

WHY BELIEVE IN JESUS?

A LIFE WORTH INVESTIGATING

GUILLERMO MALDONADO



WHITAKER
HOUSE



Our Mission

Called to bring the supernatural power of God to this generation

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to all the people around the world who long for a personal relationship with the living Jesus, who gave His life for us, and was resurrected by God, the Father. I dedicate it to the chosen people of God, who urgently need an accurate answer to the question: Why believe in Jesus? I also dedicate it to the Bride—the Church—who is preparing for the wedding feast of the Lamb.

I dedicate this book to Jesus, the only Way, Truth, and Life. Praise be to the only wise God, our Savior, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. Only He is worthy of praise, worship, honor, glory, power, and majesty.

This book is to exalt You, Jesus, Son of God most high!

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Introduction

His life was designated a milestone in human history—dividing it into two distinct periods: before Christ (B.C. or B.C.E.) and after Christ (A.D. or C.E.). In many parts of the world, His birth is celebrated during the season of Christmas, and His death and resurrection are commemorated on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. More books have been written about Him than any other person who has ever lived. His words and deeds are revered by hundreds of millions. Over the centuries, many have given up their lives rather than deny their allegiance to Him. And people from ancient times to the present have considered His life a mystery worthy of being investigated.

Yet, even today, the person of Jesus Christ evokes mixed responses from people. Many admire and believe in Him as the Son of God. Some view Him as a loving and generous historical personage. Certain people consider Him an enlightened prophet, a wise man, or a spiritual guide. Others barely think about Him, recognizing Him only as a character they have seen in a movie, or using His name as a curse word. Some people are skeptical about His existence and His claims. Still others seem to hate Him, even to the point of persecuting those who follow His teachings.

What is it about Jesus' life, claims, and teachings that attract many people's attention and either win their devotion or awaken great opposition to Him? It is not difficult to accept the fact that Jesus was a historical figure who walked on this earth two millennia ago. Yet who was He? Where did He come from? What did He teach?

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If He truly was a Savior, in what way does that reality affect us today, so many centuries later? What does He currently mean to us, and how should we respond to Him? In the following pages, we will explore these questions as we seek answers to the central question, *Why Believe in Jesus?*

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An Invitation

Jesus Christ was thirty years old when He began to travel to various towns in His region and teach. His message was characterized by a series of invitations to people. He would say things like, “Follow Me,”¹ “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water,”² and “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”³

The people to whom He spoke were living in turbulent social and political times. Many of them were looking for purpose, peace, and power in their lives. They wanted genuine solutions to their everyday difficulties as they dealt with their personal relationships, health, finances, and so on.

Seeking What Is Real and Lasting

Similarly, most people in our contemporary world are seeking something real for their lives, perhaps more than at any other time in history. Our world is filled with uncertainty. Throughout our planet, we face financial crises, political upheaval, natural disasters, wars, terrorism, crime, widespread hunger and disease,

¹ See, for example, Mark 1:17; 2:14.

² John 7:37.

³ Matthew 11:28–29 (NIV).

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and many other troubles. Yet no political, religious, or economic system seems able to offer a workable, lasting solution.

Our world has seen wonderful advances in technology, medicine, and other fields that improve our lives in various ways. But many people wonder how long we will be around to enjoy them. We continually see news headlines reporting on the latest natural disaster or social catastrophe. Consider the number of movies that have been produced in the last few years depicting the end of the world through war, disease, a poisoned environment, or other kinds of disasters. Several films have also been made about people who were left to survive alone under harsh conditions in the natural world or in space. Our society seems to be asking, “Will our world make it?” “Will we be left alone without hope?”

*Can we have peace and purpose in a world that seems to
be falling apart?*

What About God?

We wonder if it is possible for us to have peace, purpose, and empowerment in a world that seems to be falling apart with each passing day. The circumstances in our world lead many people to wrestle with basic questions about their own existence, such as “Why am I here?” and “What is the meaning of my life?” It also makes them wonder about the existence of a Higher Being to whom they might appeal for help. Yet many people, especially in Western societies, find it hard to believe in the reality of anything “spiritual” or “supernatural.” They have been trained to question the authenticity of anything that goes beyond the scientific method, beyond what can be seen and heard by their five senses or explained by their intellect. Many people are also tired of hearing about religion, because

it hasn't proven to supply answers to their questions or power for overcoming their difficulties. They want something relevant, something authentic, that they can hold on to. But the religions they have grown up with or have observed in their society seem disconnected from their daily desires, hopes, needs, hurts, and troubles.

People are wrestling with questions such as “Why am I here?” and “What is the meaning of my life?”

If there is a God, what is He like? Some people picture God as an old man with a white beard who sits on a throne in heaven and is always ready to punish people for their mistakes. Other people imagine God as a “force” that permeates the universe. Still others depict God through various images that resemble people or animals. But regardless of their concept of God, they often see Him as a distant Being who does not understand what it means to be a human struggling to live on this earth.

Yet, what Jesus Christ taught about God was entirely different from these depictions. He made some remarkable statements about God's vital connection to human beings as our Creator and “Father,” about His presence among us, and about His concern for our hurts and suffering. Far from being distant, He did something extraordinary in order to live among us on earth: He became a Man in the person of Jesus Christ—the Son of God—showing us firsthand what He is really like, what He desires for us, and how we can have abundant life. Jesus said that if you have seen Him, you have seen God.⁴ And this was His stated mission on earth:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has
anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent

⁴ See John 14:9.

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Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.⁵

Jesus referred to Himself as the “light of the world,”⁶ the “bread of life,”⁷ and the “good shepherd [who] gives His life for the sheep.”⁸ As He demonstrated the nature and power of God, He taught us answers to questions such as these:

- ✦ What is truth?
- ✦ What is the meaning of life?
- ✦ What is love?
- ✦ What is my purpose?

Jesus Christ is the source of salvation, hope, and life for humanity. “Following” Him is not the same as following another religion or philosophy. Through Him, we gain entrance to the “kingdom of God”—the fullness of life as it was meant to be lived. Jesus extends the same invitations to us today—to come to Him, to follow Him, to experience rest from our burdens, to discover renewed purpose, and to find true peace.

Answering Jesus’ Invitation

In this book, we will look at the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. And we will be introduced to contemporary people from various backgrounds who will tell the story of how and why they have come to believe in Him. The following are two such stories.

Douglas Camarillo has master’s degrees in marketing/publicity and public relations. He is a radio host, journalist, and pastor. He responded to the invitation of Jesus when his relationship with

⁵ Luke 4:18.

⁶ John 8:12; 9:5.

⁷ John 6:35, 48; see also verses 33, 51.

⁸ John 10:11.

his wife deteriorated, and Jesus healed his marriage and gave him peace. “I came from a dysfunctional home where my parents were divorced when I was twelve years old. (My future stepmother was our maid.) With my father’s support, I continued with my studies and graduated with excellent grades. At a young age, I was promoted to higher positions, and, at age twenty-five, I became a member of a group of executives of a very important chain of radio and television stations in my home country of Venezuela. Life was fast-paced, and I was earning good money and living without limits. It was a sparkling world: There were constant parties, work meetings, and social events with available alcohol and women. It was, in truth, an accelerated and without-limits lifestyle.

“When I was thirty-one, I met my wife, Nena. She was working for the competing television station. We got married and moved to Miami, Florida, where I wanted to continue working in the media and live a similar lifestyle. I worked in several places, but, in the meantime, my marriage was falling apart. My wife and I would fight over which one of us was in charge, or who could step on the other person and be superior. Pride was wreaking havoc in our relationship, and I considered leaving my wife. However, with our marriage in pieces, we visited King Jesus Church, and Jesus came and radically changed our lives for the better. He restored our marriage, crushed our pride, and ended the anger, the fighting, and the arguments in our home. He put all things in order, and we learned what our individual places were in our marriage. We received counseling and inner healing, and God’s reordering of our lives brought us peace. We have now been married for nineteen years and are more in love and happier than on our wedding day. Of course, we experience the normal adjustments and changes that come with married life, but with blessing and tranquility.”

Renee Khobragade is a young teacher who has master’s degrees in literature and educational leadership. She responded to Jesus’

invitation to come to Him and find rest when her life was full of turmoil.

“I was born in Latin America and raised in a strict, dysfunctional home. My uncle abused me when I was four years old; later, other people did the same for several more years. This caused me to experience frustration, fear, and anger, because I knew that I could never say anything to my parents about those incidents. Furthermore, I grew to hate my mother because she would make me feel unworthy and condemned by God. In our home, verbal and physical abuse was the norm, and my parents fought constantly. When I was twenty, my father died, and that event pushed me to the emotional edge. I started to visit clubs, to fight, and to go from one relationship to another, trying to fill the void within me. One day, during a fight with my mother, I threatened to kill her, and she put a restraining order on me. I had to leave home, and this was when my family hit rock bottom.

“A series of events took place that year, until, one day, when I was on my way to the airport, a friend offered to lead me in the prayer of salvation to accept Jesus into my heart. I don’t know why, but the tears began to flow uncontrollably. As I repeated the prayer, I could feel the peace of God flooding me, and I realized that I had finally found what I had been desperately seeking for years. Jesus Christ saved me. He pulled me out of the pit, thanks to His work on the cross. He healed, delivered, transformed, and restored my life, as well as the relationships that I had destroyed with my anger and bitterness. I can honestly say that I am a new creature in Christ and that He has given me my righteous identity. Today I can experience His love, joy, peace, and prosperity.”

Why believe in Jesus? He invites you to come to Him and receive the abundant life He desires for you, just as these two individuals did.