

Did Jesus Really Exist? Refuting the Jesus Myth Hypothesis

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Evangelical Sources

J. P. Moreland & Ronald Nash, Mike Licona & Edwin Yamauchi
Paul Eddy & Gregory Boyd; J. Warner Wallace; Mary Jo Sharpe; Mark Foreman

Bart Ehrman

Leading anti-Christian New Testament scholar

He argues against inerrancy & against the reliability of the New Testament text
Still, he acknowledges that no serious historian or New Testament scholar should deny that Jesus of Nazareth existed in the first-century AD & died by crucifixion.

Ehrman's 2012 book *Did Jesus Exist?*

"At a reputable university, of course, professors cannot teach simply anything. They need to be academically responsible and reflect . . . the views of scholarship. That is probably why there are no mythicists—at least to my knowledge—teaching religious studies at accredited universities or colleges in North America or Europe . . . Their views are not widely seen as academically respectable by members of the academy. (page 220, *Did Jesus Exist?*) Argues that there is no unambiguous evidence for pagan dying and rising gods before Christianity & no evidence that such gods were worshiped in rural Palestine (page 230, *Did Jesus Exist?*) He argues that even the enemies of Christianity admitted Jesus was a real historical person. (171-172. Early oral traditions about Jesus date back to the early 30's AD. Argues that there are too many early sources, written immediately after Jesus' life, to deny His existence. The sermons in Acts 1-12 are very early (30's AD) {page 172} He argues that Paul knew about the historical Jesus & he met Peter and James (Jesus' half-brother; page 173). No one would have invented the idea of a crucified Messiah (173) He concludes there is far too much early evidence for Jesus' life & His death by crucifixion. Keep in mind, Ehrman is the leading anti-Christian scholar!

Richard Carrier; The Zeitgeist Movie; Robert Price

Price's Attack on Jesus

The early church borrowed ideas from pagan myths

Jesus never really existed; Jesus was merely a myth

A revival of the discredited Christ-myth theory of the nineteenth century—Price wants us to ignore 150 years of progress in critical studies

Price assumes without evidence that miracles are impossible (denies incarnation & resurrection). His bias against miracles dictates his views about Jesus.

Early church was rooted in Judaism; Gentile influence was minimal, if not non-existent!

Christian Philosopher J. P. Moreland--Response to Price

Mystery religions: dying gods who came back to life (Christian thinker J. P. Moreland)

Never intended to be historical; Associated with yearly vegetation cycle; Similarities with Jesus are apparent, not real; Polytheistic, syncretistic, non-moral context; No real resurrection before 100 ad; Real parallels dated after Christianity

First-century Palestinian Jews rejected pagan beliefs & practices (Martin Hengel)

Existence of synagogues throughout first century Israel (ancient Jews could read)

Jesus was a recent historical person—excellent historical evidence for His life & works

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (creed from early 30's ad)

Gregory Boyd & Paul Eddy--Response to Price

Dying & rising gods?

Adonis—no death or resurrection until after Jesus

Attis—death, but no birth; not a deity

Osiris—murdered & dismembered; re-assembled, becomes a powerful god in the underworld

Tammuz—recent find of Sumerian text shows no resurrection or rebirth

Baal, Isis, & Dionysius also fail as dying & rising gods

Legend-Creating Movements?

Apollonius of Tyana (died 96-98 ad)

Written 100 years after Gospels (copied Jesus?)

Not historically accurate; No resurrection appearances

Sabbatai Svi

failed messiah; possibly mentally ill; no reports of seeing him after his death

Simon Kimbangu Congo miracle worker; died in prison in 1951; never claimed to be God; possible Christian prophet?

Christian Philosopher Mark Foreman's Response

This is a revival of an old, discredited idea—late 19th century *History of Religions School*

There are similarities in all religions

Fallacy that temporal priority means the earlier caused the latter

Entire theory assumes Jesus did not really exist in history (goes against contemporary scholarship); Arbitrarily combines all religions into one universal model

Mythicists use Christian terminology to describe pagan beliefs (this creates a superficial resemblance); Make claims about Jesus not found in Bible (December 25th, 3 Kings)

No evidence of pagan influence in first century Judaism

No evidence of dying & rising gods before Christianity

Pagan religions may have borrowed from Christianity as it began to grow

Their sources are not scholars in history, religion, Egyptology, etc.

Overemphasize similarities while ignoring differences

Example of this faulty logic: Kennedy assassination was a myth based on the Lincoln myth (some real parallels, some terms changed, some fiction)

The Historical Evidence for Jesus

Ancient creeds & sermons (30's ad)

Paul's letters (49 to 67 ad); 4 Gospels (35 to 95 ad); Rest of New Testament

Manuscript evidence for New Testament (26,000 copies, 99.5% accuracy, small gap)

Apostolic Fathers (60's to 107 ad); Archaeological evidence

Evidence for Jesus' resurrection & deity

Secular authors--1st century —Josephus & Thallus

2nd century—Pliny the Younger, Emperor Trajan, Emperor Hadrian, Seutonius,

Lucian, Jewish Talmud, Tacitus

Jesus is mentioned by 42 different authors within 150 years of His death

Emperor Tiberius is mentioned 10 times within 150 years of his death