

The Call

Around 30 A.D. a group of Jews from a region called the Galilee, claimed that their Rabbi was the Son of God, that he was born of a virgin, and that after his death he had been resurrected. They even claimed to have seen him after his death and eaten with him. Then they said he had ascended to heaven and that some day he would return. Now the world at this time was ruled by the Roman empire. One of the most popular gods of the Roman Empire was Mythra. The followers of Mythra believed that Mythra was born of a virgin, was a mediator between god and humans, and that he ascended to heaven. Another popular god was Addis. They believed that Addis was born of a virgin and each spring they would gather to celebrate the resurrection of Addis. Now this leads us back to the Roman Empire which was ruled by a succession of Caesars, the first being Julius Caesar. When he died a comet was seen in the sky. People said, "yeah, well that's Julius Caesar, the son of god, ascending to the right hand of god." Next was Caesar Augustus. Augustus believed that he was the son of god, sent by the gods to bring in an era of peace and prosperity. Their was even a popular slogan that said, "there is no other name under heaven by which one can be saved, then that of Caesar." So for a 1st Century Jew to claim that their God was the Son of God, that he was born or a virgin, and that he ascended to heaven, really wasn't that unique. The claims of these first Christians were not really new. I mean, everybody's god had risen from the dead, why was theirs so special. The answer to this can only be how they lived their lives, the love, the community, and unexplainable service they performed for those in need.

-(**John 13|34,35**) *By your love*: How to spot a Christian.

- What possibly could have made these 1st century Christians any different from the other gods at this time?

(The way they loved each other, was how they were different. While other religions only required belief and participation rarely, these Christians lived in communities where their lives resembled what they believed. They would show it by loving, serving, and suffering with each other. They made sure no one in their community was in need.)

-(**Acts 2|42-47**) *Together Everyday*

- How is this description of how a Christian is suppose to live, different from how the world today views it?
(**Today, everyone is only looking out for themselves. Even some who claim to be Christians today are guilty of this.**)
- How could this type of life show others that what you believe, is in fact, very different from the other religions?
(**Because you were not only talking about how great your God is, but you were actually living it. Another way they would seem different would be how they viewed authority. Jesus' had all authority over heaven and earth (Mat 28|18) and yet he "ruled" by giving his life to other both physically and in service. It wasn't hard to see why the kingdom these 1st century Christians were proclaiming was very different. On one hand, you had Caesar who by his military might and political power, forced people into submission or Jesus', who by love and service submitted his life to those in need. Caesar's kingdom, one which crucified Jesus, or God's Kingdom which raised Jesus' from the dead. Which one do you think is more compelling.**)

-(**Luke 14|25-33**) *The Challenge of Jesus*: True sacrifice.

While Jesus' kingdom was more compelling, it had it's tough side. True love, deep sacrifice, and complete service could only be accomplished through denying yourself daily.

- Why did Jesus say theses things to those who were following him, it seems by following him, they were believing in him and isn't that what he wanted all along?
(**Jesus does want us to follow him, but he doesn't want us to think it will be easy. It seems that he is weeding out the true followers by telling them what it really means to "come after him"**)
- What does it mean to carry your cross?
(**The cross for Jesus meant suffering, pain, and death. If we are to carry our cross, it means we have to be willing to go through what ever it takes, even the possibility of death, which was a very real thing for these 1st century people, to**)

live in this kingdom. To do this, requires a very real understanding of what you may need to give up, or deny yourself, to live this way.)

- What are some things that you would need to deny yourself in, in order to follow Jesus?

-(Body scriptures)

-(**2 Corinthians 5|11-21**)