

## Outline

- A. The context in which we find ourselves;
- B. Undergirding this context is critical scholarship regarding the Bible–
  - The “Historical Jesus” as contrasted with “The Christ of faith”
  - Of naturalistic bias and a rather idiosyncratic approach to the Bible
- C. The Crucial Importance of the life, witness, and writings of St. Paul;
  - 1. The importance of the creeds found in the writings of St. Paul;
    - 2. The importance of the Christology of St. Paul;
    - 3. The crucial importance of the conversion of St. Paul;

## The Importance of the Witness of St. Paul regarding Christ

In the nineteenth century scholars emerged who took a very destructive view of the Bible. These scholars, especially because they could not buy into the miracles recorded in the Bible, propounded the view that much in the Bible was untrue. Ancillary to this view was that the gospels were written well after Christ was crucified, so there was (according to these hyper-critical scholars) a great deal of time between the events of Christ's earthly ministry and the time when the gospels were written. With this passage of time, according to these critical scholars, the 'historical Jesus' (the Jesus who really did something) could have been replaced by the 'Christ of faith' (where the picture of Christ came to be on the basis of mistaken oral tradition and the accretion of rumor and fabrication). On the basis of this scholarship, the miracles of Christ (as well as the resurrection) are simply denied any reality. Helpful to us is the witness of St. Paul.

Luke Timothy Johnson is a highly regarded New Testament scholar who takes the view that however one regards the Gospels (and while there are some critical scholars who basically deny many of the truth claims of the Gospels) the witness of St. Paul is highly instructive for our understanding of who Christ is and what occurred during His life and ministry. Luke Timothy Johnson, in his book *The Real Jesus*, concludes that there is much about Christ that St. Paul affirms, including that:

1. Jesus was a human person (Galatians 4:4-5).
2. Jesus was a Jew (Romans 1:3).
3. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah.
4. Jesus was a Descendant of David (Romans 1:3).
5. Jesus' mission was to the Jews (Romans 1:16).
6. Jesus suffered (I Corinthians 15:3).
7. Jesus interpreted His last meal with reference to His death (I Corinthians 11).
8. Jesus underwent a trial (I Timothy 6:13).
9. Jesus appeared before Pontius Pilate (I Timothy 6:13).
10. Jesus' end involved some Jews.
11. Jesus was crucified (Philippians 2:8).
12. Jesus was buried (I Corinthians 15:4).
13. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day (I Corinthians 15:4ff.).
14. Jesus appeared to witnesses after his death (I Corinthians 15:6).

Loved one, what is vitally important to remember is that St. Paul begins writing his epistles within about two decades after Christ's death and resurrection. This is too short a span of time for rumor, myth and fabrication to have completely erased the historical Jesus. Much more to the point, St. Paul adduces the fact in his writing that many of the witnesses to events of Christ's ministry were still alive (and could themselves witness to the factual nature of the events of Christ's ministry; (please see I Corinthians 15:6)).