter?

Because if we follow a **false Jesus**, we end up with a **false hope**.

- The philosopher Jesus can't save you—He can only advise you.
- The prophet Jesus can't forgive your sins—He can only warn you.
- The political Jesus can't change your heart—He can only argue your side.

Only the **real Jesus**—crucified, risen, divine—has the power to forgive, transform, and restore.

What About You?

In a world full of opinions, the real question is not what the world says about Jesus. It's what **you** say.

Jesus once asked His disciples, "Who do people say I am?"

Then He turned the question:

"But what about you? Who do you say I am?"

(Mark 8:27, 29, NIV)

That question still echoes today.

Because who **you** say Jesus is… changes who **you** become.

In the next chapter, we'll go even deeper. If Jesus is real, if He is who He said He is, then there's only one question left: What now? What will you do with Him?

CHAPTER 6

If He Is Real, What Then?



We've followed the trail of history. We've listened to the voices of Rome, of rabbis, of revolutionaries and skeptics. We've examined the tomb and wrestled with the resurrection.

Now we come to the most personal and pivotal moment in this journey:

If Jesus is real... what now?

The evidence doesn't just ask you to think—it invites you to respond. Because if Jesus is who He claimed to be, then the question is no longer academic. It's eternal.

Knowing Demands Action

We live in an age of information overload—an age where we can know a thousand things but commit to none. But Jesus doesn't allow for neutral curiosity. He never asked for fans. He called for followers.

When Peter saw who Jesus truly was, he didn't just say, "Interesting." He said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

When Thomas saw the resurrected Christ, he didn't shrug and say, "Cool trick." He declared, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Throughout history, those who **saw** Him rightly, **responded**. They changed direction. They gave up control. They surrendered their lives.

The Claims of Christ

If Jesus is real—then so are His claims:

- That He is **the Son of God**
- That He is **the only way to the Father**
- That He has **authority over sin, death, and eternity**
- That He **will return** as Judge and King

No other religious figure spoke like this. Buddha never claimed to be God. Muhammad never offered to forgive sin. Moses never said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus did.

And if He rose from the dead, then every one of those claims demands a verdict.

Not Just Faith—Trust

Some think faith means closing your eyes and leaping into the dark. But biblical faith is the opposite. It's opening your eyes to the evidence and stepping toward the light.

The issue is not whether there's enough proof to believe. The issue is whether you're willing to surrender to what the evidence demands.

It's like standing at the edge of a bridge. You can study it. You can analyze its design. You can learn the engineering. But at some point—you have to walk across.

Faith in Jesus is not about having all the answers. It's about trusting the One who is the answer.

A Relationship, Not a Religion

Jesus did not come merely to establish another religious system. He came to reconcile sinners to God.

He called people beyond outward religious observance to genuine repentance, faith, and obedience. He didn't call us to jump through hoops. He called us to follow Him.

This is the paradox of Jesus: He is infinitely holy—yet shockingly approachable. He is King of Kings—yet He walked with the poor, touched the leper, and wept with the broken.

He invites us, not into performance, but into **relationship**.

> *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*
>
> (Matthew 11:28, NIV)

What About My Past?

Maybe you feel unworthy. Maybe your past is filled with shame, regret, or religious baggage. But Jesus came **because** of that.

He didn't wait for us to get clean. He stepped into our mess and offered mercy. That's the scandal of grace: He doesn't love us because we're good—He loves us because He is good.

> *"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
>
> (Romans 5:8, NIV)

No sin is too dark. No heart is too far. The cross covers it all.

What If I Say No?

This is the question many try to avoid.

If Jesus is not who He claimed to be, then you can walk away without consequence.
But if He is… then saying no is not just dismissing an idea. It's rejecting the God who made you, loves you, and calls you.

C.S. Lewis put it like this in his essay "Christian Apologetics":

> *"One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."*
>
> (C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*)

What If I Say Yes?

Everything changes.

- You are **forgiven**.
- You are **loved**.
- You are **given new life**—not just in eternity, but starting now.

To follow Jesus is not to become religious—it's to become **fully alive**. To live with purpose. To walk in truth. To know peace, even in pain.

It doesn't mean life becomes easy. But it means you never walk alone again.

Your Invitation

So what now?

If you've come this far, it's not by accident. The question that echoed in first-century Judea still echoes now:

Who do you say I am? (Mark 8:29)

And it's your turn to answer.

Next Steps:

If you want to explore what it means to follow Jesus:

- Talk to someone who knows Him
- Read His words for yourself (start with the Gospel of John)
- Pray, even if you don't know how. Just speak honestly.

And if you're ready, you can respond to Him right now. No ritual required. Just a heart that says:

> *"Jesus, I believe You are who You say You are. I believe You died for my sins and rose again. I surrender my life to You. Teach me, lead me, and make me new. Amen."*

In the next chapter, we'll step back and ask the question that started it all—but now with new eyes: Who is Jesus? And what does His identity mean for the future of the world—and yours?

CHAPTER 7

The Question That Still Echoes



He never wrote a book.
He never held political office.
He never led an army.
And yet, Jesus of Nazareth has shaped history more than any other figure the world has ever known.

Nations have risen and fallen in His name.
Lives have been laid down for His cause.
Hospitals, universities, and whole systems of justice owe much to His teachings.

But the most important thing about Jesus is not what He did back then.
It's what He still does right now.

Because the question was never just historical. It's personal.
It's not only, "Who is Jesus?"
It's, "Who is He to me?"

Who Do You Say He Is?

The world has never lacked opinions about Jesus.

- The Roman authorities saw Him as a threat.
- The Jewish leaders saw Him as a blasphemer.
- The disciples saw Him as the Christ.
- The early church saw Him as the Risen Lord.
- And today? He's still called everything from revolutionary to redeemer, delusion to divine.

And the question He asked His closest followers is now put to each of us.

It's a question that doesn't go away.
It waits. It lingers. It demands a verdict.

The Jesus of History… and Eternity

Throughout this book, we've seen:

- That Jesus **existed**—as confirmed by Roman and Jewish sources.
- That He was **worshipped as divine**—almost immediately after His death.
- That His earliest followers proclaimed His **resurrection** from the start—and that it remains the best explanation of the evidence.
- That many **rejected** Him not because He was false, but because He was unexpected.

- That He continues to be **reimagined** by cultures but never erased.

And we've seen that to encounter Jesus—truly—is to be changed.

This is not mythology. This is not speculation. This is **reality**.

If He Is Who He Says He Is…

Then this world is not all there is.
Then life has meaning beyond the moment.
Then your worth is not measured by achievement, failure, or fame.
Then your sin is not final.
Then death is not the end.

And most of all—
Then there is a **God** who came close,
Who walked our roads,
Felt our pain,
Took our place,
And offers us new life.

That is who Jesus is.

Not just the Jesus of Nazareth.
Not just the Jesus of history books.
But the Jesus who still knocks on the door of every human heart.

Your Story Isn't Over

Maybe you're still unsure. That's okay.

The journey of faith doesn't require perfection. Just honesty. Just a willingness to say, "If this is true, I want to know more."

Jesus meets seekers. He doesn't shame doubters. He walks with the broken. He stands with the curious. And He runs to the humble.

So wherever you are in your story—
Let this be the moment you stop asking if He's real…
And start asking, "What if He is?"

Because if He is… then nothing matters more.

Who is Jesus?

He is not just a man.
Not just a prophet.
Not just a martyr.
Not just a name in a book.

He is the **Son of the Living God**.
He is the **resurrected King**.
He is the **Saviour of the world**.
He is **your Saviour—if you'll have Him**.

And that, more than anything else, is the answer history is still waiting for you to give.

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About the Author



Dr. Bradley H. Sliedrecht serves as International Dean of Karunya Bible Institute International. He is an evangelist, Bible teacher and the author of more than forty books on theology, pastoral ministry, biblical studies and Christian living, including the *Truth in an Age of Compromise* series. He holds a Bachelor in Christian Leadership, a Bachelor of Divinity, a Master of Divinity, a Master's in pastoral ministry, and completed his Doctor of Philosophy through Karunya Bible Institute International with a dissertation on the prosperity gospel in Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity.

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His motto is "No hype. No headlines. Just Scripture." He and his wife, Vanessa, have been married since 2000 and have four children.

Continue the Journey



Thank you for reading *Who Is Jesus?* If this booklet has helped you think more clearly about Jesus, don't stop here. Keep reading the Gospels, keep asking honest questions, and keep listening for His answer.

For more gospel teaching and resources, visit:

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